
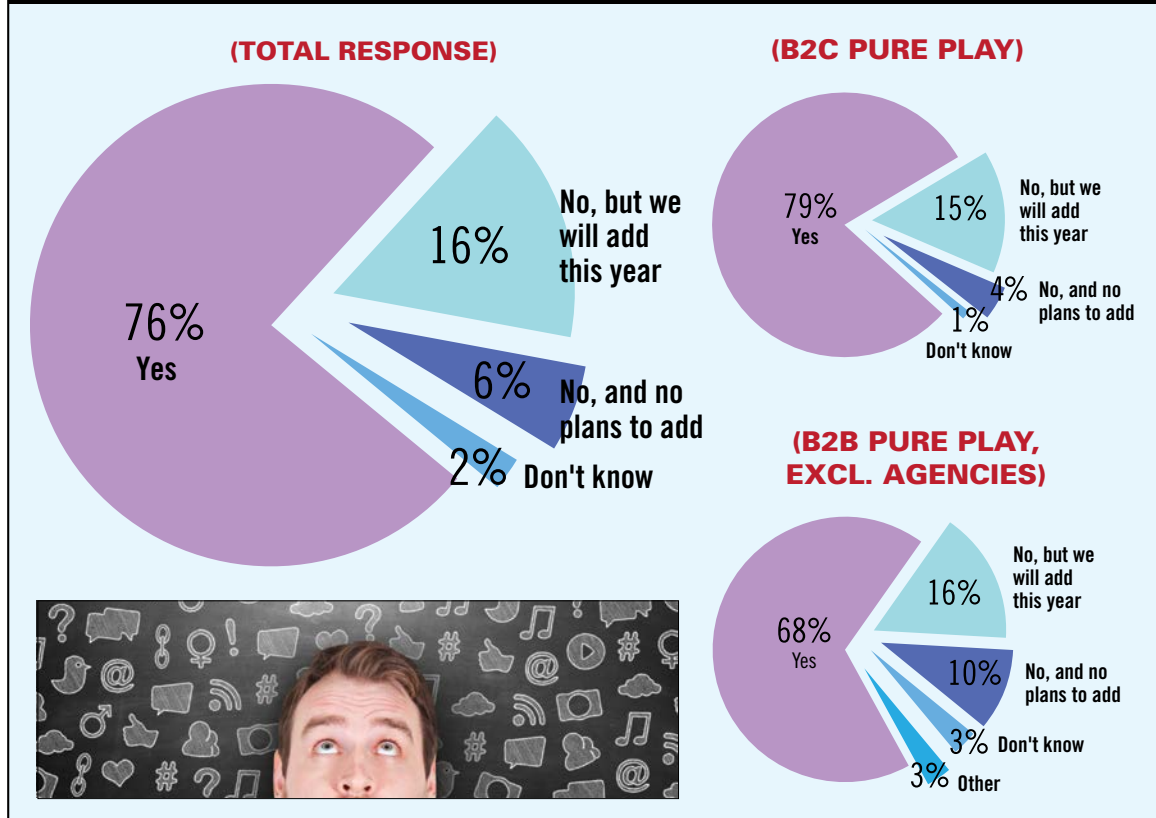


BY BRIAN QUINTON

Remember when **facebook** was only open to those in school? When **You Tube** was all cat videos all the time, and  was the punch line to a joke about the self-indulgence of social media? Those days are now part of the dim, distant marketing past. **facebook** has enough registered global users to make it the world's third largest country; **You Tube** now sees 72 hours of video posted every minute (and many don't even feature cats); and  use hitting 31% among the 18-to-34 age group in February 2012.

Such results make it natural that social will modulate from a channel to a full-fledged marketing strategy. Where once brands were content to simply post **facebook** pages and open  accounts, they now activate specific tools, and many make sure to gain early learning in some of the newer, more untested platforms.

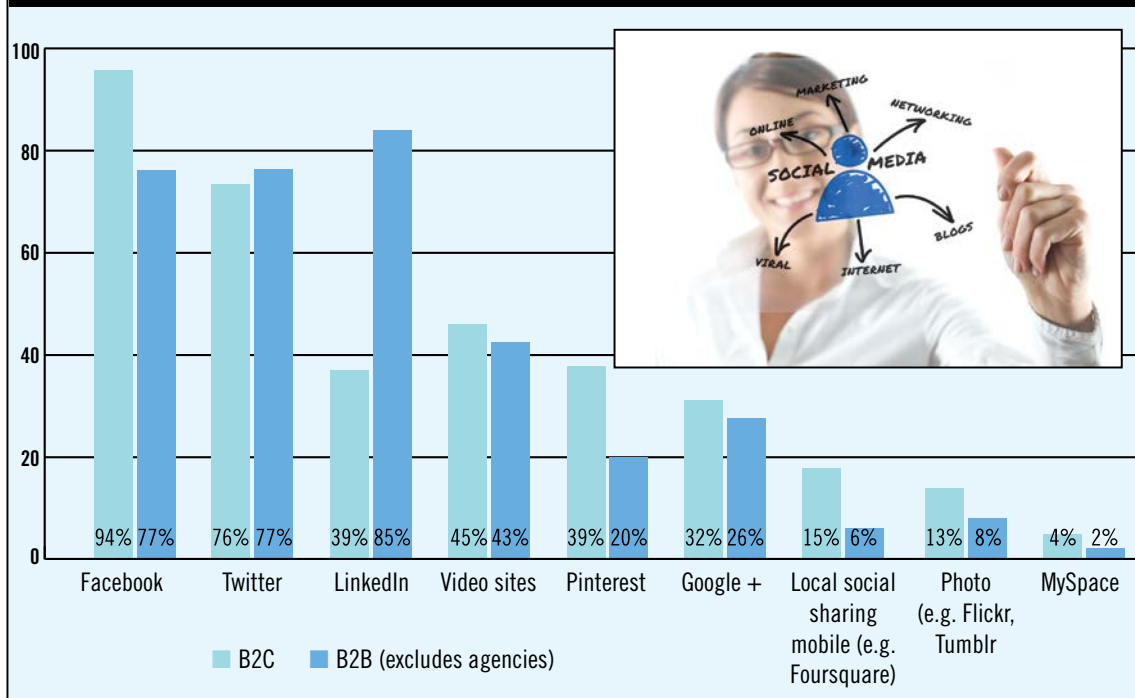
IS YOUR 2012 MARKETING SOCIAL?



