

THE  
**FUTURE**  
OF SOCIAL

RESEARCH REPORT BY **socialfresh**

IN COLLABORATION WITH

**FIREBRAND GROUP**  Simply Measured

# ABOUT THE REPORT

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The insights and data in this report are based on a Social Fresh research survey of 551 digital marketers. We targeted social media brand marketers and decision makers.

The goal for this report is to explore how social marketing budgets and resources are being utilized today and in the future. There are clear signs that social media continues to mature as an industry and marketing specialty. Positive ROI is strong, social advertising use is high, hiring is robust across many roles, and content marketing efforts are diverse (including many brands investing in video).

Purchase the premium version of the report at [socialfresh.com/fullreport](http://socialfresh.com/fullreport).

## AUTHORS

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**JASON KEATH** **CEO - SOCIAL FRESH** @JASONKEATH

As the Founder and CEO of Social Fresh, Jason Keath curates some of the smartest voices in marketing. He has trained digital marketers at over 200 Fortune 500 companies. He is cohost of the Social Toolkit Podcast and editor of SocialMediaCurrent.com, a daily news source for social media professionals.



**JEREMY GOLDMAN** **CEO - FIREBRAND GROUP** @JEREMARKETER

Jeremy Goldman is the founder and CEO of Firebrand Group, an award-winning futureproofing firm focused on building powerful brands through innovative digital marketing, and counts Unilever, L'Oréal, Consumer Reports, and Movado among his clientele.

# METHODOLOGY

- 551 Online surveys
- **SOURCE:** Respondents were reached by Social Fresh, Firebrand Group, Simply Measured, with targeted outreach through LinkedIn, Twitter, and Email
- **FIELD DATES:** March 8-17 2016
- **QUALIFYING CRITERIA:** Digital marketers whose responsibilities include social media marketing

## RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

### COMPANY TYPE

BRAND — 64%  
AGENCY — 30%  
VENDOR — 6%

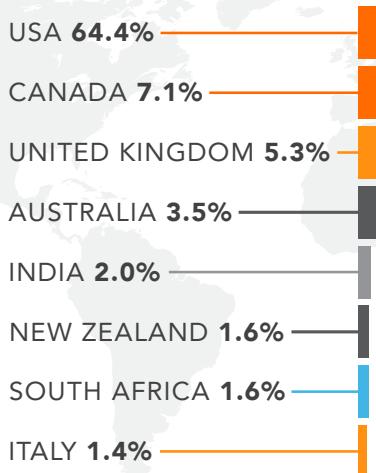
### ROLE SENIORITY

MANAGER — 41%  
DIRECTOR/VP — 34%  
C-LEVEL — 13%  
OWNER/FOUNDER — 7%  
ENTRY LEVEL — 5%

## TOP BRAND INDUSTRIES



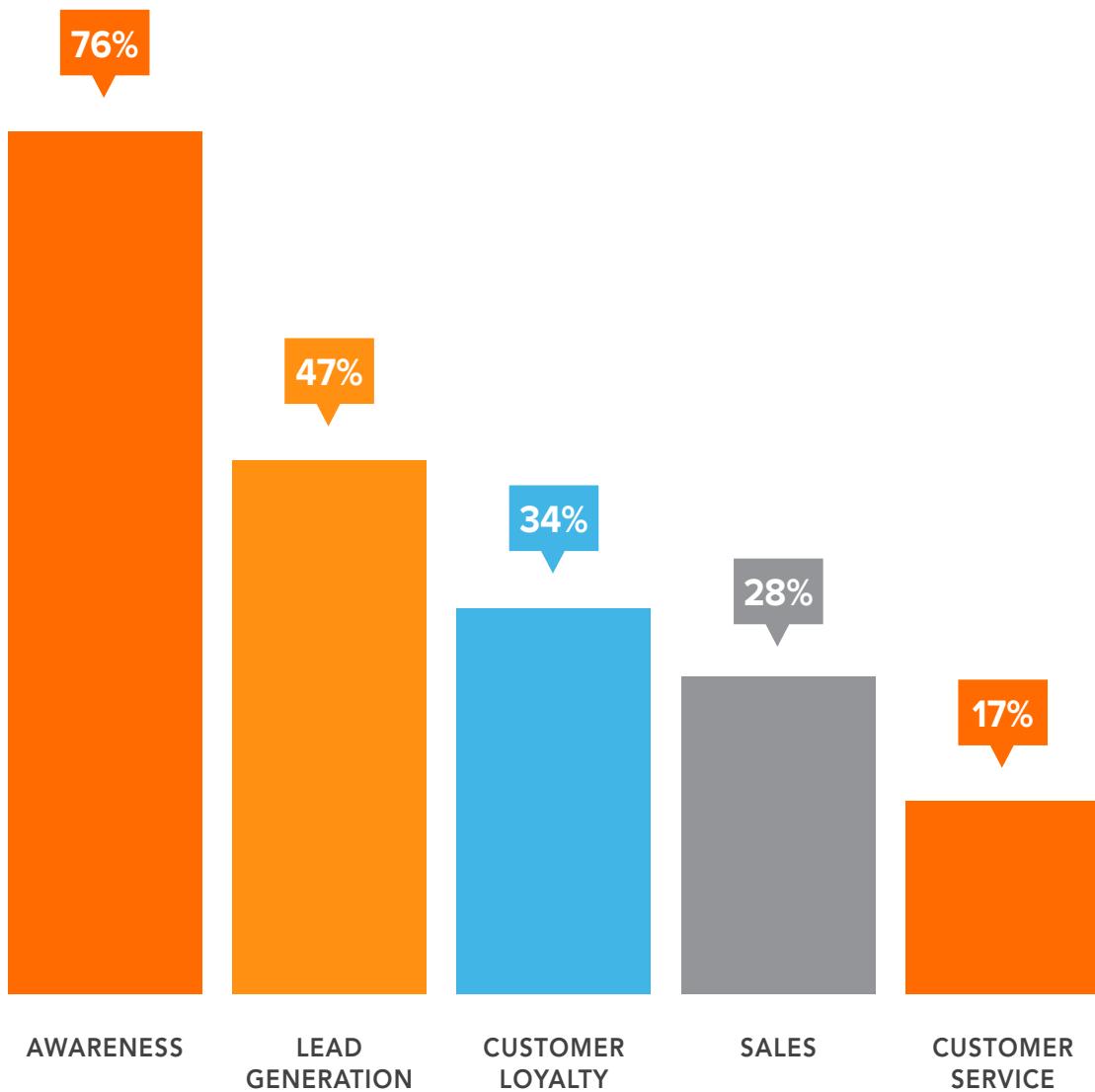
## GEOGRAPHY - COUNTRY



# SOCIAL MEDIA GOALS

## WHAT ARE YOUR TOP SOCIAL MEDIA GOALS?

N=544



## AWARENESS IS THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA GOAL BY FAR

Awareness was the most oft-cited goal from our respondents, with more than three out of four executives naming that as a top social media priority.

"The more each brand focuses on awareness, the more noise we'll have in social, and it's already noisy."



JASON ENG  
DIGITAL MARKETING  
COMMUNITY LEADER, IBM



**Sameer Kazi, CEO of Simply Measured,** had a similar response to the popularity of Awareness as a social media goal. "For social to become a true signal, a real tactic, it cannot merely reside at the top of the funnel. All companies should demand more clarity about the role that social plays in driving those conversion metrics that matter most."

## Conversion Goals Should Be A Larger Focus

47% listed lead generation as a top social media goal and 28% listed sales. These are the numbers that provide us the most clarity to how social media is supporting the growth of a business, and yet they are not supported by even a majority of respondents.

One caveat that may be affecting this is that some businesses have less opportunity to measure lead generation or sales for a variety of reasons. Many consumer brands simply are not able to track sales and may not use lead generation as a core element of their marketing. That definitely affects these numbers out of the starting gate.

And yet, tracking form conversions and hard sales are still the clearest metrics we can garner from social media efforts.

"Instead of looking at social as a tactic for one part of the funnel, marketers should measure how social impacts each step of the buyer's journey, and use that insight as a map to inform tactics and improve results."



**ADAM SCHOENFELD**  
CPO, SIMPLY MEASURED



"Every business should measure the conversion of their social media marketing," said **Jason Keath, Founder and CEO of Social Fresh Conference.** "Some businesses have a barrier to measuring conversion because they are not an ecommerce business or they do not own the stores where their products are sold, but there is always a way."

"Even if your primary social media goal is not a sale, but focuses on awareness or loyalty or customer service, there are metrics you can put in place that help you define a conversion of those goal. You just might have to spend a little more time and creativity on the strategy side to put that measurement system in place."



