PRCA

The Power of Communication

DIGITAL PR AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

2018.

GINGER COMMS

GINGER RESEARCH

STATS THAT STAND OUT

We are a UK-based independent research and content company offering global consultancy and stand out stats for PR and social campaigns.

Working with many of the UK's leading PR and social agencies, Ginger Research, part of the GingerComms group, run digital, social and newsgen content – helping agencies deliver better campaigns for their clients.

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INTRODUCTION

Danny Whatmough CMPRCA

Chairman, PRCA Digital Group, and Head of Social, EMEA, Weber Shandwick

A lot can happen in six years. And even more when we focus our attention on digital and social communication. Networks have come and gone. Audience behaviours have shifted. And we have entirely new channels, platforms, and technologies at our disposal.

When we started to delve into these digital PR trends six years ago, we knew that the trends over time would be the most fascinating. And that has certainly proven to be the case. Each year, some areas show growth, others shrink. And sometimes, these shifts don't happen where you'd expect.

This year, we ask questions about new technologies that, though small in their usage today, will have a big impact in years to come; AI and Voice are trends that are set to reimagine the way we communicate with audiences through digital channels. This year we lay the foundations to monitor and track their usage.

As ever with change, it's often the things that stay the same that need our focus and attention. There's still a lack of formal training and education in areas that really matter for our industry. We need to continue to do more when it comes to ROI and measurement. And, while there are promising signs in terms of budget provision and responsibility for management of digital activity, now is not a time to rest on our laurels.

Those who win will be those that continuously move in a forward direction. And that's hard. Especially when you consider what can happen in six years. But forward momentum is imperative to survive and thrive. Hopefully this report and the data within it can be your guide, providing a moment to reflect on where we've been, where we are, and what the future might hold. See you next year.

Ellie Glason MPRCA

Associate Director, Ginger Research

The PRCA's annual Digital PR and Communications Report is the eagerly awaited and insightful snapshot of how the industry is performing in the digital sphere.

This year we can see that – although the digital landscape continues to shift and evolve – the PR industry has now firmly taken up the reins on digital and social media content – a heartening if not unsurprising development.

PR commentators have been persuasive in their argument that – as PR is a communications discipline that hinges on showing and not selling, and earning not buying – PR professionals are best placed to develop and execute digital and social strategies and content.

Put simply, great PR is about great storytelling – and digital platforms require nuanced, engaging and relevant content – just as traditional media platforms do.

We set up Ginger Research and GingerComms four years ago with the aim of developing killer content for PR campaigns which was suitable for digital and social activation as well as traditional media outreach.

Our experience of working with both PR agencies and in-house teams tallies with the findings of this report – more of our clients are asking for digitally relevant content than ever before.

While there are still gaps in digital and social knowledge among PR professionals, and while some activity wanes (such as influencer work) and some flows faster (like social spend and video content), the overall picture is a positive one. PR departments are owning digital and social media activity – and long may this last.

ATTITUDES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

REASONS FOR TAKING BRANDS ONTO SOCIAL MEDIA:

When asked about the reasons behind their organisation's social media presence, most in-house respondents cite driving awareness (83%), driving a wider audience reach (65%), and increasing brand awareness (64%). This has largely remained unchanged since last year.

This year, we have seen the PR and communications department take clear ownership over digital and social media content. Over 57% of respondents say that the majority of their digital and social media content is produced by the PR and communications department. This represents a 12% increase since 2016 and 2017.

To drive awareness of what we do: 83%

To drive wider audience reach: 65%

To increase brand awareness: 64%

To use it as a customer services platform: 35% Down from 46%

REASONS FOR NOT USING DIGITAL/SOCIAL MEDIA MORE OFTEN:

The most cited responses for brands not using social media are lack of staff (49%) and lack of time (45%). Both have increased considerably since 2017. This is closely followed by lack of budget (30%). Fear of attack from campaigners continues for its second year to be a reason why 12% companies are not using social media more often.

Lack of staff: 49%

Lack of time: 45% Up from 34%

Lack of budget: 30%

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IN-HOUSE BUDGETS

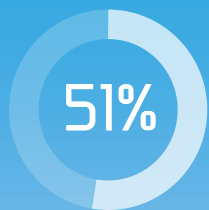
MAIN AREAS OF DIGITAL BUDGET SPEND:

Brands are more conservative about their plans to increase their spending on digital and social media than ever before in the history of the Digital PR and Communications Report. The mean percentage of spend on social media is 25.3%, down from 27%. 51% of respondents state their budgets will increase in the next 12 months, compared to 62% in 2016. 34% expect digital budgets will remain constant.

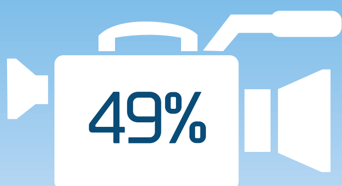
The three leading digital and social media areas on which brands spend their marketing budget are: paid social media activity, web design and build, and video-based content.

Paid social media activity:
55%

Web design and build:



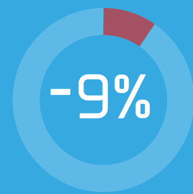
Video-based content:

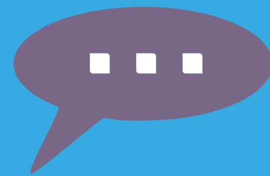


BUDGET CUTS:

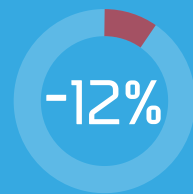
Blogger outreach and social influencer outreach have seen the biggest budget cuts in the last year, budgets in these areas have decreased by 9% and 12% respectively, despite the popularity of influencers more widely. We have seen similar budget cuts for text-based content (-11%) and image-based content (-10%).

