

#TheSocialInfluencer

Your Guide to Becoming a True Social Influencer

Social media marketing is here to stay – but what impact has it had on the companies that leverage it? Time to uncover social's state of play with the results of Oracle's #TheSocialInfluencer survey.



Table of Contents

01.	Executive Summary	3
02.	Methodology	4
03.	Detailed Findings	5
	+ Listen	5
	+ Create	8
	+ Publish	12
	+ Influence	14
04.	How do you rank compared to your peers?	17
05.	Appendix: Firmographics	18

01. Executive Summary

Europe's leading social media marketers came together through #TheSocialInfluencer – to discuss new strategies, concepts, tips and tricks designed to maximize social reach, engagement and influence. Mapped against four core pillars – Listen, Create, Publish, Influence – this was an opportunity for practitioners to benchmark themselves against peers, competitors and industry experts.

The results reveal that social media is now fully ingrained into the psyche of marketing departments across Europe. From the UK and the Benelux region to Germany, France and the Nordics, social is no longer being treated as a secondary concern but as a critical tool for customer and stakeholder engagement – that is, as long as its ROI can be proven to the C-Suite.

It's also clear that companies understand how important it is to define target audiences for social media activities, why creating content to support business objectives is essential, and how to engage with and respond to customers in a timely manner.

The report uncovers several areas in need of urgent attention:

+ Lack of Insight

[Tweet this stat!](#) [Nearly 10% of European marketers said using social media data for customer insights is 'Not Important'.](#)

They're missing out on vital data which is ripe for deep-dive analysis, can support customer databases and offer opportunities for persona creation, refinement and targeting.

+ Social Champions Un-Championed?

Some respondents are uncertain about the importance of engaging their colleagues.

[Tweet this stat!](#) [Over a fifth of European marketers said in-house Social Champions are not important to social media strategies.](#) This is a short-sighted view as champions are critical for promoting and pushing out social media strategies to everyone from customers through to the C-Suite.

+ ROI Ramifications

Measuring ROI is still causing issues with nearly a quarter of those surveyed not confident about how to effectively measure it. More worrying?

[Tweet this stat!](#) [Only 32% of European marketers believe it is 'Very Important' to be able to measure ROI.](#) With a sometimes cynical C-Suite eyeing their bottom lines, such an attitude could prove deeply corrosive to a social media strategy's success in the mid-to-long term.

While these issues show there is still room for improvement, marketers should take solace in the fact that social media is proving to be a hugely valuable

resource – as long as it is properly planned, deployed and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

02. Methodology



The guide gathers insights on the level of market confidence across the core tenets of social media marketing - Listen, Create, Publish and Influence. Respondents were asked about their teams' readiness, skills and confidence – answering questions based around these four topics.

Oracle conducted the online survey of 530 marketing professionals (Users, Managers and Buyers) in the summer of 2014. Both B2B and B2C marketers responded from

France, Germany, the Benelux region, the Nordics and the UK. These respondents have varied job titles and work for companies of different sizes.

Alongside the survey, six Social Champions from across Europe blogged, tweeted and Facebooked their insights into the changing face of social media marketing over four months, supported by Brand Champions at Oracle.

For a full break down, please skip to Appendix: Firmographics (page 18).

03. Detailed Findings



Without listening goals in place, social media is just a potentially useless mass of information that can tie a company up in knots as it fights to decipher it. But with a listening strategy in place, companies can target content accordingly and reap the benefits of relevant, in-depth and manageable customer metrics based on real world, real-time responses.

Imagine it as a customer focus group delivering information potentially 24/7 which could transform how you understand your buyers' behavior, boosting your bottom line in the process. The potential is huge – if tapped properly.

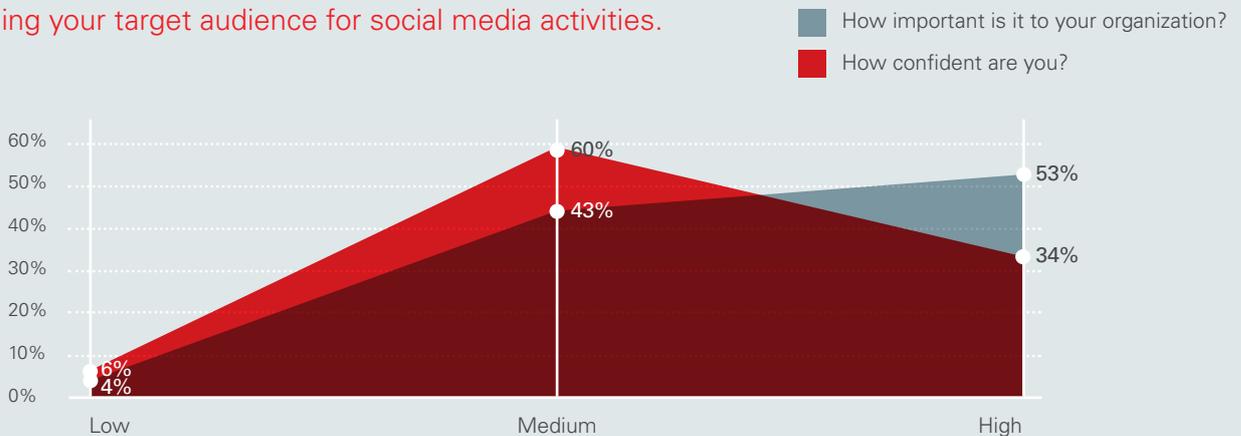
Are you interested in Business Intelligence? Generating leads? Engaging customers and answering questions? Tracking brand mentions, in the way PR professionals use 'press clippings'? Measuring 'sentiment' - and measuring customers' sentiment for your competitors? Finding trends in your sector? Looking for risks and opportunities? Or do you want to measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns? Although there are several tools available to sift and organize social data, many businesses lack skilled employees capable of performing the data analysis required to identify genuinely useful patterns that your business can exploit.

In today's global marketplace, foreign language markets present a significant social media listening challenge. It's difficult to understand nuances of sentiment in a second language.

The four key aspects of the **'Listen phase'** are:

- Defining your target audience.
- Engaging in social listening.
- Putting the correct levels of resources and investment in place.
- Engaging with both internal and external influencers to aid in social media campaigns.

Defining your target audience for social media activities.

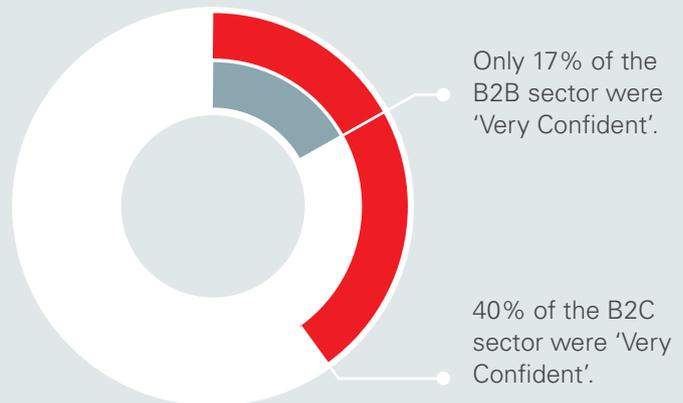


'Defining your target audience for social media activities' is the only discussion point in the Listen phase where the 'Very Important' option outstrips all others – and that's good news. Savvy marketers understand that defining your audience is imperative to deliver your social media messaging to the right audience each and every time.