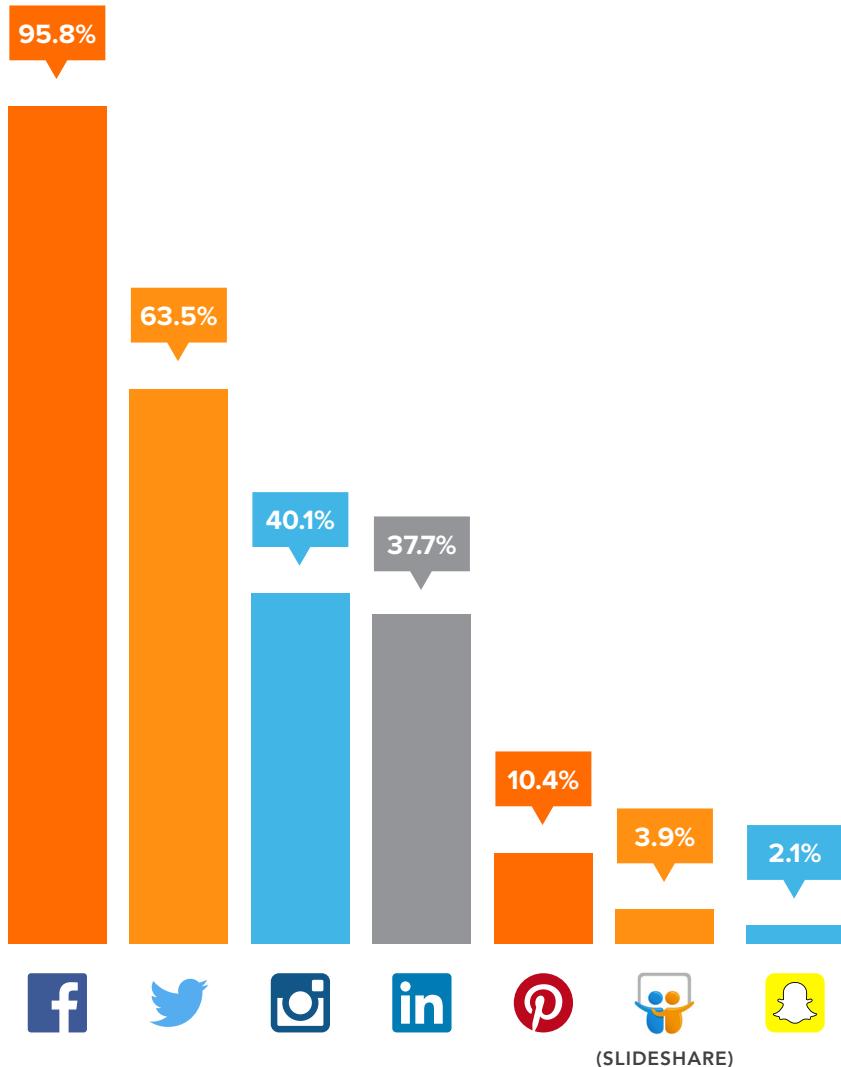
JAY BAER  
PRESIDENT  
CONVINCE AND CONVERT

"The people most likely to pay attention to your brand in social are current customers. Customer loyalty and customer service objectives are vastly under-embraced. Embrace that organic social functions more like an email newsletter, and think strategically about how you can use social to take people who like you and make them love you."

## WHAT SOCIAL NETWORKS PRODUCED THE BEST

ROI IN THE PAST YEAR?

N=456, SELECT UP TO THREE



"I keep on hearing how Facebook is slowly dying, but apparently that's not the case."



JASON ENG  
DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNITY LEADER,  
IBM

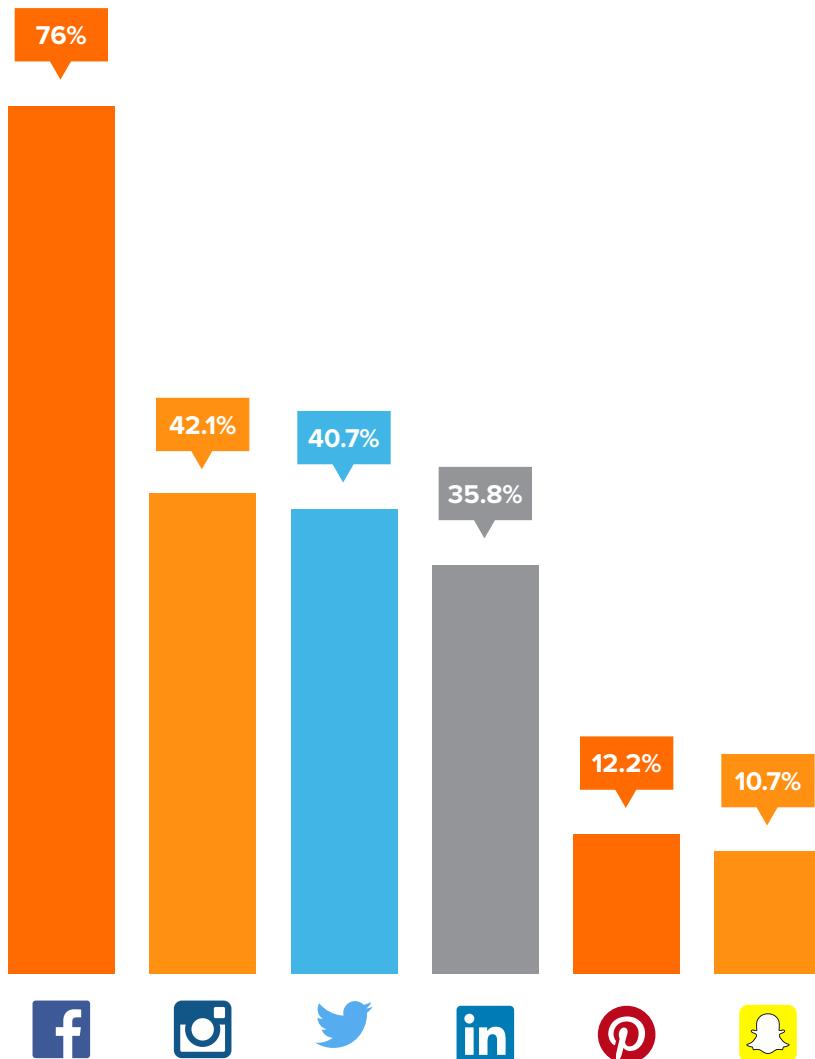
IT'S A COMMON REFRAIN IN THE MEDIA AND ON MARKETING BLOGS THAT FACEBOOK IS DEAD (OR DYING) WHEN IT COMES TO BUSINESS SUCCESS.