Blogger outreach:





Social influencer outreach:



Text-based content:

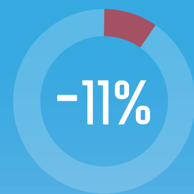
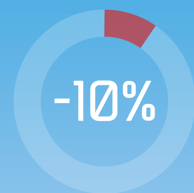
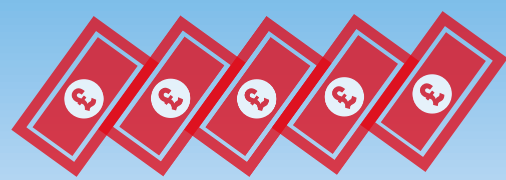


Image-based content:





PR AND COMMUNICATIONS AGENCIES AND HOW THEY ARE BEING USED:

The leading services that PR and communications agencies provide clients are online press release distribution (13%), text-based content (12%), online media relations (12%), and paid social media activity (12%).

The prevalent services that clients expect PR and communications agencies to deliver on are: blogger outreach (40%, down from 49%), social influencer outreach (40%, down from 56%), digital crisis management (36%, down from 51%), and online reputation management (36%, down from 51%).

Despite this expectation, only 4% of in-house respondents currently use their PR and communications agencies for digital crisis management.

CURRENT AREAS OF PR AND COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY SUPPORT, ACCORDING TO CLIENTS:

Online press release distribution: 13% Up from 8%

Text-based content: 12%

Online media outreach/relations: 12%

Paid social media activity: 12%

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BIGGEST CLIENT EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR AGENCIES:

Blogger outreach/engagement: 40%

Social influencer outreach/engagement: 40%

Digital crisis management: 36%

Online reputation management: 36%

MAIN DIGITAL SERVICE OFFERINGS FROM AGENCIES:

The leading digital services currently offered by agencies are online media outreach/relations (83%), text-based content (78%), and social network strategy (76%).

Online media outreach/relations: 83%

Text-based content: 78%

Social network strategy: 76%

PLATFORMS

IN-HOUSE

Unsurprisingly, Twitter (94%) and Facebook (72%) continue to be the most popular platforms amongst brands.

Snapchat and Pinterest have seen the biggest drops in usage by in-house teams, dropping to 10% and 3% respectively. Instagram's usage has increased to 56% this year, although this still represents a 9% drop since 2016.

Most used platforms:

Twitter: 94%

LinkedIn: 73%

Facebook: 72%

Instagram: 56%

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PLATFORMS

AGENCIES

For agencies, Instagram's popularity in their client work has increased from 59% to 70%. The leading platforms among agencies are Twitter (91%), Facebook (85%), and LinkedIn (85%).

Most used platforms:

Twitter: 91%

Facebook: 85%

Blogs: 72%

LinkedIn: 85%

Instagram: 70%

Up from: 59%

EDUCATION AND INSIGHT

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IN-HOUSE

The most highly-rated sources of social media education amongst in-house teams are external training courses (54%), conferences and events (48%), and expert blogs (39%).

When asked which areas they needed more education in, in-house respondents cited social influencer outreach (39%), social network strategy (24%), and monitoring and listening to customers (24%). The need for education in online community engagement has increased from 9% to 22%.

MAIN SOURCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING:

External training courses: 54% down 10%

Conferences and events: 48%

Expert blogs: 39%

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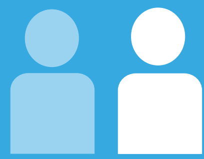
NEED FOR MORE EDUCATION/INSIGHT:

Social influencer outreach/engagement: 39% up 12%

Social network strategy: 24%



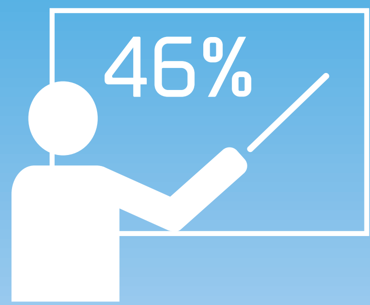
Monitoring and listening to customers: 24%

AGENCIES

Agencies get most of their training from expert blogs (49%), external training courses (46%), and conferences and events (39%).

MAIN SOURCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING:

Expert blogs: 49%



External training courses: 46%

Conferences and events: 39%

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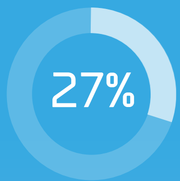
NEED FOR MORE EDUCATION/INSIGHT:

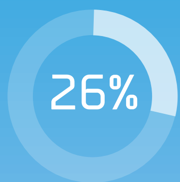
Agencies are seeking more education in Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality (39%), Chatbots (27%), and SEO (26%).

Augmented reality/virtual reality:

Chatbots:



SEO:



METHODOLOGY

Ginger Research partnered with PRCA to survey 384 agency and in-house PR professionals across business services, finance and banking, technology and telecoms, charities and NGOs, Government and other sectors. In-house respondents include directors of marketing/ comms, heads of marketing/ comms, head of press/PR. Agency respondents include CEOs, MDs, Partners and Directors.

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