



The Chartered
Institute of Marketing

SOCIAL MEDIA BENCHMARK WAVE 3 RESULTS JUNE 2013

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Managing social media risk and reputation is a priority for marketers, but in need of a more robust approach. Explore the latest findings.

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THE NEW POWER

Isn't social media fantastic? Minute by minute, consumers from across the planet congregate in the same place to share what they think, what they like and what they're up to. What's more, businesses and brands are able to join this conversation, connecting directly with their customers in a way never previously achievable. Add to this the cost efficiencies of social media and it's almost too good to be true.

The benefits of social media are indeed significant. Social media is a cost-effective tool offering up a wealth of benefits; not least the ability for businesses to successfully achieve highly targeted customer reach while fostering meaningful conversations with their audiences. This can ultimately lead to the dissemination of key messaging and values of a brand which, in turn, helps to build loyalty and create brand ambassadors for your business. The problem is, everything comes at a price.

What's developed over the last decade isn't merely a new, low-cost marketing channel. Rather, we are witnessing a paradigm shift in how people interact, communicate and consume information.

The permeation of technology and adoption of social media platforms has led to a fundamental shift in power. Whereas businesses may previously broadcast their messages and ideals to a public audience, we are now seeing the amplification of individual consumers' opinions and influence through their social networks. There has been a power shift, and it sits with the consumer.

What does this mean for businesses? Risk and reward in equal measures.

These days, a single frustrated customer or a disgruntled employee can launch a media-grabbing campaign against a company before the business even hears of their complaint. It's what we call the democratisation of conversations and the implications for a brand can be profound.

MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA RISK AND REPUTATION

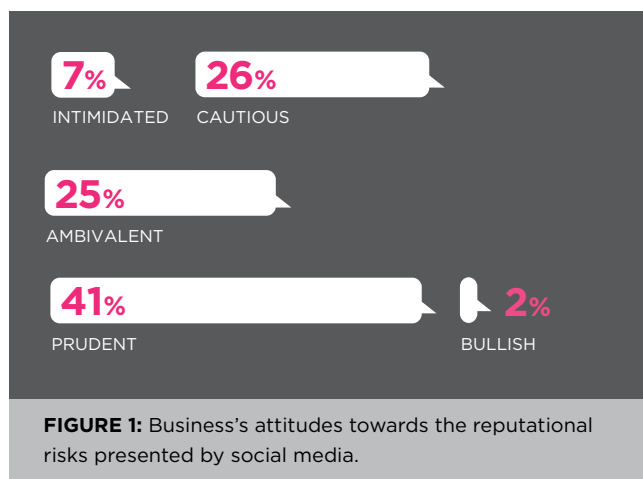
The Social Media Benchmark is an on-going research initiative exploring how marketers are adapting to, investing in and getting value from social media. In the third wave of this survey, we explore marketers' attitudes towards reputational risk and how their organisations are trying, or not, to mitigate this.

You can find out more about this research initiative, as well as see and share an infographic of these results, at www.smbenchmark.com/results, or read on for a summary of our views.

DON'T STOP, JUST BE READY

This isn't to suggest retrenchment in the face of a brand battering, we simply recommend readiness. Whether or not an organisation chooses to engage with customers, clients, consumers or citizens in a social space is irrelevant – the conversation will happen regardless. It's how prepared businesses are for it that will make all the difference.

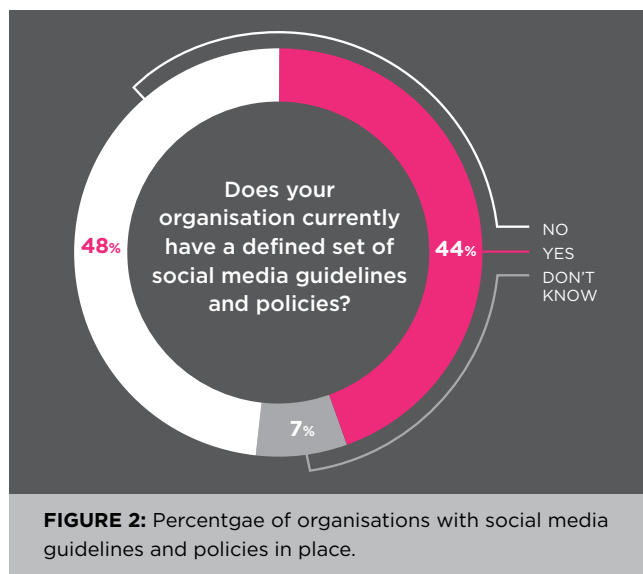
What's essential, as with any risk or vulnerability, is for an organisation to understand the issues and make the appropriate preparations to mitigate or avoid them.