However, our survey results reaffirm that virtually all digital marketers believe Facebook to be essential to social media marketing success. **95.8% of respondents included Facebook as one of their top 3 social networks for ROI.**

The methods for how marketers get results from Facebook have and will change, but the world's largest social network continues to create the future of the social marketing industry.

## WHICH SOCIAL NETWORKS DO YOU PLAN TO INVEST IN MOST OVER THE NEXT YEAR?

N=519, SELECT ALL THAT APPLY



### DIGITAL MARKETERS PLAN TO INVEST IN THE PLATFORMS THEY ALREADY CONSIDER TO BE USEFUL.

This is clear because the 4 most popular social networks for ROI (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) are also the most popular for future investment. Meanwhile, Pinterest and Snapchat are seeing limited future investment, comparatively.

“Snapchat. It’s the new bright-and-shiny social network, but I still think it’s lacking from a brand marketing point of view. The analytics aren’t there yet and it’s a difficult channel to show ROI.”



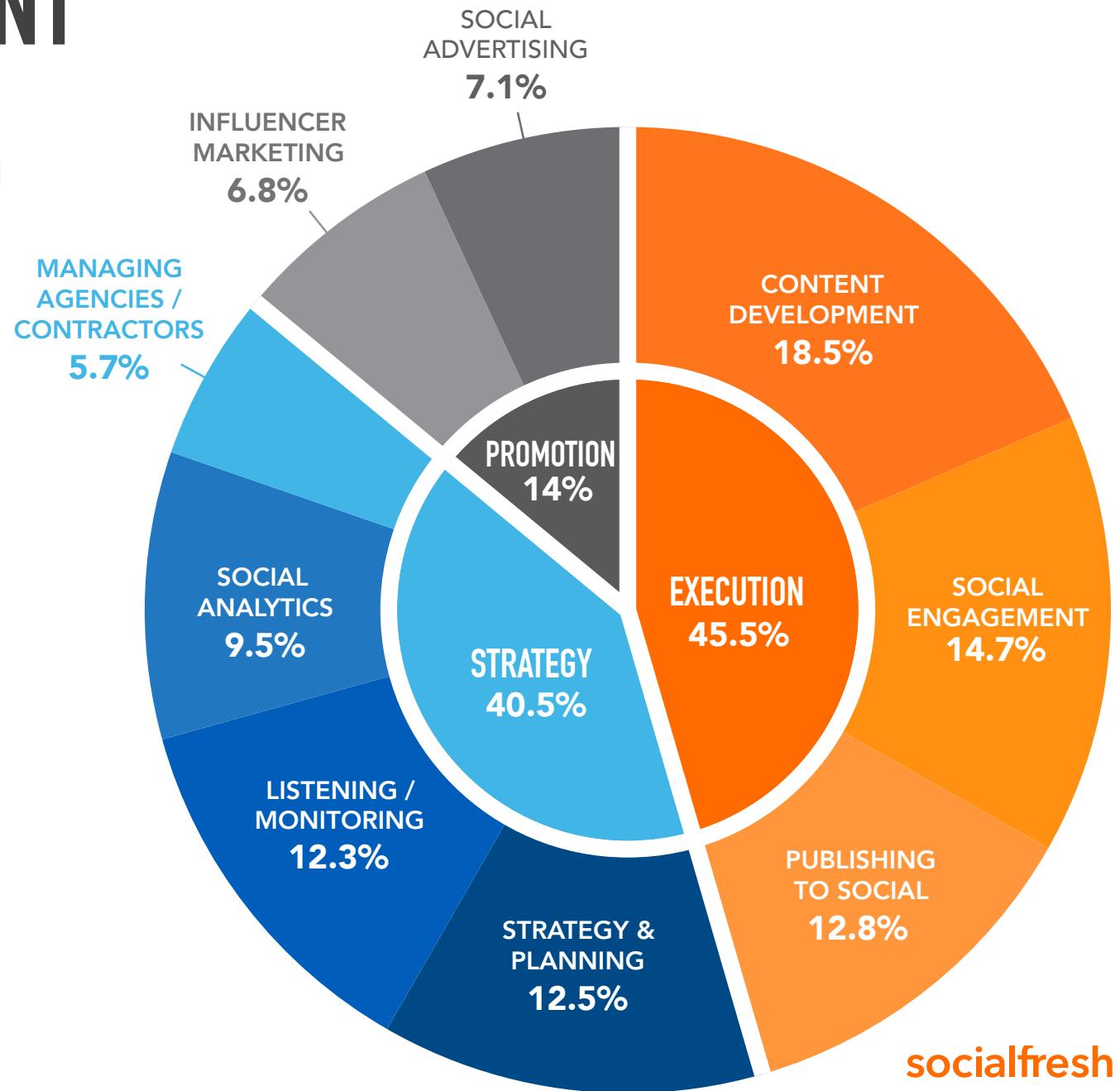
KARIANNE STINSON  
MARKETING MANAGER,  
MICROSOFT

Instagram rose from the 3rd most popular answer for our ROI question to the 2nd most popular answer for where respondents plan to spend the most money in the next year.

# TIME SPENT

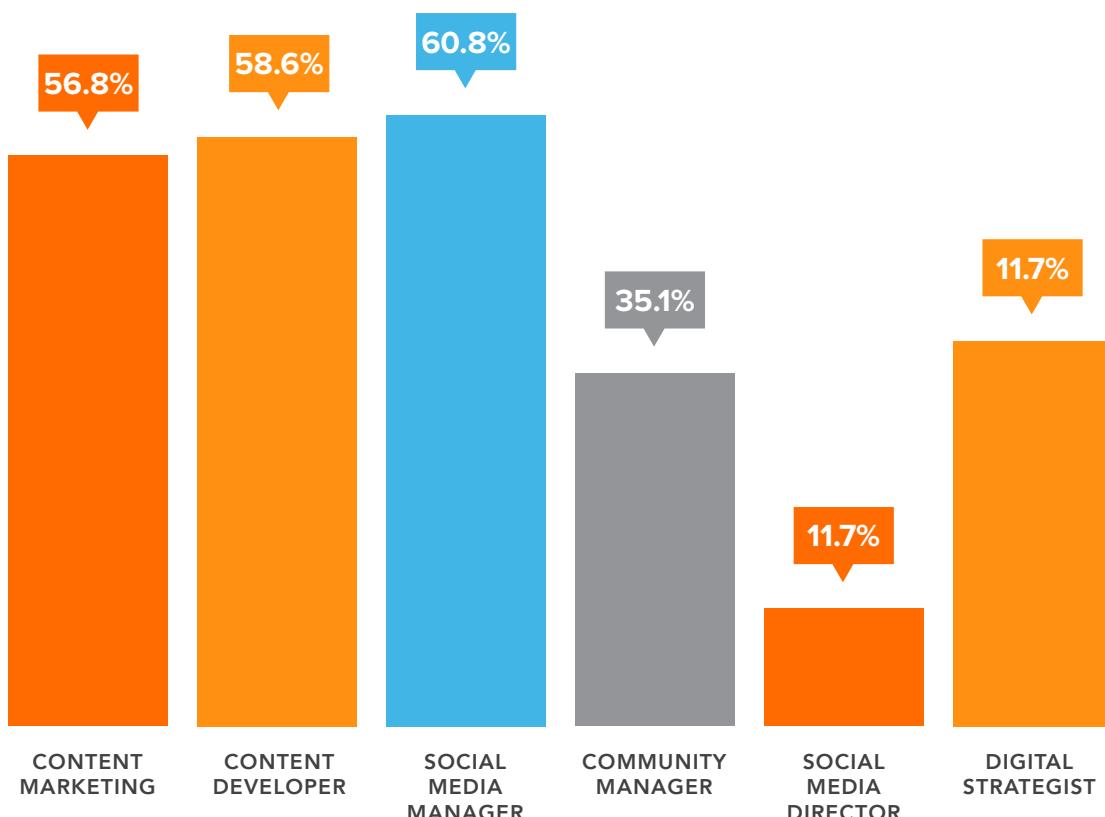
HOW MUCH OF YOUR TEAM'S DAY IS SPENT ON THE FOLLOWING TASKS?

