

The 2025 Impact of Social Media Marketing

**Proving Social's
Business Value**



sproutsocial

Leaders know social media leads to ROI, but say their teams *can't prove it*

Most leaders are confident social media can influence the entire customer journey—even if their metrics don't show it yet.

Which puts social media marketers under increased pressure to close attribution gaps and tell more compelling data stories.

More than two-thirds of marketing leaders are confident that social media generates brand awareness. Yet, as we near peak saturation across networks and face a tumultuous socio-economic climate, top of funnel metrics like awareness mean less.

These leaders also believe that social drives customer acquisition, customer loyalty and revenue. Though they aren't as confident in their *own team's* ability to tie social to those outcomes. Most blame their tech stack for underwhelming data, but are also disappointed by the metrics that are reported on.

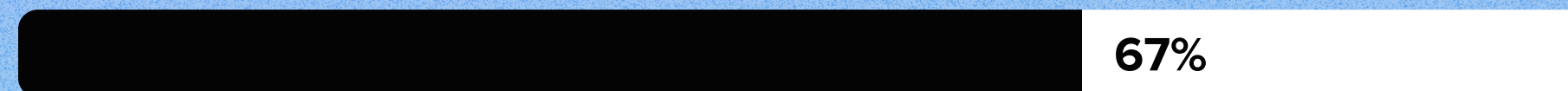


MARKETING LEADERS SAY:

“Social media drives ____.”



Awareness



Customer acquisition



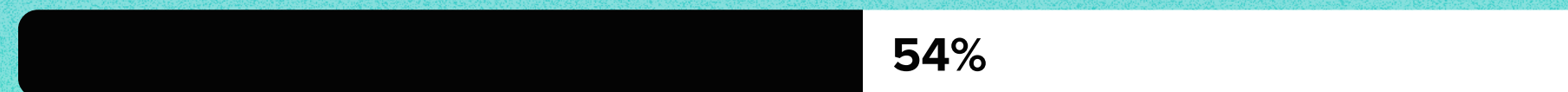
Customer loyalty



Revenue



R&D / Decision making



Without a tangible grasp of social ROI, leaders are less likely to grant teams autonomy. Though strides have been made in resourcing, social teams still don't feel like leaders trust them. Social marketers need the right tools and sophisticated integrations, but they also need skills and rituals that enable them to evangelize the power of social insights.

For our 2025 Impact of Social Media Report, we surveyed 1,200 marketing leaders from around the globe to find out what separates teams who can prove social ROI from those who can't. We examined what social marketers can do to make sure their reporting infrastructure prioritizes the right metrics, and how high impact social data can provide value company-wide.

The *most meaningful* metrics & measurement

Despite their confidence in social's impact, leaders are relatively split on whether or not their team knows how to drive and measure social efforts that reach business goals.

Less than half (44%) rate their social team at the expert level when it comes to measuring the business impact of social. They aren't seeing the metrics that matter most—to them or to other teams across the company.



Defining return on investment (ROI)

Marketing teams measure social media returns by looking at engagement and conversion rates—even when sharing the data with leaders outside of marketing. But marketing leaders indicate that they want to see more competitor and audience insights, performance data contextualized with data from innovative brands, and intel into the latest network updates.

There’s an instinctual understanding that social drives more than brand awareness—and that awareness alone doesn’t generate ROI—but teams don’t have the infrastructure to prove it.

// Practitioner takeaway

Don’t just drop dashboards. Craft short, digestible narratives around your reports—showing what happened, why it matters and what action you recommend next. The more you can translate raw metrics into business-relevant stories, the more trust you’ll earn from your entire company.

How does your social media team define social ROI?

Engagement



Conversion



Revenue



Efficiency



Discoverability



Social data is siloed with digital marketers

Currently, digital marketing teams are most likely to use social data to inform their decisions—by a long shot. But leaders say they want teams like customer experience and success, customer care and support, and business development to use social insights to drive their decisions, too. For that to happen, teams need to democratize access to social and share reports that go beyond engagements and conversions.

// Practitioner takeaway

Create tailored monthly or quarterly social intel briefs for your customer service, R&D and PR teams that highlight actionable trends, feedback or competitor insights. Set up a standing 30-minute sync with one cross-functional partner each month to share findings and build relationships.