Failing to do so could cause even the most imaginative social media campaigns to fall on deaf ears, in turn impacting the credibility of your social media strategy and, critically, reducing its ROI.

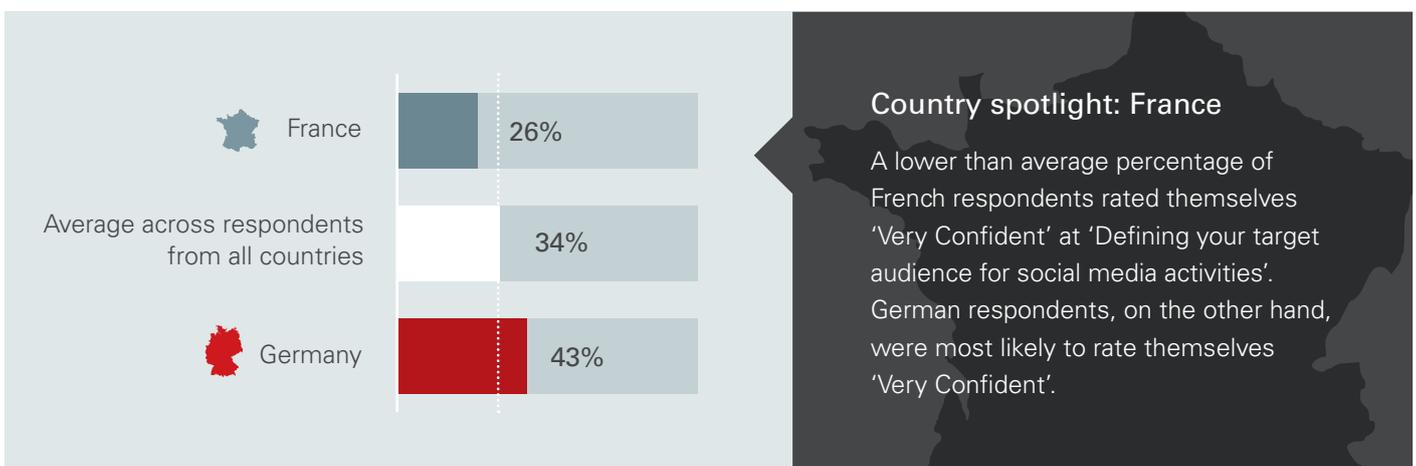
Supporting Matters

When asked how confident they were that they're getting the support needed to fulfil social media objectives...



“ Remember, social media is not a marketing exercise. You have to listen. You have to make it a part of your business. ”

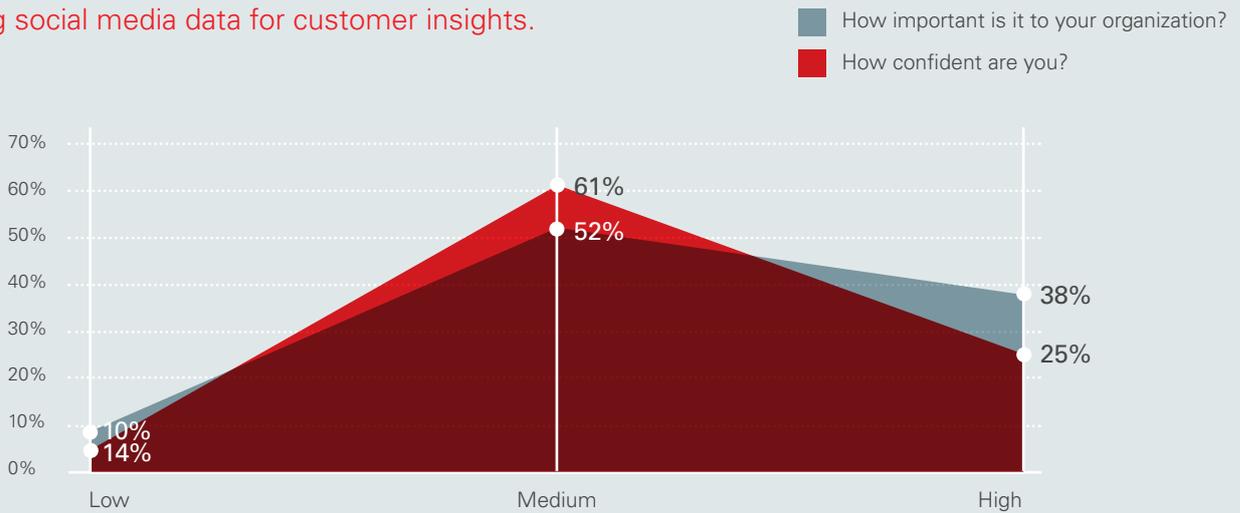
Nordics Social Champion [Henrik Sandberg](#), founder of SeoCustomer.



Country spotlight: France

A lower than average percentage of French respondents rated themselves 'Very Confident' at 'Defining your target audience for social media activities'. German respondents, on the other hand, were most likely to rate themselves 'Very Confident'.

Using social media data for customer insights.



Taken at face value, this result suggests a confident and balanced attitude from those surveyed that companies are taking customer insights gleaned from social media and using them to inform their campaigns and strategies. But there is an issue – the ‘Not Important’ option makes up a huge 10% of the results.

Some companies still fail to realise how vital social media

is for generating key customer insights. This could hold companies back from attaining a wealth of fresh, relevant data that can aid customer analysis, database management and the persona and targeting processes. Customers now expect businesses to provide services the way they want. Businesses which fail to learn from the insights and feedback on Twitter, Facebook, blogs and review communities will fall behind.



Country spotlight: Germany

When it comes to confidence, Germany has it in droves. When asked ‘How confident are you?’, Germans race ahead of their European neighbors on every question in the ‘Very Confident’ category – by over 10% in some cases – leading to the conclusion that the country is more assured than the rest of Europe about its social media marketing decision-making and goal-achieving.

“ Every company should have a Chief Listening Officer who is in charge of taking care of the customers and who will enhance the company profile – which leads to more customers. ”

Benelux Social Champion, [Dick Raman](#), CEO of BrandReact, Inc.

“ Many businesses nowadays aren’t able to deliver to their target audience what they want/ need, and the main reason for that is the fact that they are not listening to them. ”

UK Social Champion, [Lilach Bullock](#), Co-Founder of Comms Axis.