N=522



## WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON ROLES BEING HIRED FOR?

N=222



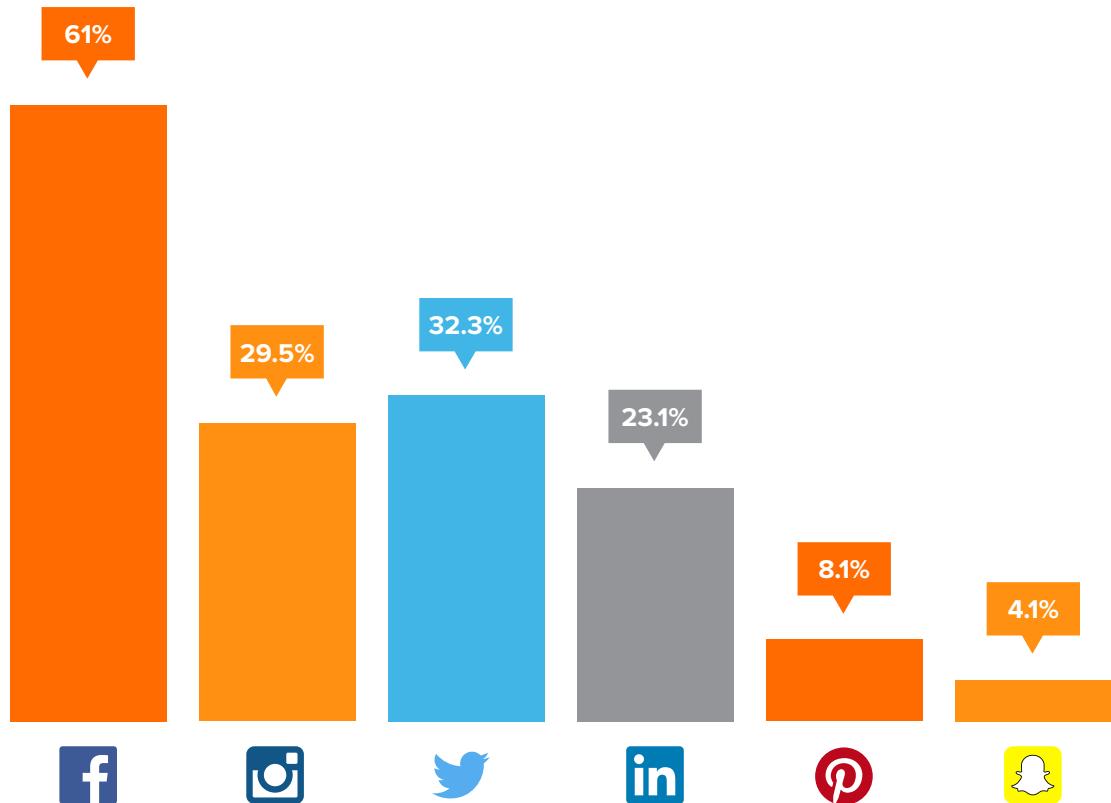
**THERE IS A HIRING FOCUS ON CONTENT, ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING, AS COMPANIES SEEK TO PUSH MORE VOLUME IN THEIR SOCIAL EFFORTS.**

The lower number of hirings for social media directors and digital strategists - relative to that of developers and managers - demonstrates brands' belief that they already have a solid approach, and mostly want to add more to their output.

There were 60% more respondents interested in hiring someone in Content Marketing or Content Developer, as opposed to a Social Media Manager or Director. Clearly, the driver of social media marketing in the future is content creation.

# WHAT SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE YOU ADVERTISING ON AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH?

N=454



"It's wild to see how quickly Instagram has grown as an important channel for advertisers. Twitter's offering has been around for years longer, but Instagram is on pace to overshadow it in less than 1 year from coming out of beta."



JUSTIN KISTNER  
VP OF PRODUCT, MIXPO

## WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT ARE YOU CREATING AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH?