Marketing leaders *want* these departments to use social insights

- 71% Digital marketing
- 58% Customer experience & success
- 49% Customer care & support
- 49% Business development
- 44% Sales
- 38% Operations
- 38% Product / Research & development
- 37% Communications & PR
- 18% HR



Reporting workflows create friction

Over half of all marketing leaders say incompatibility between their social media management tools and the rest of their marketing tech stack is the #1 reason they aren't able to understand social's impact on their business. They also cite how difficult it is to set up reliable attribution models and the lack of internal knowledge about connecting social efforts to business goals.

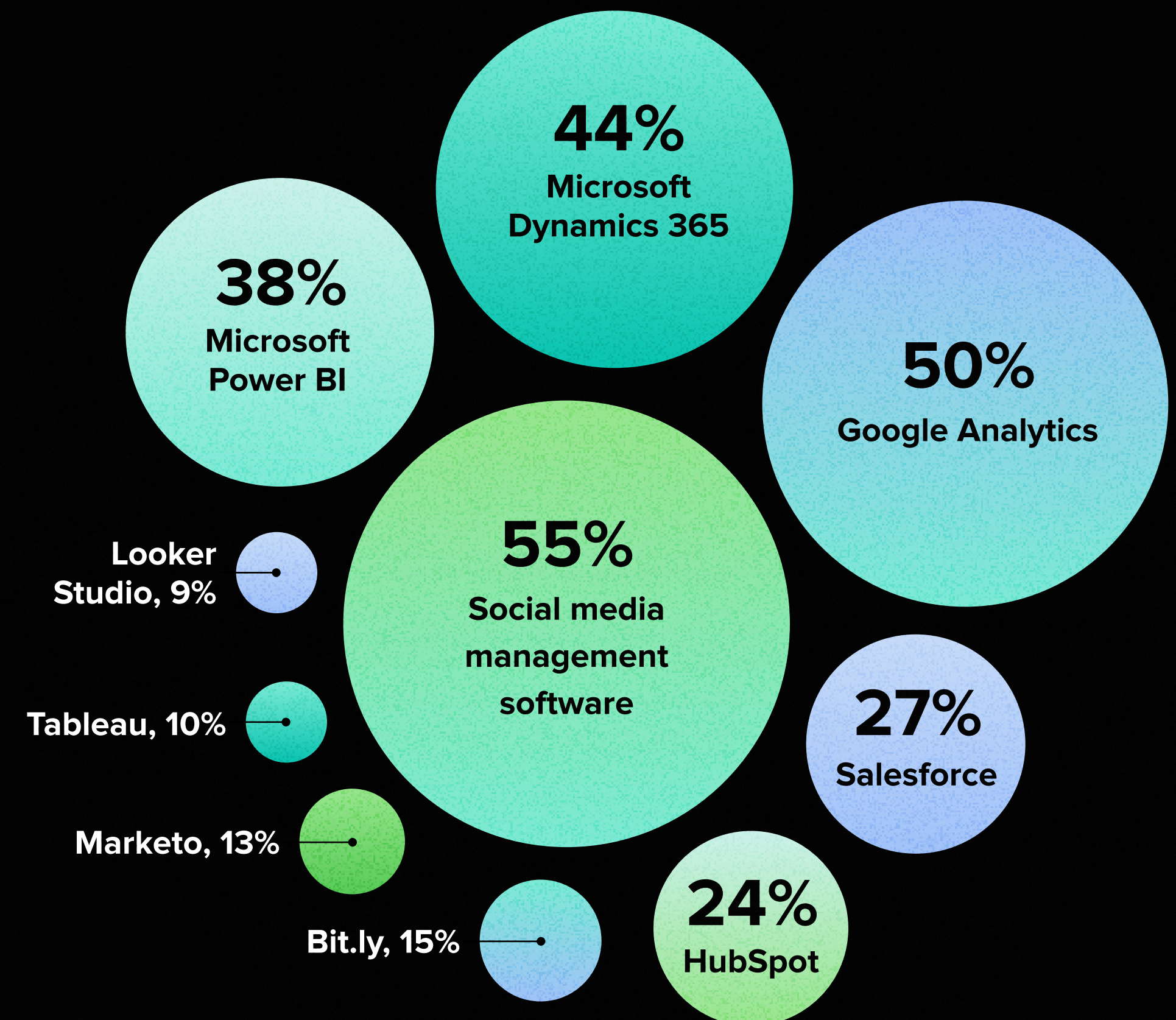
Less than half of all marketing leaders say their teams embed social data into any form of CRM (customer relationship management) software.

Which puts social marketers in a precarious catch-22. They need to develop the skills to share cross-functional insights. But they also need tools that surface compelling data and integrate with other sources, and leaders who ensure this integration is at the top of their analytics' teams priority list.