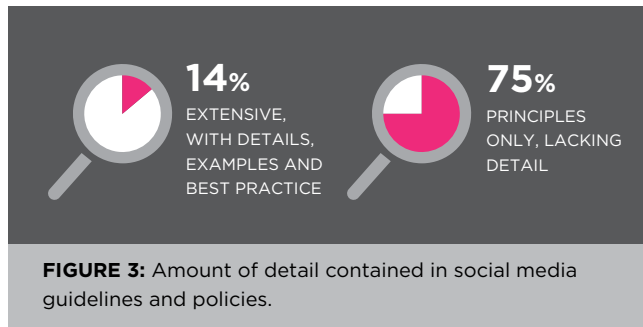
In this free flow of information and communication, an organisation can't hope to control the conversation or silence its critics, but it can make sure its own people – whether they work in marketing and communications or not – understand the role of social media in business and how to best represent an organisation's brand, beliefs and opinions online through well developed and internally communicated social media policies and guidelines.

RISK IS REAL, BUT...

In this latest research, readiness to address risk fell short of expectations – whilst 98 per cent of businesses acknowledge the risks and vulnerabilities of social media (figure 1), only 44 per cent of organisations currently have a defined set of social media guidelines and policies in place (figure 2).

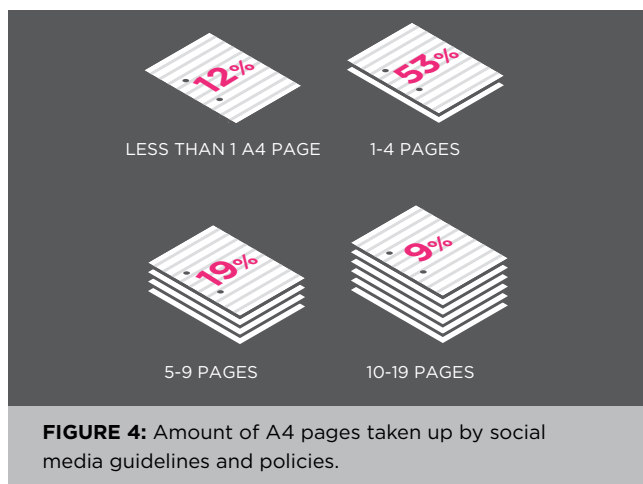


In a world where 'red tape' is often met with disdain, it's understandable that some may shy away from rules and procedure, however the potential damage that can stem from mismanagement of such a visible and fast-growing medium cannot be ignored.

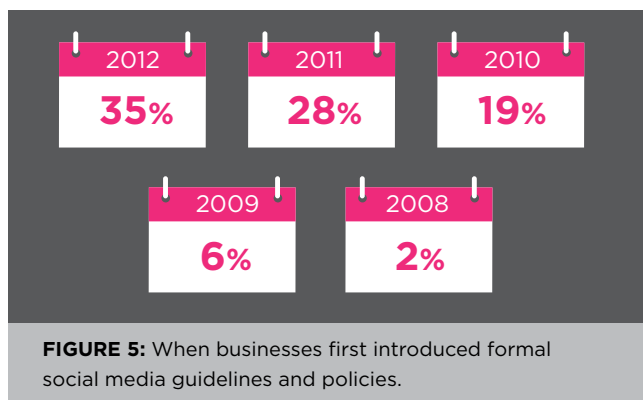


TOO LITTLE DETAIL?

Of those organisations who have invested time in creating social media guidelines and policies, our research reveals a surprisingly light-touch approach. Only 75 per cent of businesses (figure 3) say that their policies contain only 'principles' - high-level guidelines lacking detail, best practices or case studies - and 65 per cent say these policies fill less than four pages of A4 (figure 4).



What's more, 6 out of 10 organisations only introduced these policies as recently as 2011 or 2012, raising the question as to how road-tested or effective they may be given their relative newness (figure 5).