N=551

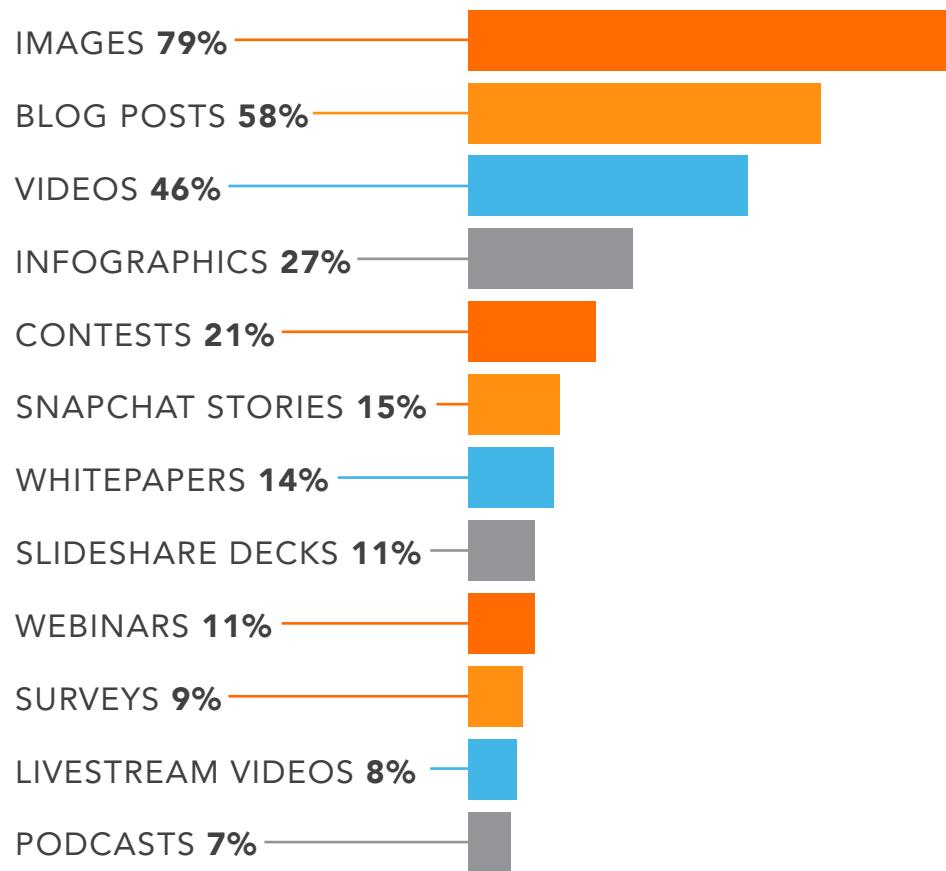


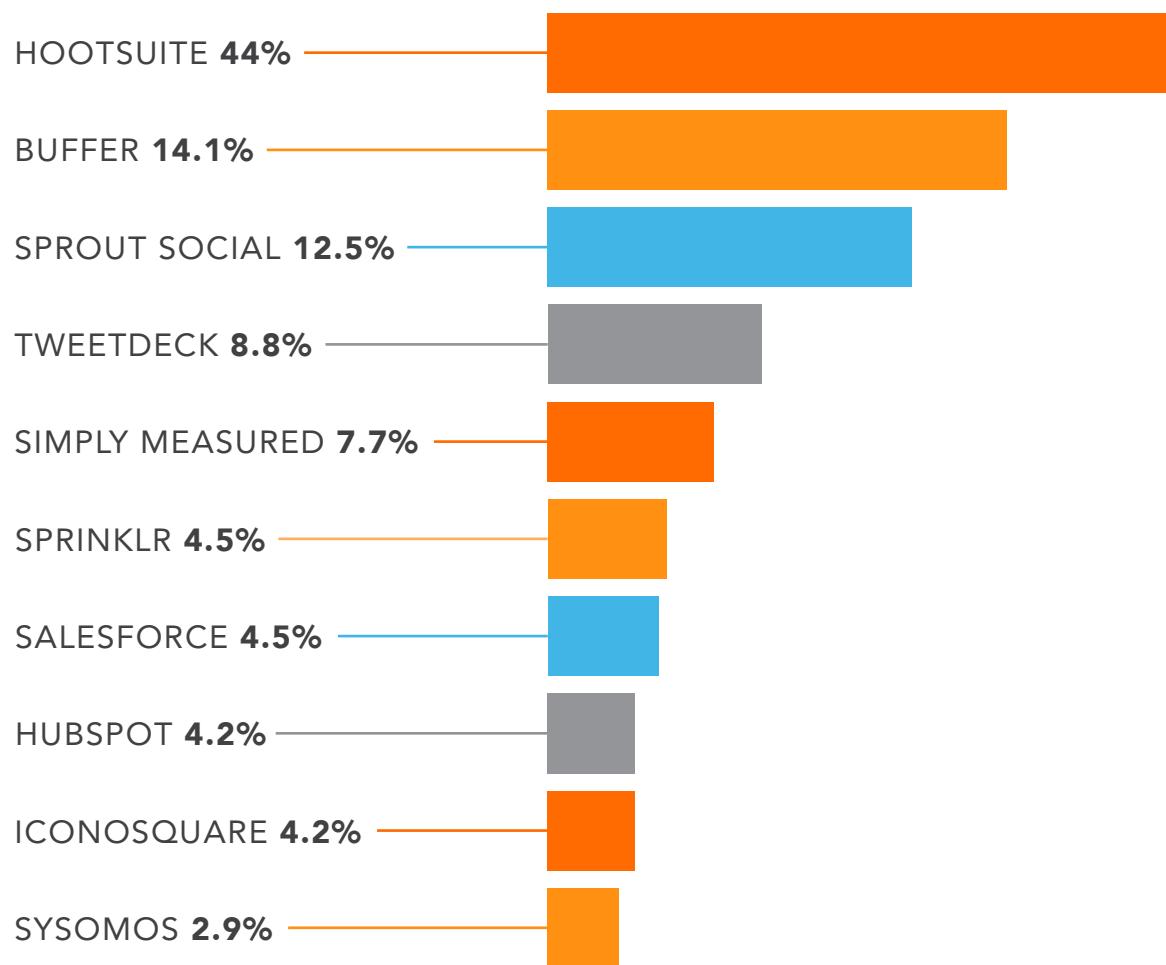
Image-based posts remain the most popular option for content, and for good reason. They are familiar, easily digestible, and the formats with which content creators are most comfortable.