About 76% of overall respondents to the survey said their brands were already conducting some level of marketing within social media, and a further 16% reported plans to begin do so by the end of this year, making for a potential social marketing contingent of 92%. By contrast, only 6% of those polled said they were not doing anything to market within social and did not plan to do so this year. Those results track with trends in the last two CM social marketing surveys, where 73% of respondents reported social marketing in 2011, up from 64% in 2010.

Unsurprisingly, B2C brands are more heavily invested in social marketing. Among pure-play B2C marketers, 79% reported current campaigns involving social media against 4% holding out. But it's interesting to note that while a larger proportion of pure-play B2B brands taking part in this year's survey reported not doing any social marketing (10%), 68% in that group said they were actively marketing inside social media and another 16% reported plans to begin this year. That 68% among B2B brands (excluding marketing agencies) is higher than the percentage of all social marketers in the 2010 survey.

WHERE'S THE ACTION?



It's also not surprising that the greatest number of respondents overall said they were concentrating their social marketing efforts in the three largest U.S. social networks: Facebook (89% overall), Twitter (77%) and LinkedIn (63%).

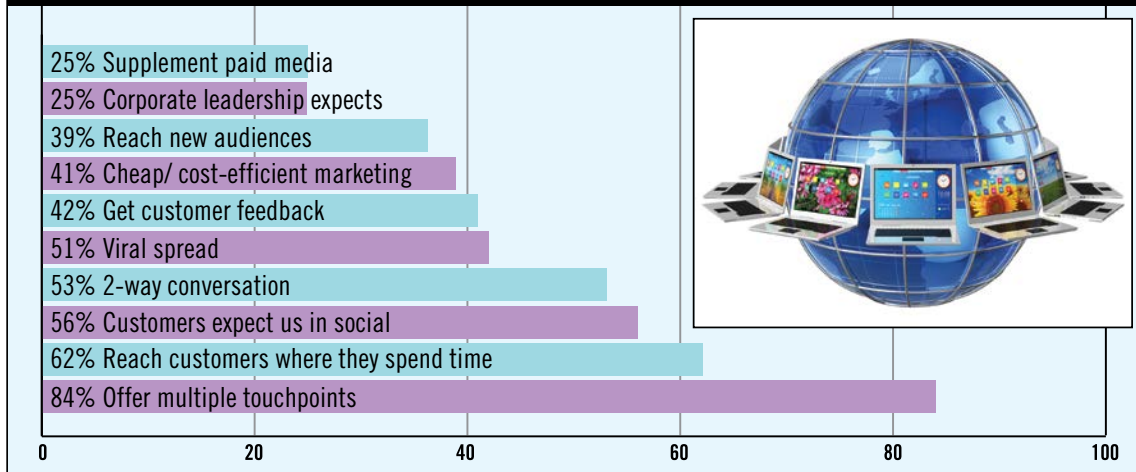
But breaking those out into B2C and B2B pure-play responses proves more interesting. Among B2C-only respondents who are now doing social marketing, Facebook use shoots to 94%; Twitter hovers at 78%; but LinkedIn drops to 39% of the brands polled. But among pure-play B2B respondents, LinkedIn is the channel of first choice (85%), outpacing both Facebook and Twitter (77% each).

Also worth noting is the fact that after the Big Social Three, the social media platform most often reached for are the video sharing and aggregation sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, with almost half of all marketers reporting posting clips to aid their marketing efforts.

This is also the first CM Social Marketing Survey to ask about Pinterest, which barely registered as a blip on marketers' radar last year. No fear of going unnoticed now: 30% of all marketers polled said their brands use the photo- and video-sharing service, which reported 23 million U.S. users in August. That level is much higher for B2C players, 39% of whom reported using Pinterest to market (or at least to bring visitors to their web site) compared to 20% of B2B marketers. And interest in Pinterest indexed even higher in specific consumer verticals: content publishers (67%); entertainment companies (56%); and retailers (45%).