Remember to:

- Set clear goals that define why you are engaging on social media, and what you want to get out of it.
- Define your target audience for your social media strategy.
- Use your social media campaign to glean fresh new insights into customers.
- Consider hiring ‘listening specialists’ to understand your customers and drive your social media strategy.



Create

It can be a daunting prospect – creating engaging stories for your social media strategy across multiple platforms and formats is no easy task. It requires marketers to

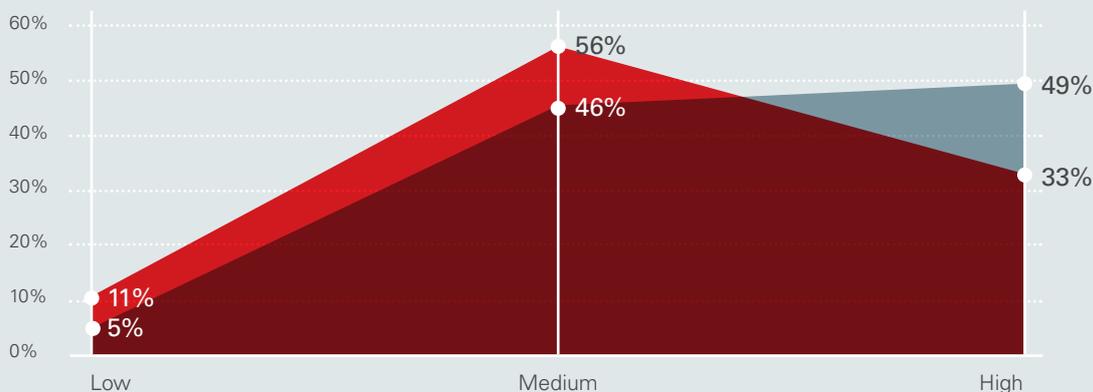
operate on multiple fronts, pulling in the right talent to solidify and deliver on content plans, all while deciding on the best ways to present the content to customers/ clients. But don’t feel overwhelmed – use each stage of the ‘buyer’s journey’ to identify key areas for content development to push the right messaging out each and every time.

The key aspects of the ‘**Create phase**’ are:

- Creating appropriately targeted content for your social media strategy.
- Putting in place the right team for the creation of suitable content.
- Choosing the right content for the right social media platform.
- Ensuring that the content both informs and entertains, while avoiding ‘sales’ talk.

Creating content to support defined business/communication objectives.

How important is it to your organization?
How confident are you?

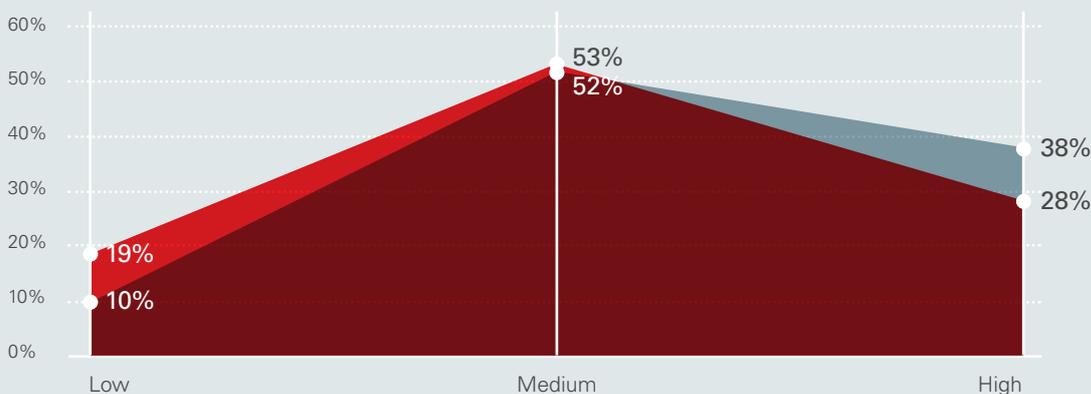


It's another rare example of 'Very Important' receiving the majority of votes for a question. It's a reassuring sign that companies understand that social media must be treated

as a vital part of a communications strategy, not as a nebulous, woolly and ill-defined drain on resources simply put in place to save face with competitors.

Engaging the appropriate internal stakeholders into your social media content creation strategy.

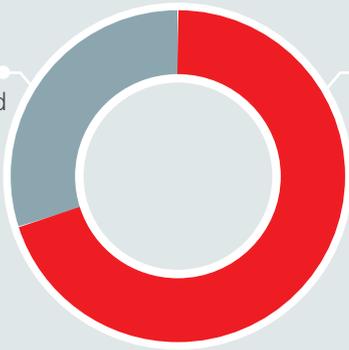
How important is it to your organization?
How confident are you?



The majority of companies regard the engagement of internal stakeholders as 'Important'. Without the full backing of internal stakeholders, a social media strategy risks losing traction.

It is essential that all stakeholders are behind the strategy, fully supporting and engaging with it. The best content comes from a wide-reaching conversation - internal stakeholders make great brand advocates, and could create fascinating new insights.

30% of your updates should inform.



70% of your updates should entertain.

70/30 Vision

'Salesy talk' should be avoided at all costs in any social media messaging; that's a given. But deciding on what tone your content should have can be a tough balancing act – so the 70/30 rule provides a useful guideline.

Country spotlight: The UK

Although companies understand that social media is important, the UK had the lowest percentage of respondents, at 34%, who thought that adapting content across channels was important.

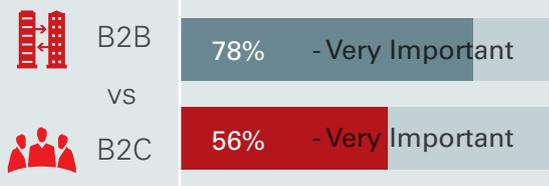
Meanwhile:



thought that adapting content across channels was important.

B2B vs. B2C

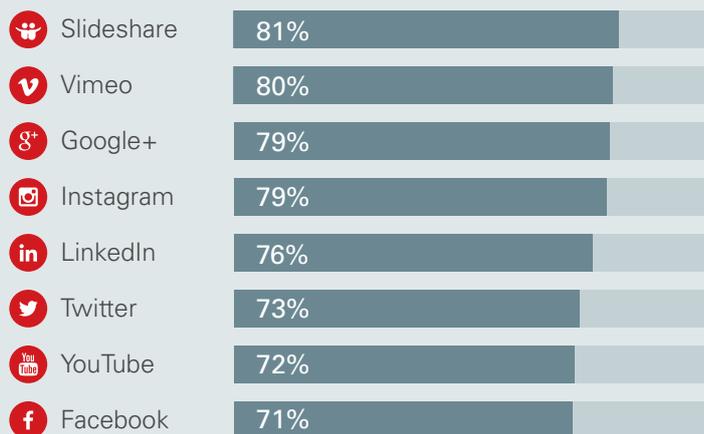
There are marked differences between how the B2B and B2C sectors see the importance of objective-driven content:



Is this a reflection of social media's role within the two sectors? Perhaps B2B companies want to know what a company can do for them quickly and efficiently while B2C customers are more open to a less formal approach?