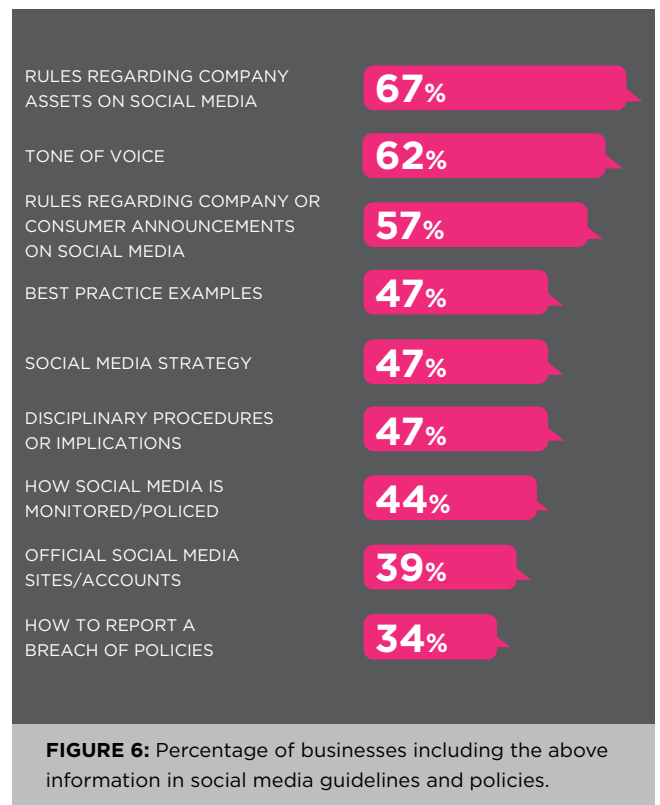


Whilst we advocate the use of guidelines rather than rigid or cumbersome rules, the fast-moving, ever-changing world of social media necessitates a level of support and guidance beyond merely 'pointers'.

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL

Even if you try to restrict it, social media permeates an organisation - it simply can't be isolated to one department or individual's responsibility.

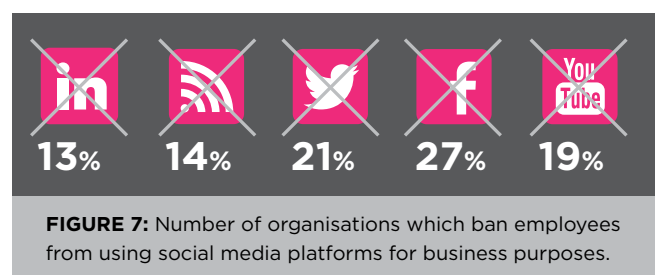
For guidelines and policies to be of use, instruction and context becomes key - to simply hope that all employees, irrespective of job function, might have the same level of knowledge of the digital world would be a mistake. What's clear from these results, however, is that more needs to be done to equip employees to act responsibly and appropriately.



That less than half of businesses include details of their social media strategy or official sites and accounts in guidelines is concerning, as is the shortage of good practice examples and rules regarding company announcements on social media.

DON'T GO THERE

Despite most businesses failing to guide employees on what they can do with social media, a surprisingly high number of businesses are telling them what they can't do, thus proactively restricting employees from using social media platforms for business purposes (figure 7).



INSTITUTIONALISING GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Social media guidelines aren't designed to be dry, restrictive documents which rarely see the light of day once published. Rather, they are intended to serve as a management tool to help mitigate reputational risk, and to enable businesses to derive value from their efforts and investments in social media.



FIGURE 8: Organisations which take the above approaches to embedding guidelines and policies into the business.

This latest research, however, reveals (figure 8) there's still work to be done to employ relatively low-cost methods of driving greater engagement with, and understanding of, social media guidelines – and to help their risk-management intentions to be more effective:

- Providing training and support to those expected to manage, implement or adhere to social media guidelines or policies can often be done at low or no cost by colleagues or agency partners.
- Enlisting a network of employees as 'ambassadors' across different teams, functions and locations, can help guidelines to permeate an organisation and benefit from the credibility of 'one of the team' advocating its contents.
- Less than half of organisations include social media guidelines and policies in employee inductions – concerning given the widely accepted benefits of 'catching people when they're fresh'.
- There are different views on whether to make adherence to social media guidelines and policies a contractual requirement: for some, the mantra of 'what gets measured, gets done' should only be used as a last resort, but for others it's an effective and quick way of focusing people's attention on what's important.