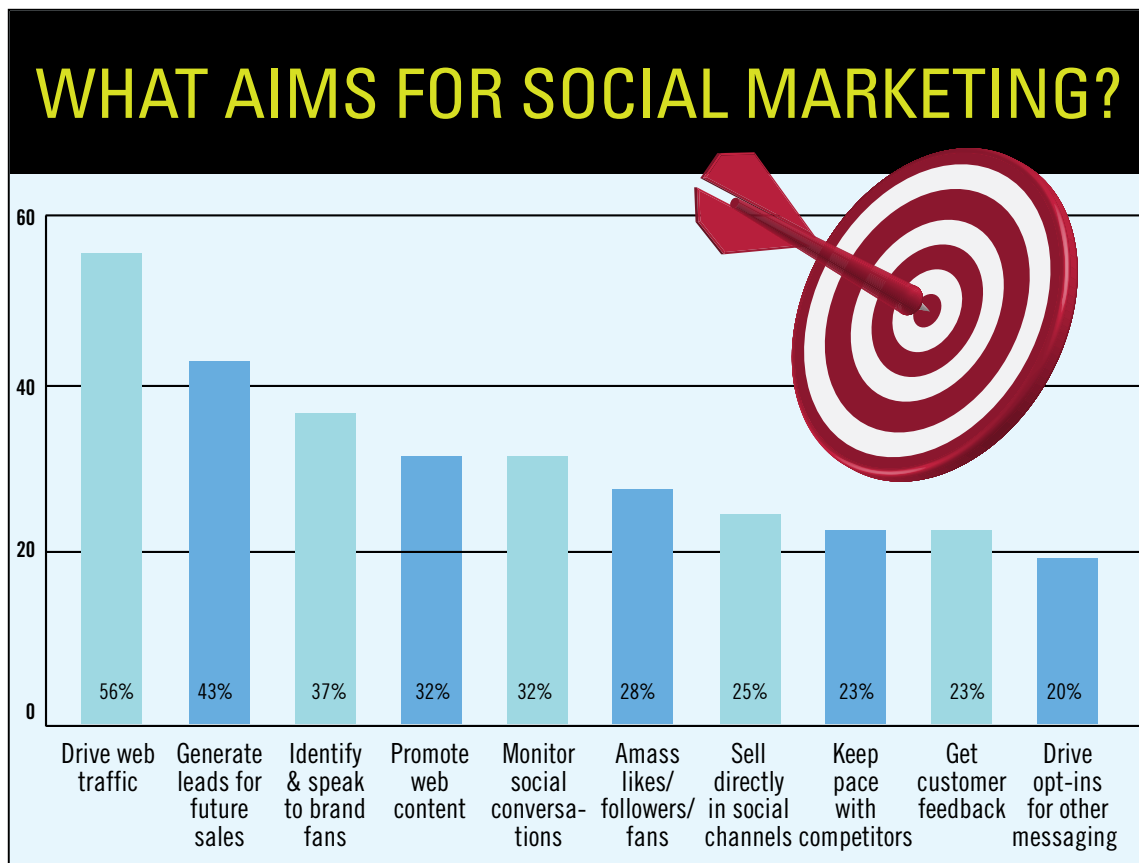
It seems worth noting that survey respondents were asked to name a social platform that they thought will be more important to marketers next year than now, and also to name one that will fall off in marketing impact. Responses to the first question were about evenly divided among Facebook, Pinterest, and Google +, with some votes for Twitter or for mobile/social/local networks like Foursquare. But asked to name a platform that will be less important to their social marketing next year, the most frequent response by a factor of about x3 was “Facebook.”

WHY GO SOCIAL?



Asked for the strategy behind their social media efforts, respondents most often pointed to a need to reach customers at multiple touchpoints (84%) to maximize the impact of their campaigns and messaging. The second most often-cited rationale is customer behavior (62%); prospects are spending increasing amounts of time in social networks, so reaching them digitally often means social engagement. Respondents also said customers have come to expect that their brands will have a social presence (56%), and more than half (53%) pointed to the benefits of the two-way marketing conversations that social media enable.

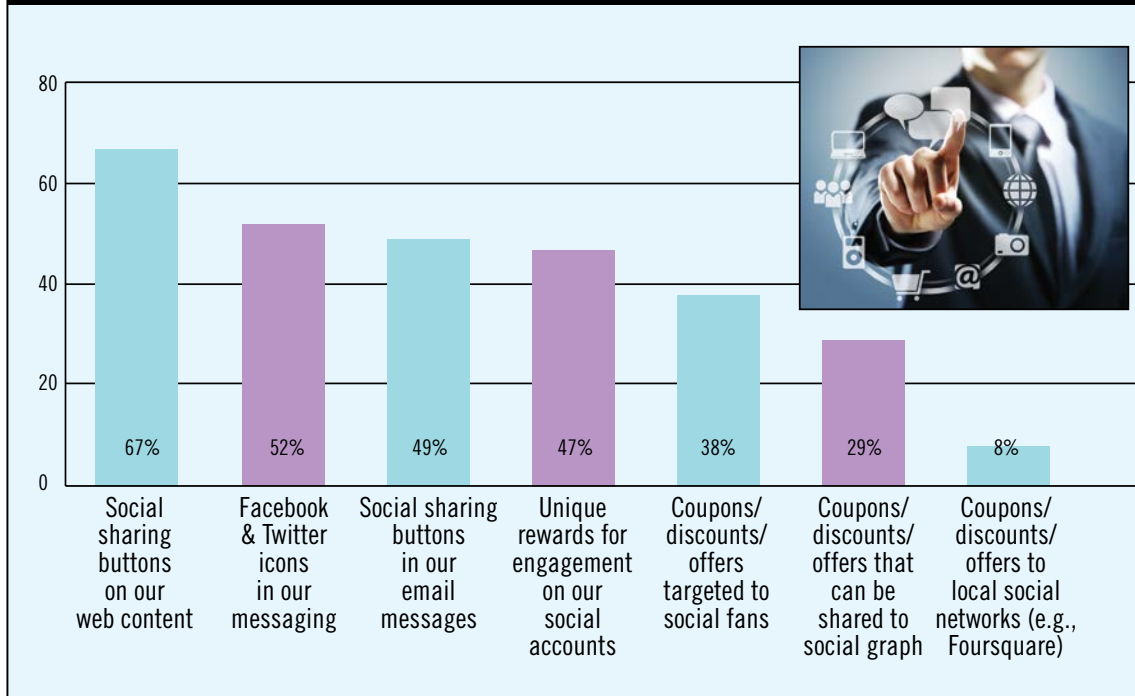
Notably, the chance to take a campaign or message viral in social media has dropped off somewhat. Where last year 59% of all marketers cited that as a reason for social marketing, this year the level has dropped to 51%. Marketers may be starting to appreciate the difficulty of taking an idea viral in an increasingly fragmented social or digital landscape.