Interestingly though, the B2B sector is less confident about delivering on its objectives:





Platform Preferences

The survey asked respondents which platforms they regard as being 'Very Important' for delivering objective-themed content, leading to some surprising results:

“ *In virtually all aspects of communication, creativity is the key. Only people who are creative in generating and communicating messages, content or products to target groups will achieve sustained success.* ”

German Social Champion [Ira Reckenthäler](#), Chief Marketing Officer & Partner of Wildcard Communications.

“ *Each stage of your brand's 'Create phase' should add value, keep on topic and clearly direct the user to the next stage in the engagement and buying cycle. This is a journey of discovery for the customer, adding to their knowledge, providing solutions and scratching that itch.* ”

UK Social Champion [Steve Welsh](#), a leading social media and digital marketing specialist.

Remember to:

- ❏ Put the right team together to generate your content – without genuine creativity, your social media campaign will fail.
- ❏ Involve internal stakeholders at all stages of your social media campaign; from creation and execution to its evolution.
- ❏ Create content to support your business objectives and communications; don't lose sight of why you're doing this in the first place.
- ❏ Create content that adds value and complements the buyer's journey.



Publish

This phase requires clear, pragmatic planning to ensure you engage with your targeted audiences, all while

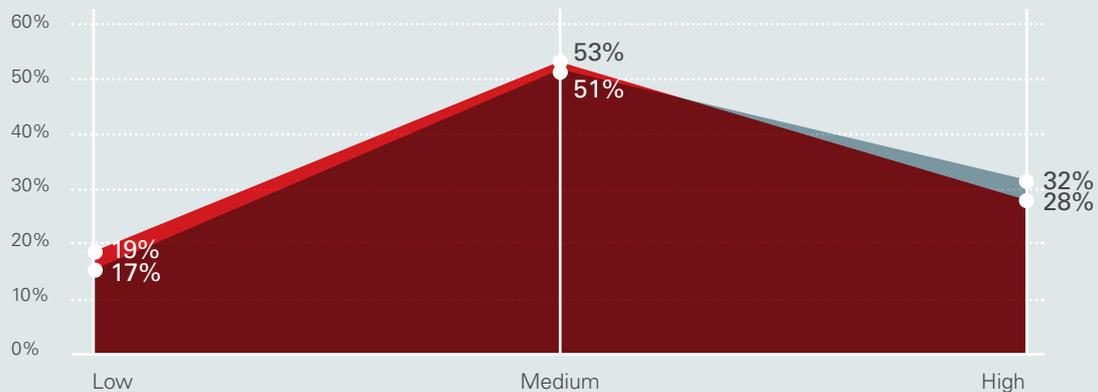
retaining a consistent brand between departments and across networks. Consideration must be given to where the content is published, at what time and, importantly, on which device the content is being viewed; mobile is increasingly dominating the social media viewing experience.

The key aspects of the **'Publish phase'** are:

- 📱 Tailoring social media posts for targeted audiences.
- 📱 Researching the best publishing times depending on the social platform.
- 📱 Responding in a timely manner to customer queries or complaints.
- 📱 Investing in and deploying software-based automation tools to aid in publishing content and tracking key metrics.

Publishing tailored social updates at the best times of day for your target audience.

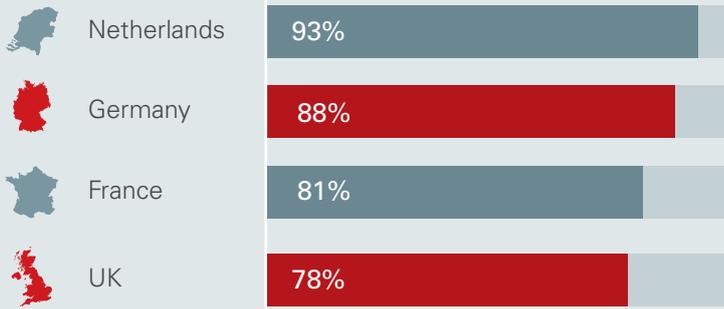
■ How important is it to your organization?
■ How confident are you?



On the face of it, a positive response to the question – but look closer and nearly 20% remain 'Not Confident' about what time of day is the best to actually post. It's an understandable conundrum made more difficult because of the many different social channels and when their users are most likely to check-in with their news-feeds.

There is a wealth of advice from various bloggers about the best times to post online. It's recommended that you use such timings as starting points only – and use the rollout of your own social media strategy to test for the optimum times to reach out to your audiences.

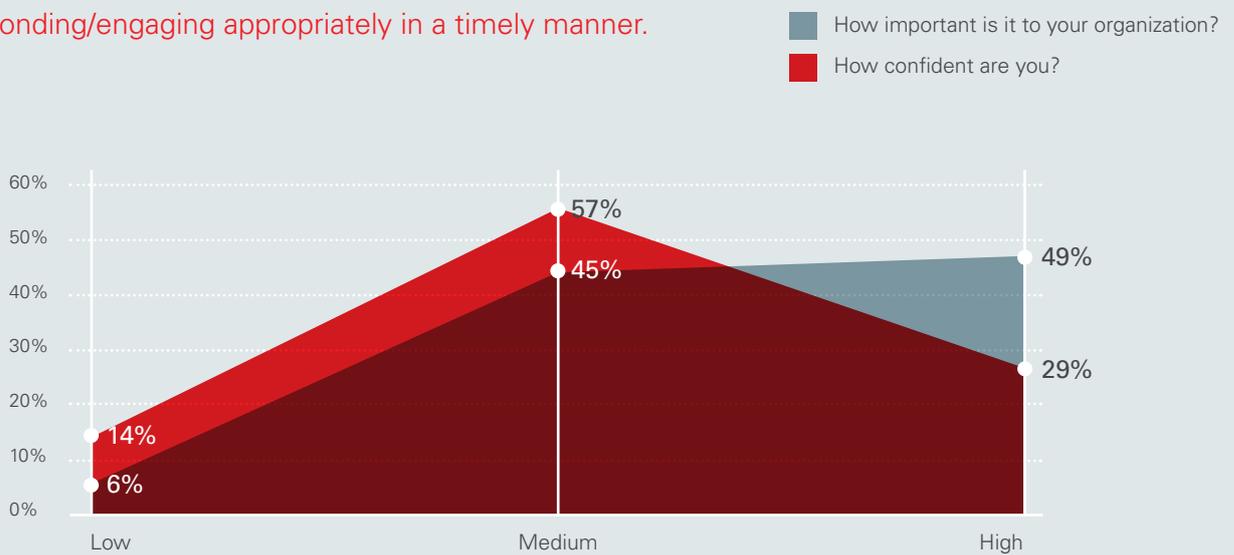
Meanwhile:



Country spotlight: The Netherlands

The Dutch lead Europe when it comes to knowing when to post social content. Some 93% of Dutch respondents said they were 'Confident' or 'Very Confident' in this area.