// Practitioner takeaway

To go beyond awareness and engagement, you need tools that allow you to map social activity to revenue. Working natively in the networks won't cut it—neither will outdated attribution models or low sophistication integrations. If full attribution isn't realistic yet, pick one campaign or initiative to connect to CRM or web analytics data and use that as a proof of concept.

Tools social media teams currently use to measure performance



3 ways expert teams work differently

44% of the marketing leaders we surveyed say their teams were experts at measuring social media's impact on their business. The data reveals that these expert teams are likely to track their efficiency, use social media management tools and cross-functional reporting software, and have their leaders' confidence in their ability to perform. These findings suggest that social data sophistication requires investment, intention and prioritization.

However, even these teams face challenges integrating social data with the rest of their tech stack, suggesting there's still room for most brands to improve their data operations.

ROI = Revenue and efficiency

Expert teams are significantly more likely to use revenue and efficiency metrics to measure ROI.

Correlation between tech adoption and data sophistication

58% of expert teams use social media management software, more than emerging or evolving teams. They're also more likely to rely on link tracking and marketing automation systems, and less likely to struggle with setting up reliable attribution models.

Confidence in overarching business impact

Unsurprisingly, 72% of leaders whose teams are experts at measuring social media's impact say their teams are also experts at understanding how to drive more business impact. The more data (and data literacy) teams have, the more strategic they become.

What social media professionals are saying

Canva

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“We are integrating social data into the larger marketing mix by analyzing community conversations on social to learn more about what our audience needs from our product. By tracking all of these conversations in Sprout, we’re able to tag thousands of incoming messages, and eventually close the loop with our community and show them we listened. We launched all of our new products this year based on user feedback. We’ve come a long way in thinking about how social media shifts the business forward.”

Shirley Tat, Global Head of Social, Canva

Stats by Tag

💡	#feature_request	535	↗	7%
💡	#product_feedback	405	↗	5%
💡	#customer_success	210	↗	9%

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“We define ROI with the ratio of opportunities created to pipeline generation. We track leads and UTMs on all social content. If a lead engages with social media content, we see that in Salesforce. Through the magic of attribution, we can see the entire journey, all the way from interacting with social content at the top of the funnel to becoming a customer. This is already the way many companies measure ROI. Just not necessarily social media ROI.”

Jordan Tennenbaum,
Head of Social, Talkdesk

Wild

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“While Wild’s social team is part of the brand function, influencer marketing is its own division. Both teams have their own goals and are considered different facets of the business. Social drives brand visibility, engagement, buzz and community, so their KPIs are top-of-funnel metrics. But influencer marketing is completely different. It’s driven the brand’s success from the beginning, and is considered a sales channel. The team’s goals are solely bottom of the funnel—new customer acquisition and conversion.”

Laura Donadio, Consultant and former
Global Head of Influencer & Partnerships, Wild

How *your* content strategy influences social's business impact

Almost all (83%) leaders rate their team's content strategy as expert level—with strategies rooted in audience insights, aligned to business objectives and used to inform content on channels beyond social.

They are even able to identify the top platforms for generating business impact.

But many leaders are still *too focused* on publishing cadence, despite their advanced strategies. It takes more bandwidth to produce the long-form and original content that drives engagement, and posting more has no clear correlation to the bottom line.