The tactical aims for social campaigns remain fairly similar to those expressed in previous surveys. Driving traffic to a web site outpaces all other goals for 56% of respondents, followed by generating sales leads (43%), and identifying brand fans (37%). About a third of those polled (32%) said their brands were using social to promote new web content and to monitor social conversations. As in the 2011 survey, more than a quarter of marketers report they're still in mass-building mode, with 28% this year saying one aim of their social efforts is to amass likes and follows.

B2B-only marketers re-prioritize these aims somewhat. For them, social is useful primarily to drive web traffic (61%). But it's almost equally used as a channel for generating leads for future sales (60%). And in a likely nod to the rise of content marketing as a prospecting tool, 39% report using social channels to promote their brand's content. All other uses fell below the 25% mark; bulking up likes or follower counts only got a nod from 18% of B2B respondents, to whom unqualified fans are less useful.

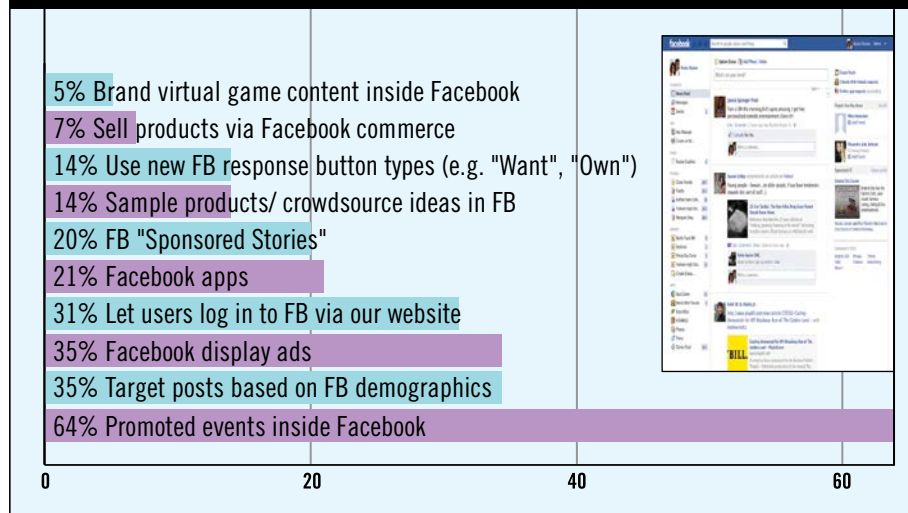
GENERAL SOCIAL TOOLS & TACTICS



By far the most used tool for adding a social element to campaigns is to include social-sharing buttons on web content; more than two thirds of marketers polled said they make sure to give web visitors that option to post content to their personal social accounts. That outweighs by a good amount the number who said they include links to their brand's social accounts in all their messaging, online or offline (52%), and those who enable easy social sharing of their email messaging (49%), an updated version of forward-to-a-friend capability.

Almost as many respondents (47%) reported encouraging fans to engage with their brands in social via deployment of unique rewards. These can be special content or sneak peeks at new products, of course. But for 38% of social marketers, those rewards can include coupons, discounts or price-related offers targeted specifically to social fans, usually for a Facebook like or some other social action. And of those, the plurality (29%) make sure those coupons and offers can be shared with fans' social graphs, sometimes increasing in rebate value as the shares mount up.

MOST POPULAR FACEBOOK TOOLS



In the matter of platform-specific tools, Facebook marketers reach most often (64%) for Facebook Events, which lets them advise fans about upcoming events either online or off- and often upload event details to their calendars or post them on social walls. Events use far outpaces the other main tools Facebook makes

available, including in-network messaging targeted to specific Facebook demographic groups (35%), Facebook display ads (35%), and “Sponsored Stories,” branded posts that run in users’ news feeds and report their friends’ interactions with brands, ads or Facebook pages (20%).

Slightly less than a third of social marketers polled let users log into their Facebook accounts directly from a brand website. That proportion seems low, given that allowing visitors to do so can enrich the available view of those visitors with self-reported data about social graphs, preferences and habits. Even B2C retailers only permit website Facebook logins at a 35% rate.

On the other hand, 20% of retailers report using Facebook Action buttons, which supplement the basic “Like” with “I Want” “I Own” or “I Read”. Users can opt to click on these buttons from Facebook partner websites and post these specialized messages to their own Timeline and to the “news ticker” in the right rail of their friends’ pages. By contrast, 15% of all survey respondents reported using or testing the new Action buttons.