Responding/engaging appropriately in a timely manner.



Another high-scoring 'Very Important', which is reassuring as research shows that it's vital to engage with and respond to customers in a timely fashion – or risk looking out of touch at best, nonchalant and uncaring at worst.

If your customers operate in multiple timezones, you may have to do so too. According to some studies, consumers now expect a response within an hour. Remember that your silence won't just be noticed by the person who posted the comment, but by everyone else who sees it.

“ It is very easy to gather data but it is very important to invest in the interpretation of data that has been collected. It also means that more time is needed to be spent on interpreting what these digital and social signals mean. ”

French Social Champion [Grégory Pouy](#), a leading digital marketing consultant.

Remember to:

- 📅 Test the optimum timings for your social media posts by testing at different times of the day during your social rollout.
- 📅 Respond to customer/client queries or complaints in a timely fashion – aim to respond within 60 minutes.
- 📅 Schedule suitable time to analyze your digital and social signals to inform the way you publish in future; don't waste your hard-earned customer data.



Influence

service solves problems – and create social platforms and communities so customers can influence others as they become brand advocates.

It's no longer enough for an advert to scream at consumers, or for a salesperson to tell them what to think. Modern marketers influence prospects – showing how a product or

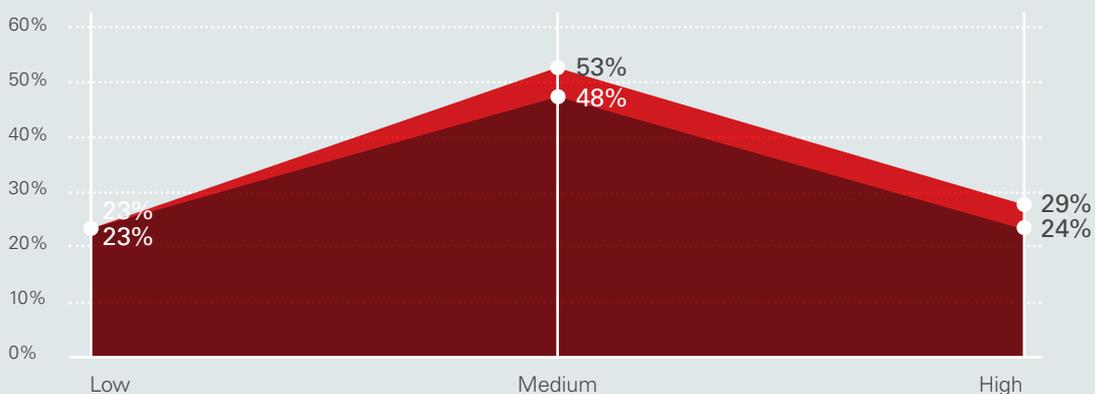
Harness the potential of the 'Influence phase' and it will inform the other three phases, helping you reach out to ever wider audiences as your social media campaign evolves.

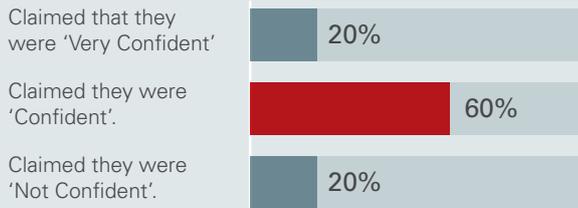
The key aspects of the **'Influence phase'** are:

- 📶 Creating consistent brand messaging across all channels.
- 📶 Measuring the impact of social media in lead generation.
- 📶 Calculating and demonstrating social media ROI.
- 📶 Involving all departments from Customer Services and Sales through to Product Management and Human Resources.

Putting in-house 'Social Champions' in place to maximize the impact and reach of your messaging.

■ How important is it to your organization?
■ How confident are you?





Country spotlight: France

French respondents were equally likely to rate themselves as 'Very Confident' and 'Not Confident' when it comes to maintaining a consistent on brand message across all social media channels.

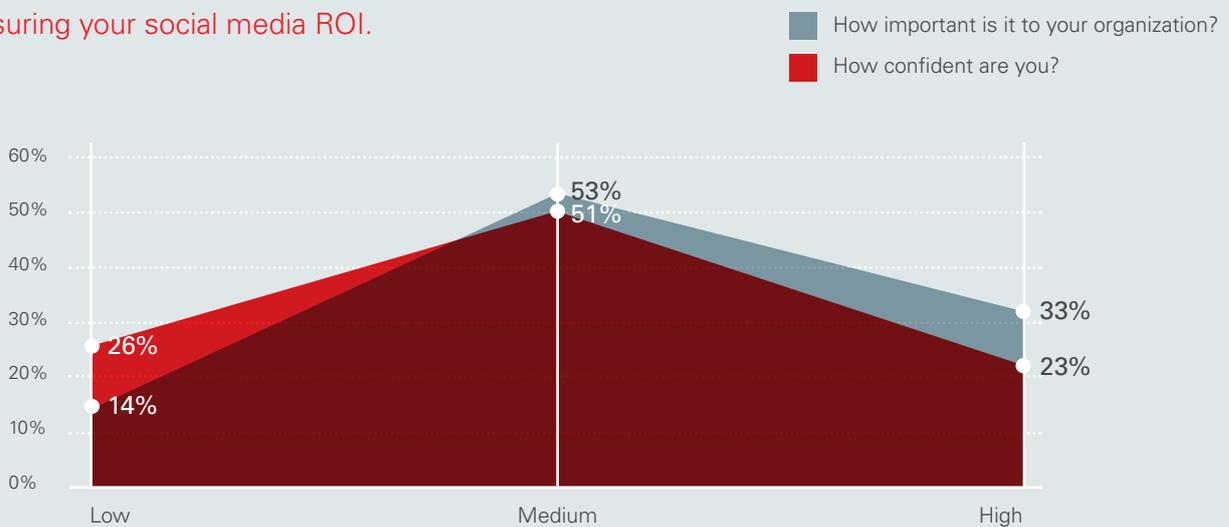
This discussion point produced one of the highest 'Not Important' results of the entire survey. Why are companies not attaching as much importance to in-house Social Champions as they are to other elements of their social media strategy? A clue can be found in the 'Not Confident' score, which makes up nearly a quarter of all responses – with even the normally assured German respondents stating they are only 'Confident', not 'Very Confident' (53.3% vs. 36%) about the issue of in-house Social Champions.

Perhaps it boils down to one simple fact – that many of us are not entirely sure why Social Champions are important

in the first place. Indeed, in the Listen phase of this report, a worrying lack of importance was attached to engaging the appropriate internal stakeholders within a social media strategy.