IT'S NOT [JUST] A MARKETING PROBLEM

A robust set of social media guidelines and policies can only be constructed by looking outside of the marketing team and utilising companywide expertise. Governance, oversight, training, crisis management and disciplinary processes are well-worn terms in HR, IT and legal departments, and it is through harnessing this experience that marketing and digital teams can create social media policies that will effectively defend a company's reputation and allow it to reap the benefits of social media.

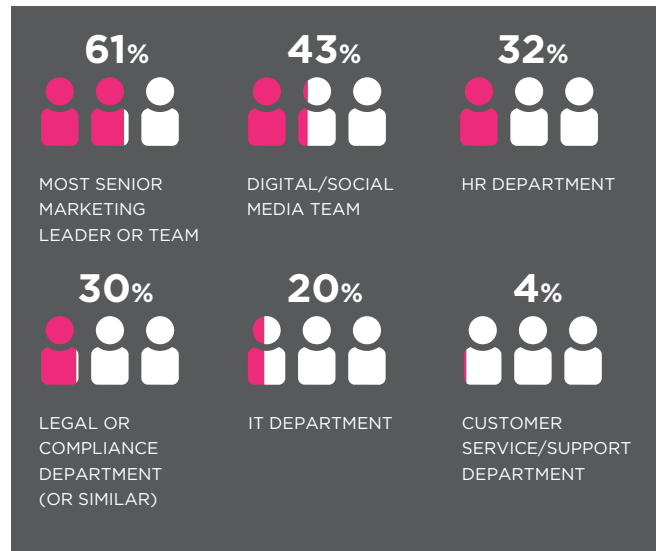


FIGURE 9: Functions involved in the creation of social media guidelines and policies.

However, our research reveals that organisations have, on the whole, taken a narrow approach to formulating social media policies and guidelines (figure 9). Of those surveyed, 60 per cent of marketers say their most senior marketers were party to their formulation, but only 32 per cent say their HR and only 30 per cent say their legal and compliance teams had any input, while less than 20 per cent of IT departments were involved.

Organisations need to break down silo walls: social media can't be restricted to any one part of an organisation; it can be championed, and pockets of deep expertise and skills will undoubtedly be needed. But if social media guidelines and policies are truly to be of value as a management tool, they will be stronger for bringing the right parties to the table in their creation, roll-out and on-going management.

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Businesses widely recognise the reputational risks presented by social media, with just 2% dismissive of the potential vulnerabilities.



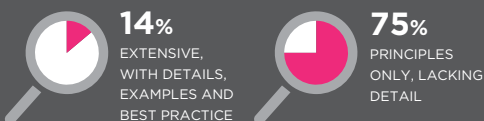
But only 44% organisations have any formal guidelines or policies to help mitigate these risks, leaving the majority of businesses with open exposure.



Where they exist, have we perhaps forgotten that they're intended to be used by people? **6 out of 10** say their guidelines are 'official and legal' or 'corporate and stuffy' in tone.



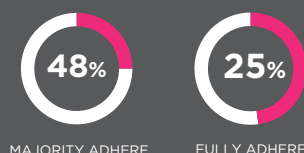
Not only do these guidelines and policies seem to lack a human touch, they are also light on content – the majority lacking detail, best practice or case studies.



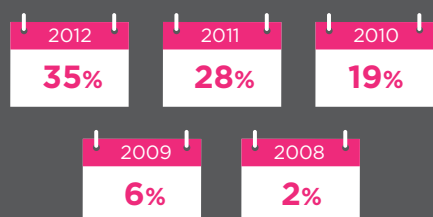
Little surprise then, that most fail to fill more than four pages of A4.



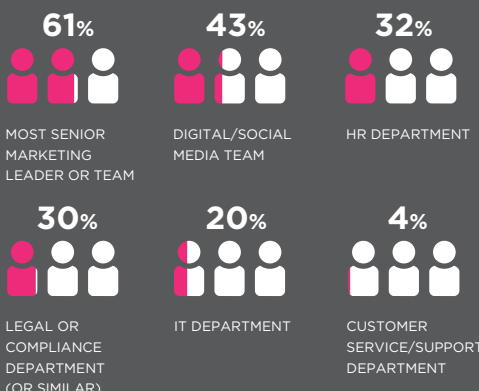
Positively, most organisations report good adherence to guidelines and policies internally but given their brevity, lack of detail and relative newness, does this really say much?