This year’s survey also asked if the March 2012 rollout of Facebook Timeline has made Facebook marketing easier, harder or had no impact. Among all respondents, 7% said the Timeline page format makes marketing easier, but more than twice that size group (16%) said Facebook marketing was now more difficult. By far the largest group, however, saw “no difference” (44%). Among B2C marketers, 8% said marketing under Timeline is easier, but 20% find it more difficult.

“We can tell our story as a brand more powerfully,” said one respondent in favor of Timeline. But one who says it has made Facebook marketing more difficult pointed out that “our fans don’t see what other fans say and don’t get a great sense of community like they did in the past. We find fewer conversations happening between fans now.”

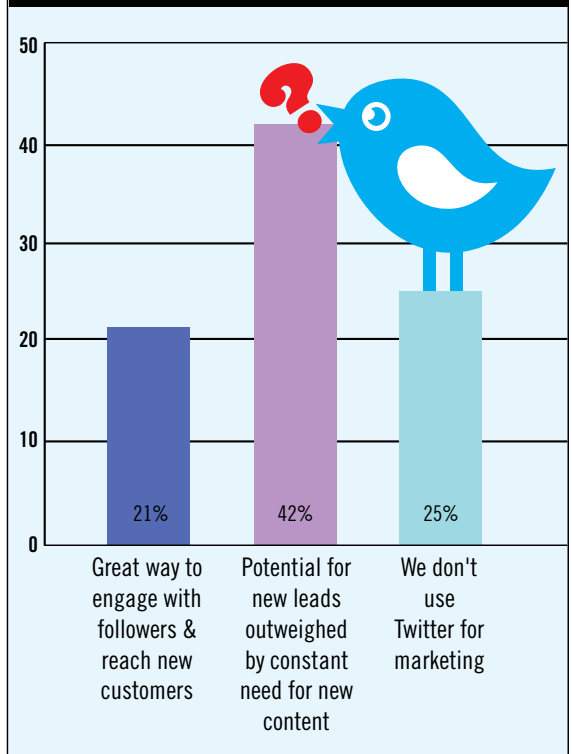
“Imagery has become essential now,” said another marketer having issue with Timeline. “Brands without a large image library must invest in these assets.”

In Twitter, tool-using marketers are reaching mainly for hashtags: either those associated with specific campaigns (30%) or simply to organize conversations around their tweeted content (26%). More than a quarter of the total response (26%) have also made use of Twitter's Promoted Tweets feature: tweets that can be made visible longer and to a wider audience for a fee. (B2C marketers adopt this tactic in somewhat larger numbers (30%) than the total response.)

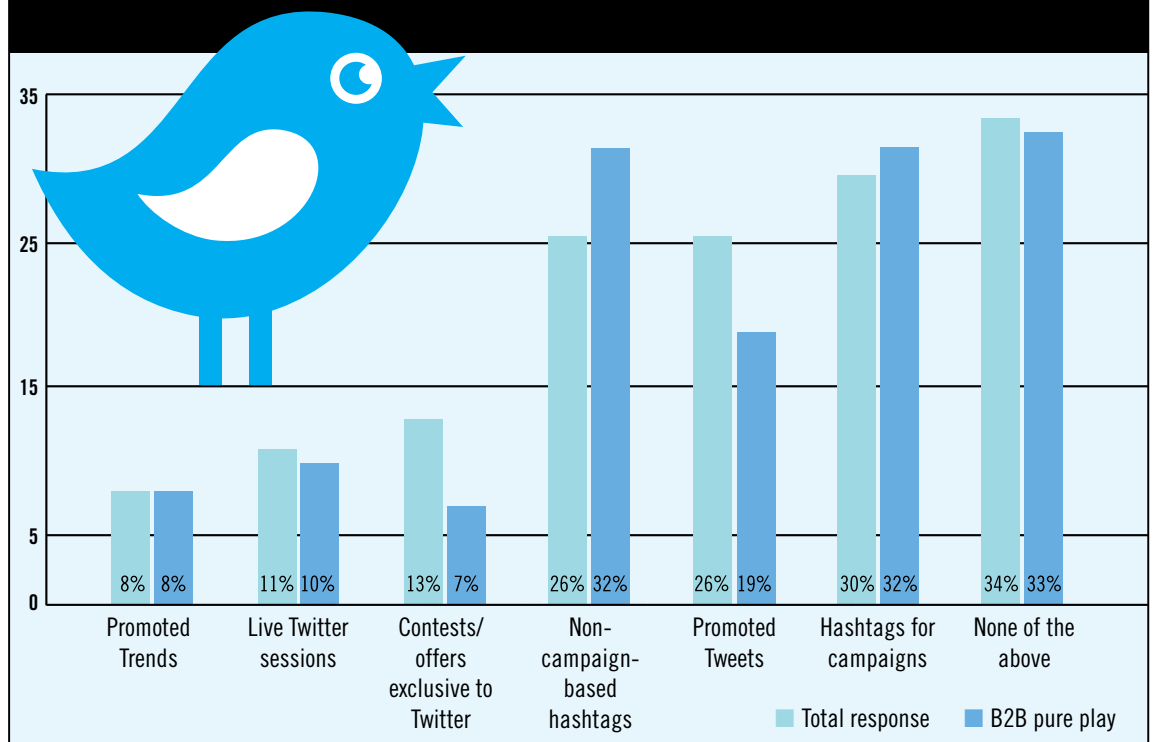
Other special Twitter techniques include offers or campaigns aimed specifically at Twitter followers (13% of all respondents) and live Twitter sessions with groups of followers (11%). Promoted Trends and Promoted Accounts have a relatively low use (8% and 5% respectively.) But the largest response group, both overall and in the B2C/B2B sectors, says they're not using any special tactics in Twitter. Thirty-four percent of the total response says they're not using Twitter tools.