Social Champions are colleagues from throughout the departments of your business - in management and beyond - who create engagement with both customers and stakeholders by sharing their thoughts via social media. These champions must be seen as the lynchpins of any strategy, encouraging and inspiring others to ensure that everyone - from customers through to the C-Suite - is engaging fully with a social media strategy.

Measuring your social media ROI.



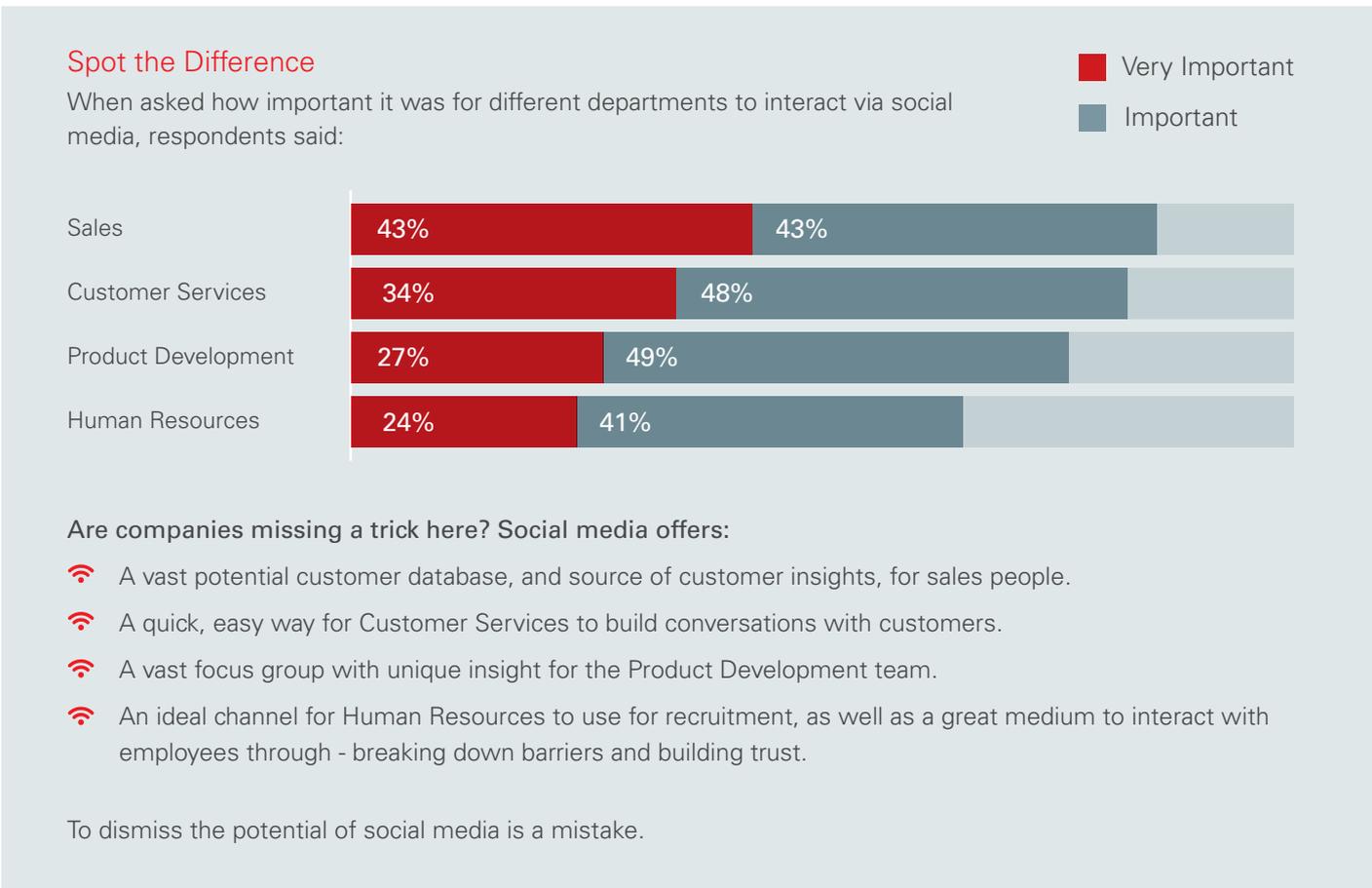
ROI - it's the big issue when implementing a social media strategy. But #TheSocialInfluencer report findings reveal a different picture. While the 'Important' option comes in at just over 50%, it's the 'Very Important' result that surprises the most. You would expect the option to lead by a country mile, not languish at 33%.

And just as significantly, over a quarter of those surveyed stated that they were 'Not Confident' about measuring ROI. Perhaps the real issue here is that some social media strategists are sweeping the significance of ROI under the carpet because they are simply not confident about how to correctly measure it in the first place.



That’s an overwhelming response. There appears to be a divide between ‘measuring’ ROI and ‘demonstrating’ ROI –

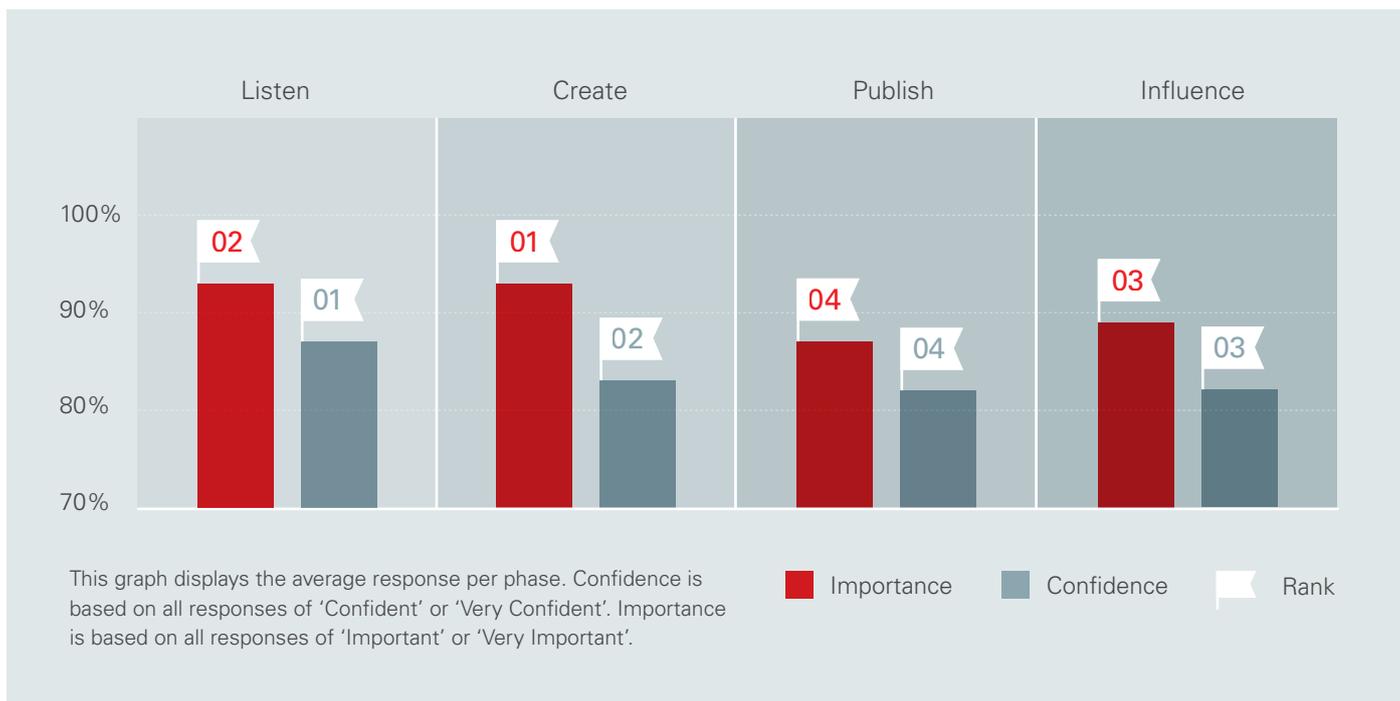
but without one, you can’t have the other...