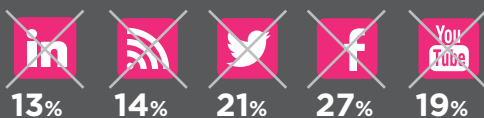
Of those organisations with guidelines in place, the majority were only introduced as recently as 2011 or 2012 – raising the question of how road-tested or effective they can be, given their relative newness.



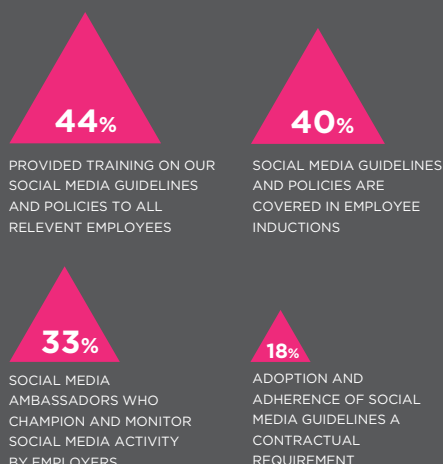
Worryingly, those with guidelines and policies in place seemed to have siloed their creation – HR, IT and legal teams lacking input.



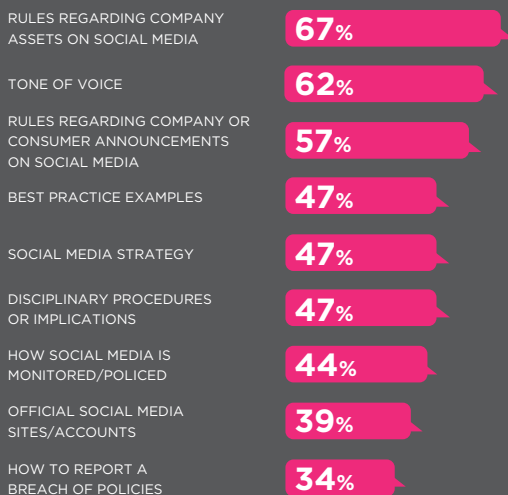
Despite a lack of detail on good practice, a surprising number of organisations ban employees from using platforms for business purposes.



Finally, efforts to support the use of social media guidelines and policies as an effective management tool are lacking – the lack of support through training and inductions requiring particular remedial attention.



The content within social media guidelines also raises interesting questions – a lack of clarity on making company announcements and a lack of detail about social media strategy in particular.



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MOBILE: GIMMICK OR GAME-CHANGER?

Marketers recognise the potential in mobile, but they're not quite ready to place a bet. Explore the latest findings.

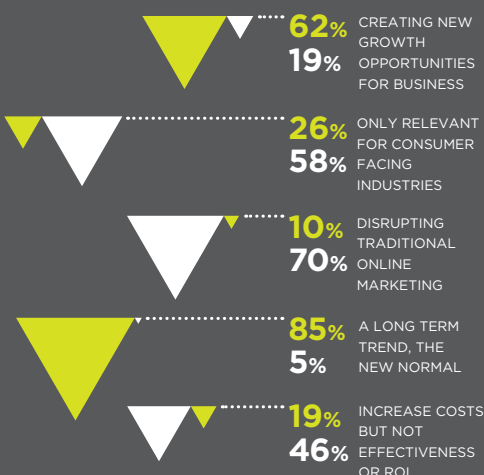
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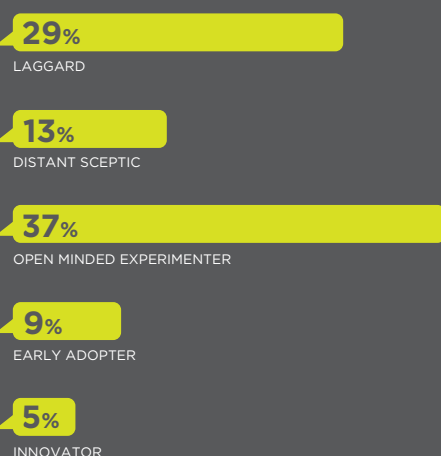
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Not only is mobile here to stay, businesses also recognise its disruptive nature and commercial potential.