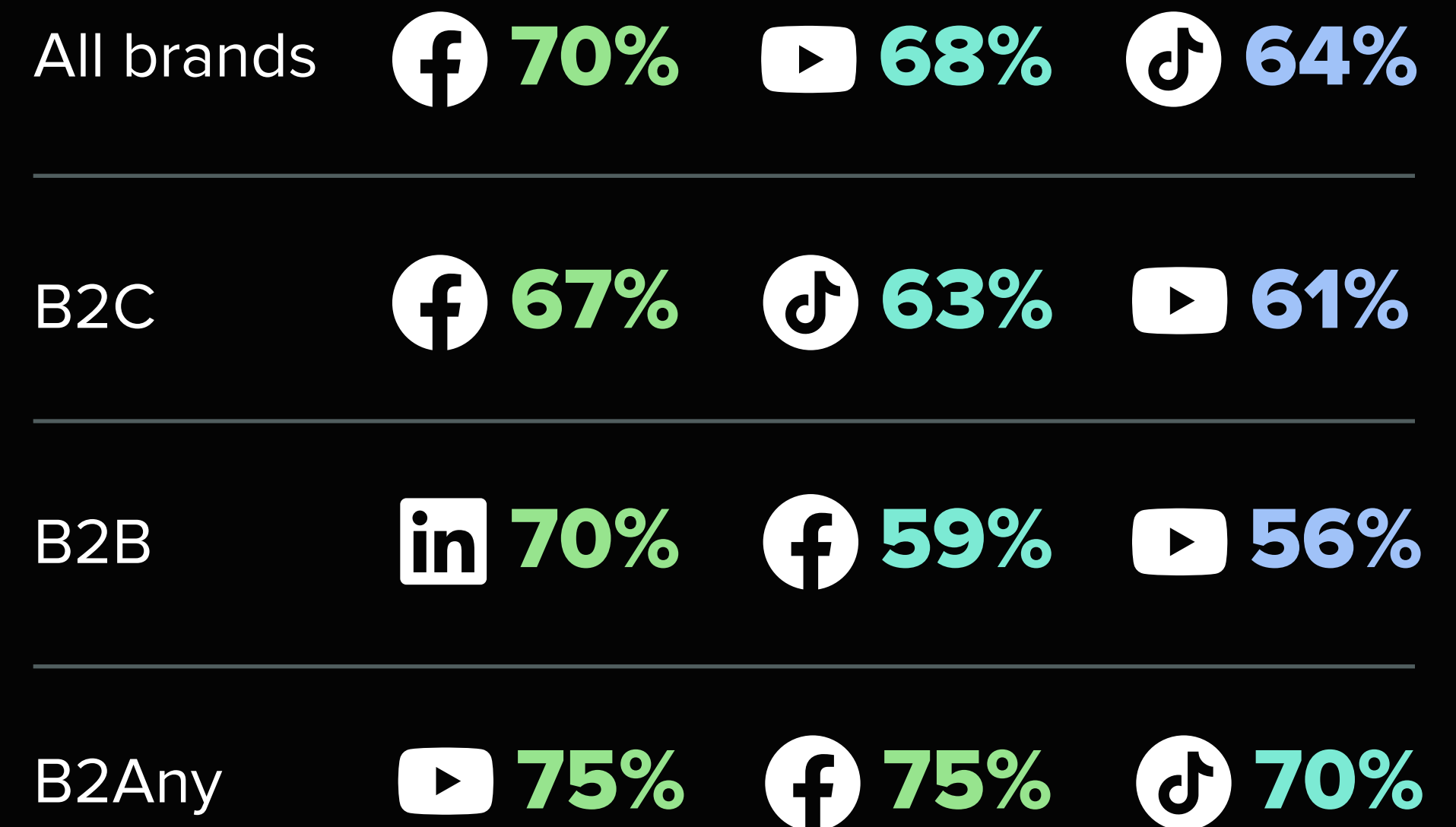


Where you post matters

When it comes to generating ROI, not all platforms are created equal. Marketing leaders say the platforms that drive the most business impact are Facebook, YouTube and TikTok. Though this differs for B2B brands who say LinkedIn is the top driver. Interestingly, almost all (85%) marketing leaders agree their brand needs to be present on more networks to maximize social's influence on business goals.

Considering more than half of consumers plan to spend time on community-driven and emerging networks like Reddit, Substack, Patreon, Bluesky and Threads, experimenting on these platforms could be worth the investment. But may require divesting some attention from core networks.*

Platforms that drive the most business impact



How often you post matters, too—but not how leaders think

71% of Marketing Directors and 69% of CMOs believe their teams must increase their social media publishing volumes if they want to increase impact. Only half of social media managers agree. And a mere 16% overall want the team to recommend their posting cadence.

Benchmarks tell a different story. Even though publishing volume decreased from 2023 to 2024, engagement increased by almost 20%. Consumers want more originality, authenticity and community—not brands posting just to post.**

Teams should be given the space to set a publishing cadence that prioritizes quality over quantity, especially if they're under more pressure to publish long-form video and experiment on emerging platforms. Interestingly, most VPs say they already look to their teams to recommend how often they should post.