Remember to:

- 📶 Source in-house Social Champions; they will drive your social media strategy within your organization and externally with your customers/clients.
- 📶 Ensure all departments are engaging via social media, including Human Resources.
- 📶 Make ROI a top priority; it’s what the C-Suite is ultimately interested in. Without the correct processes in place to demonstrate ROI, the C-Suite’s interest – and investment – is at risk.
- 📶 Hire a third party specialist if you are struggling to put an ROI roadmap in place.

04. How do you rank compared to your peers?



Social media marketers unite: growing knowledge and confidence

In all four areas, 'Not Important' and 'Not Confident' are dwarfed in comparison to the other answers - a glowing reflection of **Europe's social media marketing confidence**.

The biggest gap can be seen in the 'Create' phase. Respondents agreed that the right content is 'Important' or 'Very Important': but just didn't feel equally confident about creating it.

Interestingly, European marketers are markedly more confident in listening to customers and prospects than creating and publishing content or influencing via social media: perhaps reflecting how much easier it is to research a market than it is to put together campaigns with proven success.

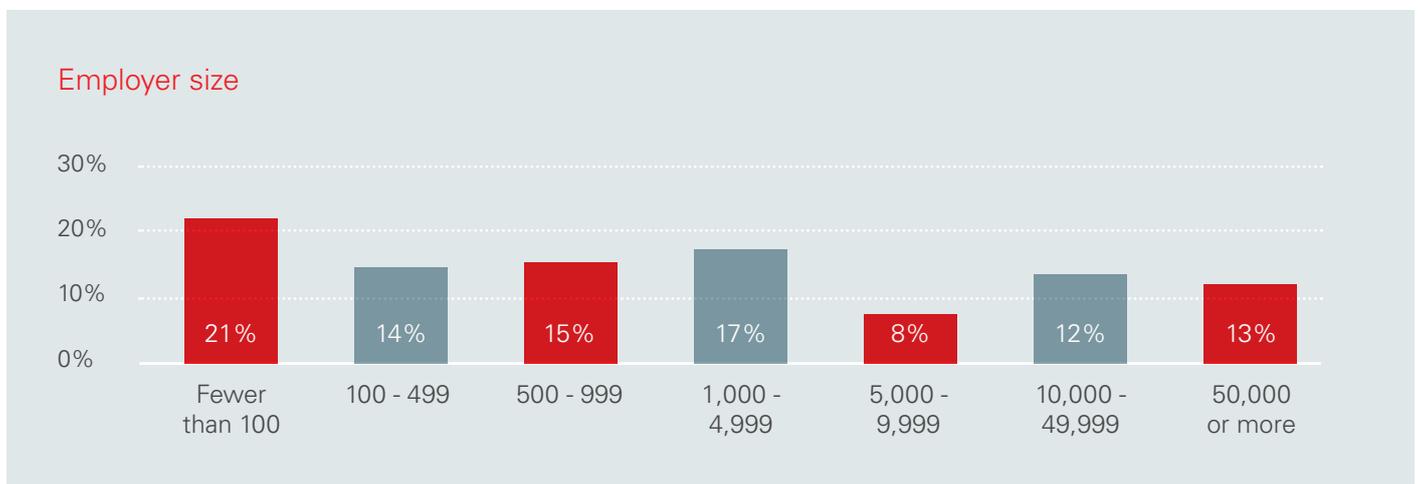
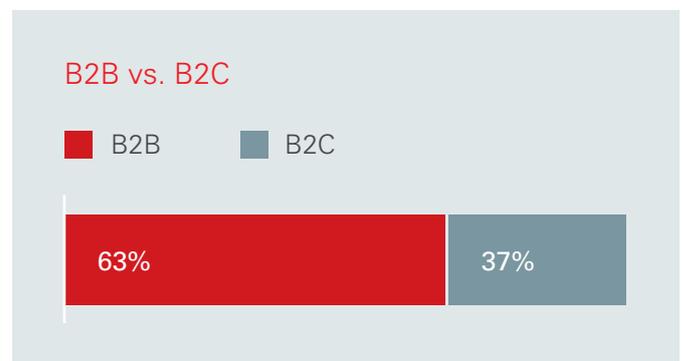
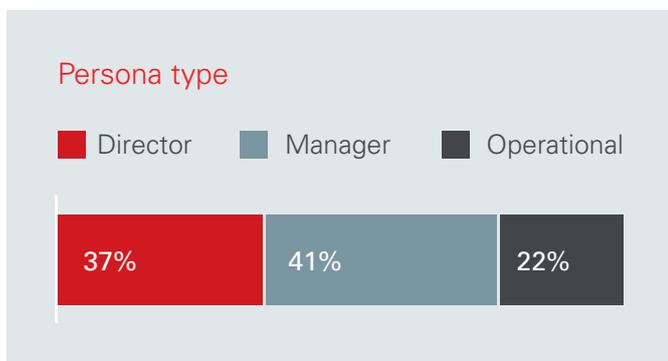
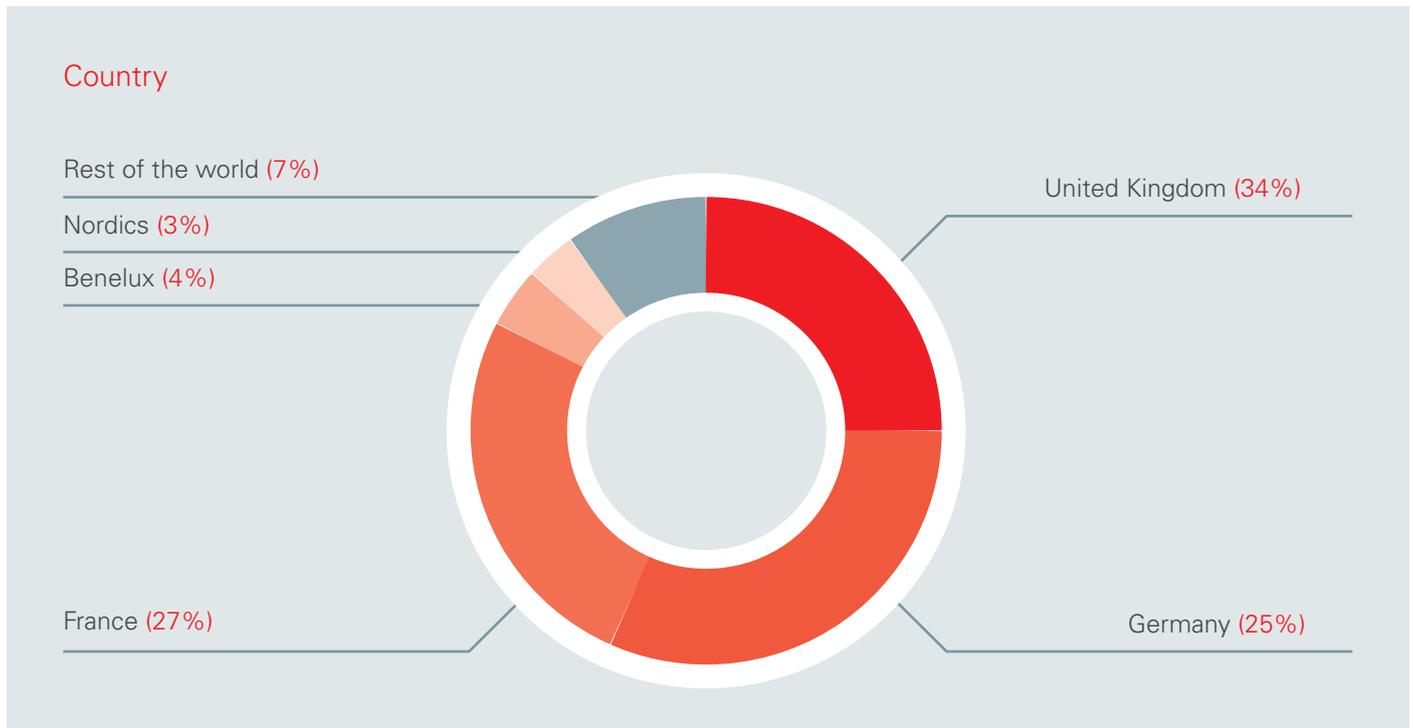
What's next?