There may be a connection between this reluctance to do more than the bare minimum in Twitter and marketers' attitude toward the platform's usefulness. Asked what they think of Twitter as a marketing platform, the majority of the total response (42%) said that while they value it as a way to reach new customers, Twitter has the drawback of requiring a constant stream of new marketing content to draw and engage those prospects. That compares to 21% who consider it simply "a great way" to stay in contact with customers and generate leads, and 25% who say they don't do marketing on Twitter.

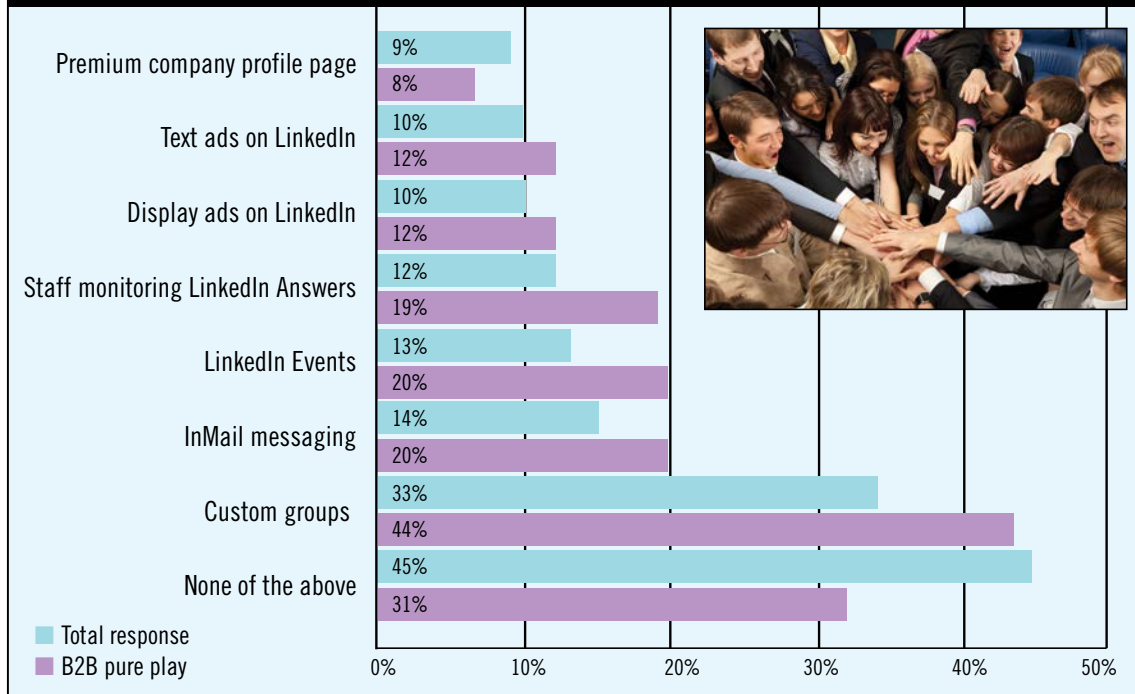
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF TWITTER FOR MARKETING?



TWITTER TOOLS



LINKEDIN TOOLS



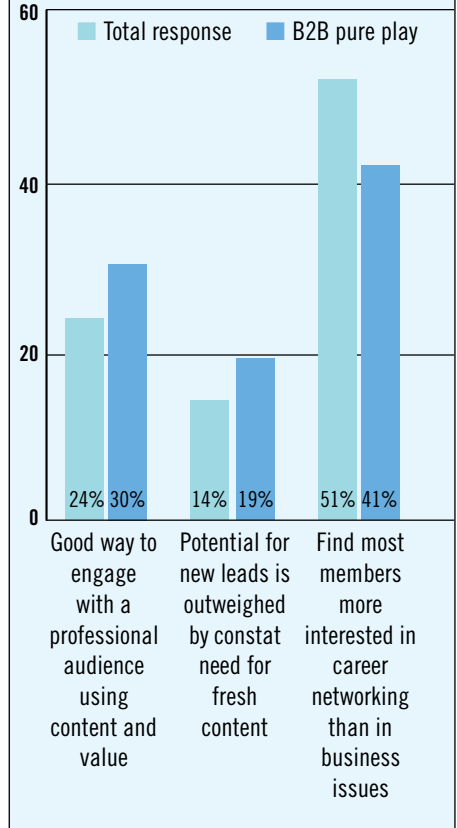
As expected, B2B marketers doing social marketing are using available tools and tactics in LinkedIn much more intensively than their B2C counterparts. For the most part, both B2B marketers and the total response group are focusing on starting or joining ongoing conversations within LinkedIn discussion groups; 44% of B2B marketers say they make sure their brands take part in those groups, compared to 33% of the overall response.

As the next most frequent LinkedIn tool, 20% of B2B marketers using social media also use In Mail messaging—LinkedIn's feature for sending messages directly to a registered member in-network, for a price if that user has not permitted a link to the brand. In about the same proportions, B2B marketers also make use of LinkedIn Events (20%) and monitor LinkedIn Answers for user questions to which they may be able to supply solutions (19%). In all these tactics, they outpace the overall response group by five percentage points or more.