■ AGREE
■ DISAGREE

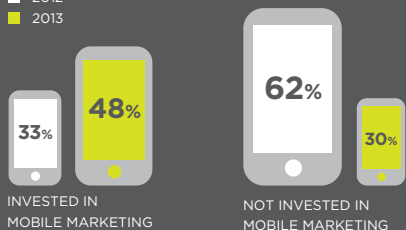


This recognition hasn't yet translated into action, however, with most businesses opting to be a 'follower', not an 'innovator'.

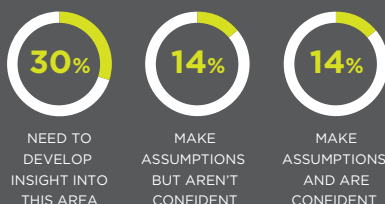


Whilst less than one third invested in mobile in 2012, it's on the rise for 2013.

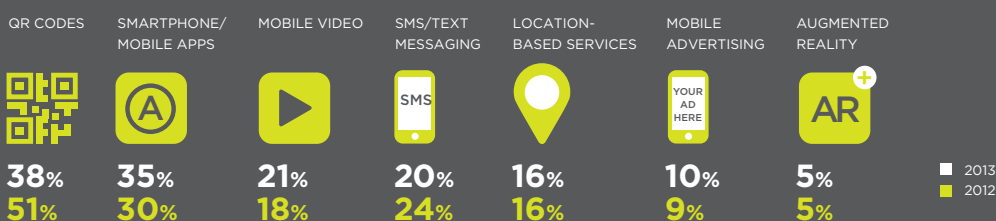
■ 2012
■ 2013



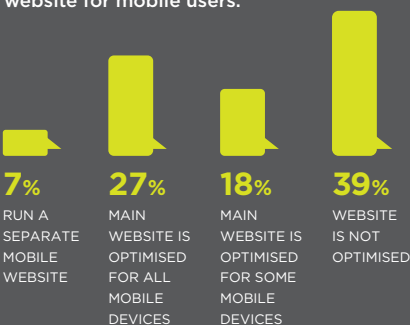
Despite the increased attention, however, a need for greater insight into the role and potential of mobile is clear.



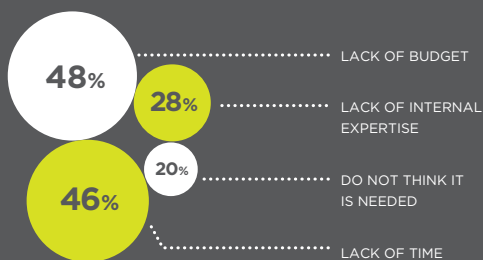
What's more, the use of different mobile tools is widely varied, with new applications such as augmented reality struggling to gain traction.



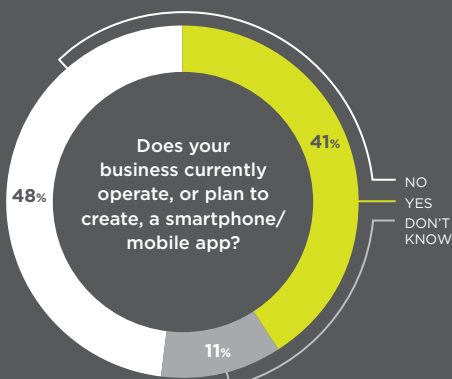
Despite wide acceptance that mobile is here to stay, worryingly few businesses have optimised their primary website for mobile users.



When asked why they hadn't optimised their website for mobile devices, a worrying 1 in 5 marketers said they don't think they need to.

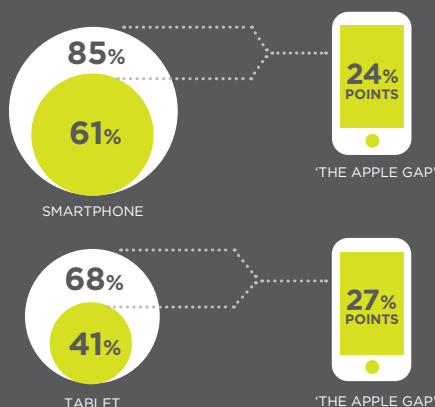


Less than half of businesses have invested in, or plan to create, a mobile app.



Of those businesses who have created an app, the 'Apple gap' emerges across both tablets and smartphones.

■ APPLE
■ ANDROID



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TESTING, LEARNING AND EXPERIMENTATION

Experimentation and 'test and learn' approaches to digital and social media are crucial – but are they being supported? Explore the latest findings.