Blog posts (58.1%) and videos (45.7%) were the second and third most popular types of content to be produced by respondents on a monthly basis.

Infographics, fourth most popular, have a strong presence in these results as well, helping brands to present data in a simple and impactful way.

## MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA SOFTWARE

N=377

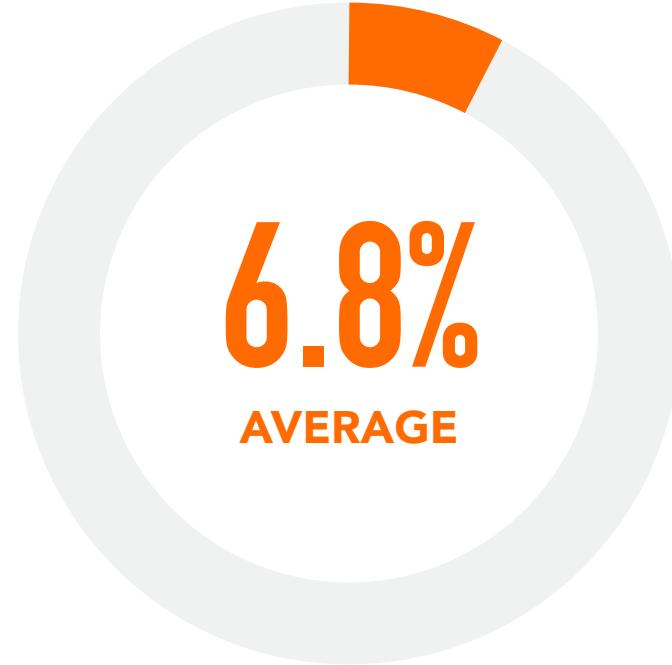


**Hootsuite and Buffer** are by far the most popular freemium tools available to social marketers. They both have a massive awareness in the industry and utilize their free features as a strong marketing funnel. Both also continue to grow their feature-set (free and paid), their customer revenue, and investment. Hootsuite especially showed up with the largest share of social media software use in the industry, with almost 44% of respondents listing the app.

**Sprout Social** was the most popular paid software tool listed by respondents, third overall, at 12.5%. Tweetdeck, popular amongst Twitter 'superusers' came in as the fourth most popular software overall.

**Simply Measured** was the top result for listening and monitoring focused software, and fifth overall at 7.7%.

## HOW MUCH OF YOUR DAY DO YOU AND YOUR TEAM SPEND ON INFLUENCER MARKETING?



**INFLUENCER MARKETING RECEIVED THE LOWEST AVERAGE BUDGET AND NEXT TO LOWEST RESULTS FOR TIME SPENT.** This is less of a reflection of the importance of influencer marketing and more of a suggestion at the complexity of what is involved in running an influencer program.

We reached out to **Nicole D'Alonzo, founder of Victory Rituals** for comment on some of our Influencer Marketing focused results. She was not surprised to see influencer marketing with a low budget and lower hour numbers compared to other industry tasks. She noted that "Agencies are the best equipped to manage influencer marketing projects."



Nicole added that the "**logistics and laws around influencer marketing are complex and capricious.** It not only requires strong networks and community but also constant knowledge sharing. Agencies, when compared to brands, have entire teams devoted to staying on top of changing platform rules and regulations that are essential to influencer marketing success."

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to those who filled out our survey. And industry experts who provided comments on the data we collected.

## ABOUT SOCIAL FRESH

Social Fresh is a social media training and education company. We are a community of industry leaders, disruptors, and strategists. We know that inspiration is essential to education and everyone has the capacity to be more creative. SocialFresh.com and Social Fresh Conference provide actionable marketing resources to help businesses drive ROI. Attendees return each year for high-level content and the best networking in the industry.

**LEARN MORE** at [www.socialfresh.com](http://www.socialfresh.com)



## ABOUT FIREBRAND GROUP

We are an NYC-based collective of experienced strategists, creatives, marketers, and storytellers. We provide beautiful and forward-thinking solutions to business objectives. Firebrand Group brings an insightful approach to innovative global brands and startups alike. Our tendency to ask "what if" allows us to break new ground with each and every one of our partners.

**LEARN MORE** at [www.firebrandgroup.com](http://www.firebrandgroup.com)



## ABOUT SIMPLY MEASURED

Simply Measured is the most complete social analytics solution, empowering marketers with unmatched access to their social data to more clearly define their social strategy and optimize their tactics for maximum impact.

**LEARN MORE** at [www.simplymeasured.com](http://www.simplymeasured.com)



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