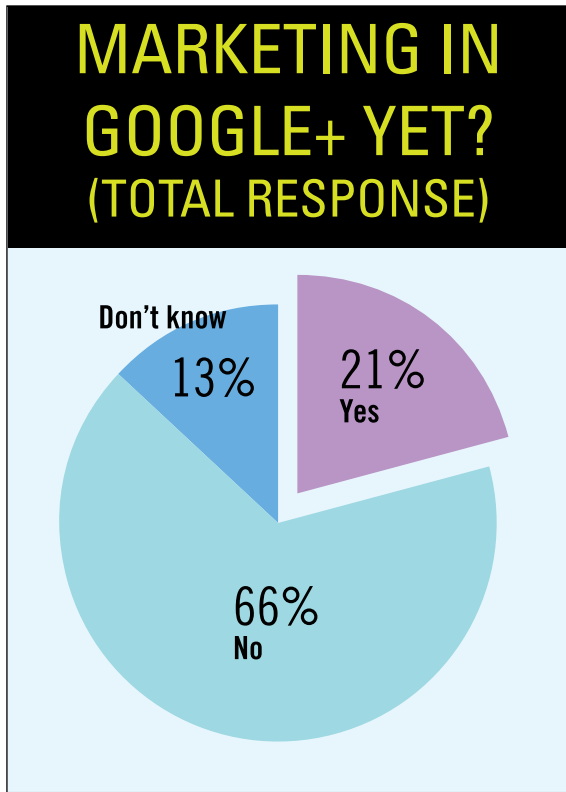
But few marketers of either business type (10%) are looking to text or display ads within LinkedIn to promote their campaigns. And surprisingly few (9%) are opting to post a company page, an enhanced LinkedIn company profile that permits more details about a brand's products and services. Only 4% of pure B2C marketers make use of these company pages in LinkedIn; but even among B2B marketers, the use of company pages reaches only the 8% level.

Again, marketers polled expressed some ambivalence about the usefulness of LinkedIn for marketing. While about a quarter of all those responding (and 30% of B2B marketers) find it a “good way” to appeal to a professional audience using content and added value, 145 of the whole response group (and almost one-fifth of B2B) said LinkedIn’s potential for producing new leads is offset by its demands for fresh content. And a sizeable half of all respondents (and 41% of all B2B respondents) said that LinkedIn users employ the medium to develop their personal networks and career skills rather than finding solutions to business problems—and thus making LinkedIn problematic as a marketing channel.

LINKEDIN FOR MARKETING?



Google’s 16-month-old social network Google + has yet to take any firmer hold with marketers than it has with users. According to a Google statement in September, the platform now has 100 million active monthly users—respectable for so recent a launch but still small compared to Facebook’s 955 million monthly users.

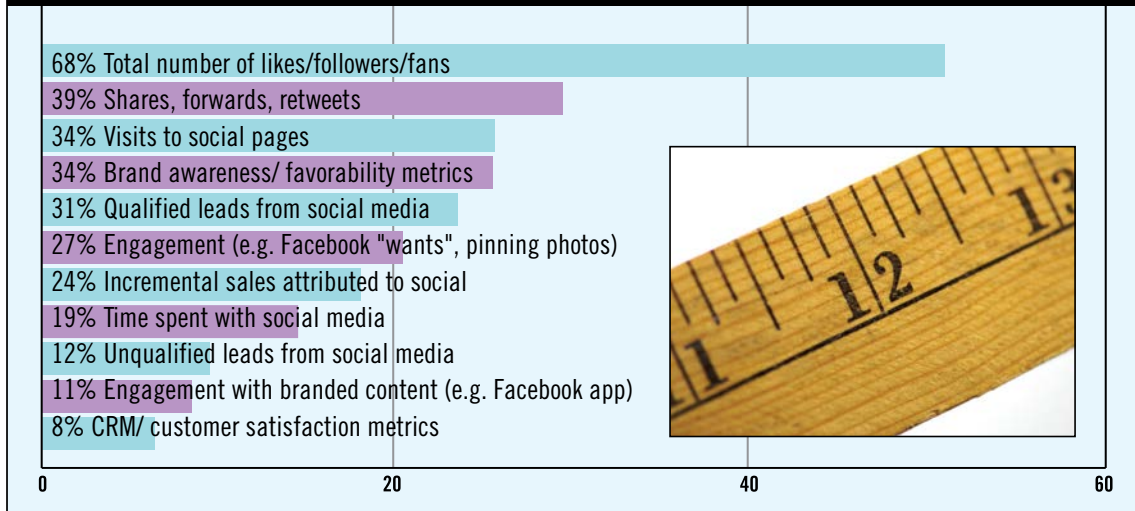


But two-thirds of social marketers polled for this year’s survey said their

brands are not currently taking part in Google +. It can’t be determined whether those non-participants are waiting for the network to build a critical mass or are simply directing their social media resources and budgets to other, more immediately productive platforms. While Google + has relatively few members, the company has rolled out a +1 button to let users indicate page likes and has moved to integrate Google + with its search results pages.

Still, 21% of all social marketing respondents to the CM survey say they are pursuing some form of marketing within Google + right now. CM didn’t ask the level of that involvement, which could range from simply maintaining a brand page in the network to running live video chats or hangouts with groups of customers or prospects. That usage rate rises to 24% for pure-play B2C marketers.