Social media marketing has gone from a new discipline to a respected area of marketing with established principles, with many of its practitioners growing in their self-assurance. In future, we expect more marketers to answer 'Very Important' and move into a 'Very Confident' state of mind when it comes to their social media marketing strategy.

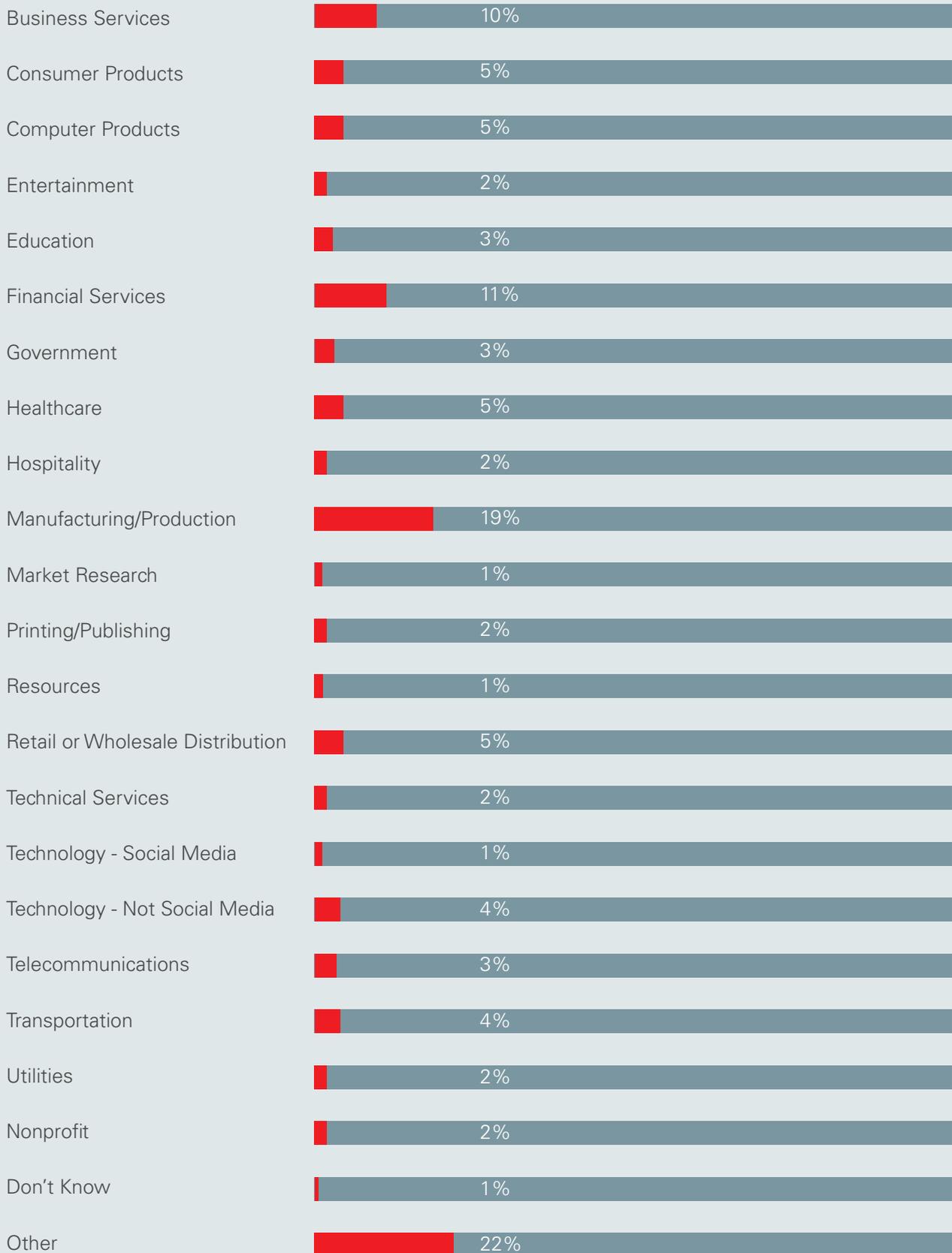


05. Appendix: Firmographics

Find more details about the survey respondents here.



Business sector





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