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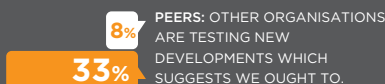
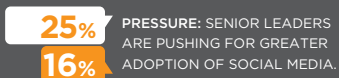
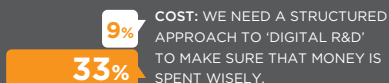
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Encouragingly, the majority of organisations are actively investing in experimentation with, and testing of, new digital and social media developments.

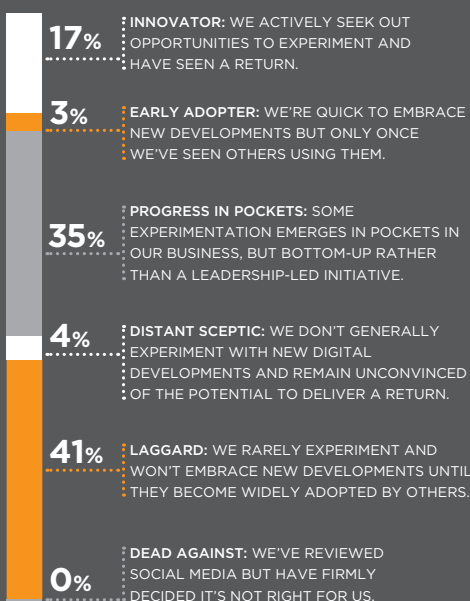


The pace of change in digital and social media is the primary driver of experimentation, shortly followed by budget pressures and cost justification.

■ LOW OR NO INFLUENCE ■ VERY INFLUENTIAL



But how this is put into practice isn't quite as robust a picture – most businesses would prefer to be a follower than an innovator, and many haven't institutionalised a 'test and learn' philosophy.



The top benefits of investing in experimentation and 'test and learn' efforts include improving keeping marketers up-to-date, being seen as 'cutting edge' and supporting an innovative culture.

■ LITTLE OR NO VALUE ■ SOME OR SIGNIFICANT VALUE



IT HELPS KEEP OUR MARKETERS FRESH AND UP TO DATE



IT HELPS POSITION US AS A 'CUTTING EDGE' ORGANISATION



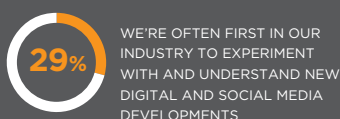
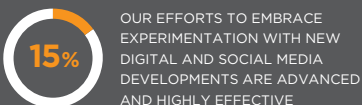
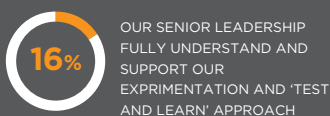
IT HELPS PROMOTE A CULTURE OF INNOVATION



But only **one in five** marketers say their business has a structured, disciplined approach to digital experimentation and ensuring an 'outcome' focus.

Unsurprisingly, only a quarter of marketers strongly agree that their senior team support an experimental approach to digital and social media and less than one in five believe such efforts are highly effective.

■ STRONGLY AGREE



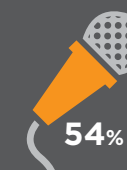
Of some concern, most businesses are focusing on relatively 'passive' ways to support experimentation with digital and social media.



WE SUBSCRIBE TO INDUSTRY MAGAZINES/RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS.



WE ATTEND CONFERENCES AND EVENTS TO LEARN NEW SKILLS AND SHARE BEST PRACTICE.

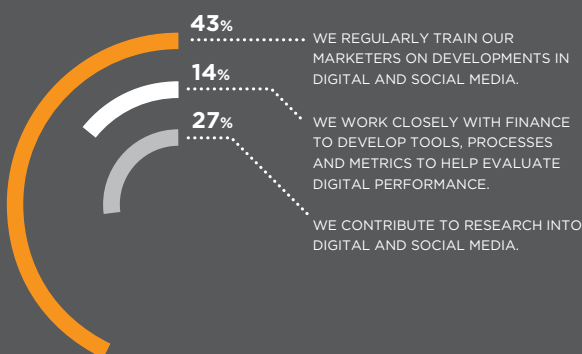


WE SUBSCRIBE TO INDUSTRY BODIES AND ATTEND THEIR EVENTS AND SEMINARS.



WE WORK CLOSELY WITH SPECIALIST AGENCIES/CONSULTANCIES.

Far fewer have invested in training their people, adapting legacy processes or collaborating with finance to develop appropriate digital metrics and KPIs.



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