WHAT METRICS FOR SOCIAL SUCCESS?



As they have done in the previous two surveys, asked to name the metrics that they most commonly rely on to gauge successful social campaigns, respondents who do social marketing continue to look at raw numbers first. Sixty-eight percent of respondents say they track the incremental growth in likes, follows or fans to measure a social marketing campaign. A much smaller percentage (39% of the total response) keep count of shares, forwards and retweets of their social content to determine how successfully they've engaged advocates in their social campaigns. And 34% simply watch how often users come to their social pages.

About a third of social marketers (34%) say they look at the lift social campaigns may produce in their brand's awareness or favorability ratings to determine marketing benefits from social. And slightly more than a fourth (27%) of all respondents consider more direct indicators of customer engagement—e.g. clicking Facebook "I want" buttons or opening photo links in Twitter—in evaluating campaigns.

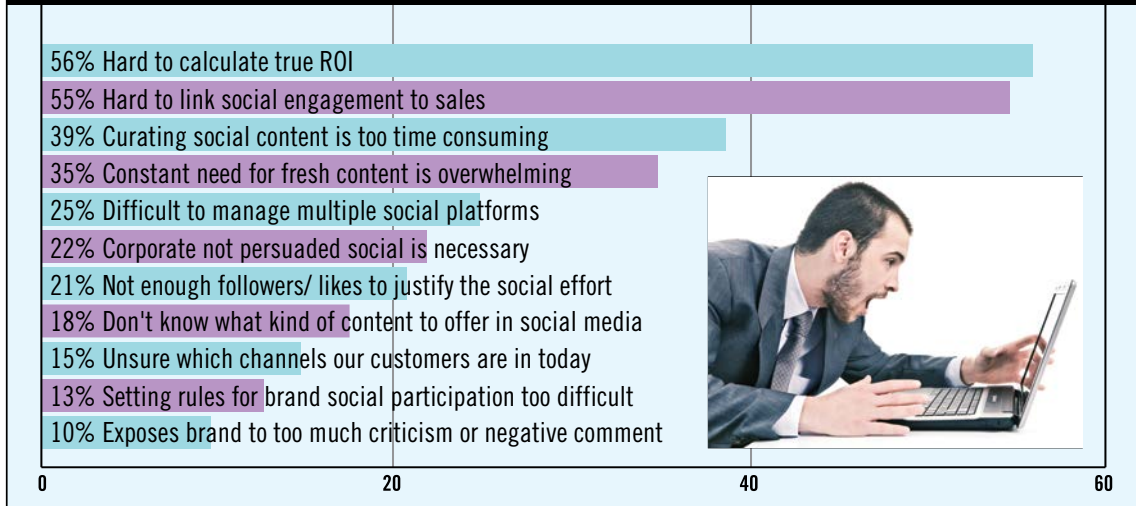
Use of those metrics appears to hold steady for both B2C and B2B marketers. Where the two business types diverge is in their reliance on social media for leads and trackable sales. Among pure B2B marketers using the social channel, 34% say they judge the success of a campaign in part on the number of qualified leads it produces. By contrast, only 18% of B2C marketers say they look for qualified leads from their social efforts. In measuring social marketing's benefits by tracking incremental sales to the channel, 28% of B2C marketers say they use such growth to evaluate campaigns, while only 19% of B2B marketers make the same report.

One long-time social survey question that shows a distinct shift in response is that of how marketers feel about their brands' ability to measure social marketing success generally. In the past two surveys, the proportion of respondents saying they and their companies were "very effective" at measuring social marketing ran about 13%, while those who said they were "somewhat effective" reached 47% in 2011.

But this year only 4% of the total population doing social marketing reported being "very effective" at measuring the impact of their efforts. And only 38% claimed they were "somewhat effective" at doing so. The proportions of those answering "not very effective" (31%) and "not at all effective" (16%) were somewhat higher. But a surprisingly large contingent (11%) of respondents simply "don't know" how good their metrics are for evaluating social campaigns.



WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST FRUSTRATIONS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA?



Problems of measurement figure large in the pain points of marketers who are running social marketing campaigns—followed closely by the strains those campaigns put on their in-house resources. More than half (56%) of respondents cite the difficulty of calculating an accurate return on their social marketing outlays as a prime frustration with the channels. That difficulty in turn grows out of their second most often expressed complaint (55%) in this year’s survey: the difficulty of accurately tracking sales to social campaigns. Those response rates held true for both B2C and B2B marketers.

Beyond the bottom line, marketers are also troubled by issues of content: specifically, by the amount of time their staffers spend curating social media (40%) and by the need to keep social media supplied with a constant stream of new, fresh, engaging content (35%). Further down the list of pain points are the difficulties of managing multiple social accounts in multiple platforms (25%), lining up C-level support for social campaigns (22%), and acquiring enough fans or followers to justify the expense and effort of an effective social marketing strategy (20%).

A small but telling portion of the total response group (17%) said that they basically “don’t know what kind of content to create” for their social accounts—a problem that will only grow bigger if highly visual platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube grow in importance. And about 15% of marketers express an even more fundamental confusion, admitting that they don’t really know “where our customers are in social now.” ■

METHODOLOGY:

The Chief Marketer 2012 Social marketing Survey was conducted online between August 7 and September 10, 2012, and polled 1,050 active marketing professionals at brands and agencies distributed across a range of industry verticals including manufacturing, retail, financial, healthcare, travel, entertainment, publishing, advertising, database and non-profit sectors.