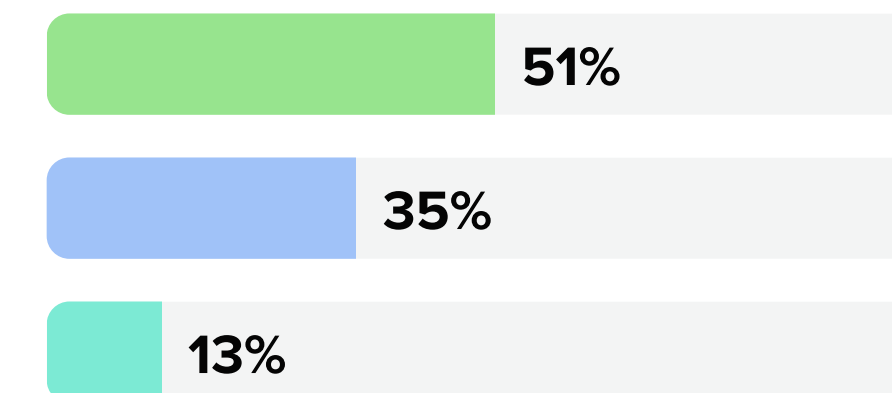
// Practitioner takeaway

Instead of chasing publishing frequency, identify broader audience truths, and incorporate them into your content *and* reporting. Help educate leadership that what really matters most to audiences isn't that you're all over their feed—it's that you truly "get" them.

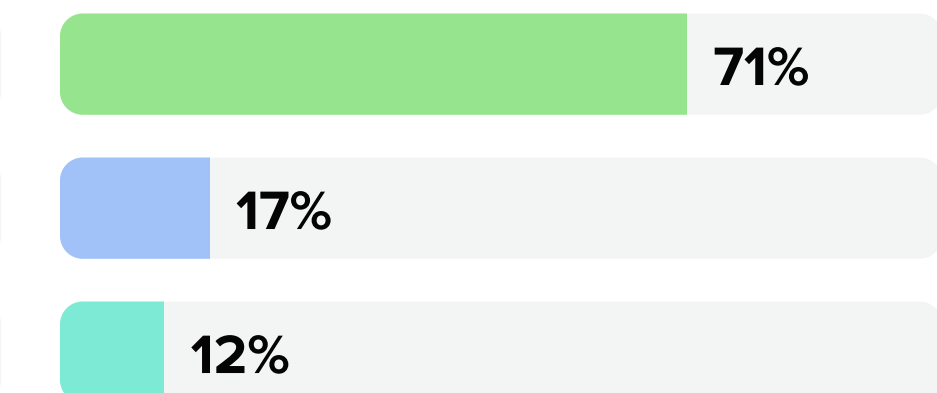
I believe our social media team should...

Post more often Post less Recommend how often we post

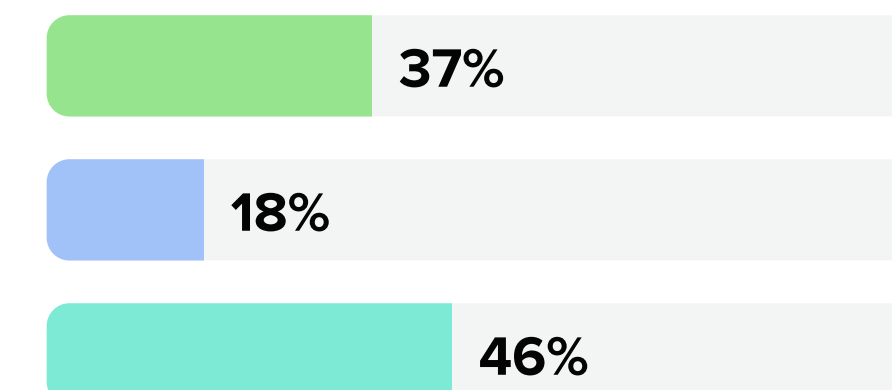
Manager



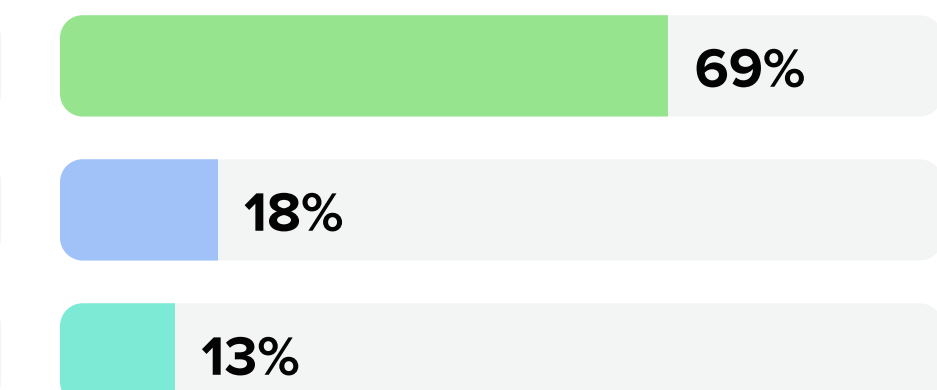
Director



VP



C-Suite



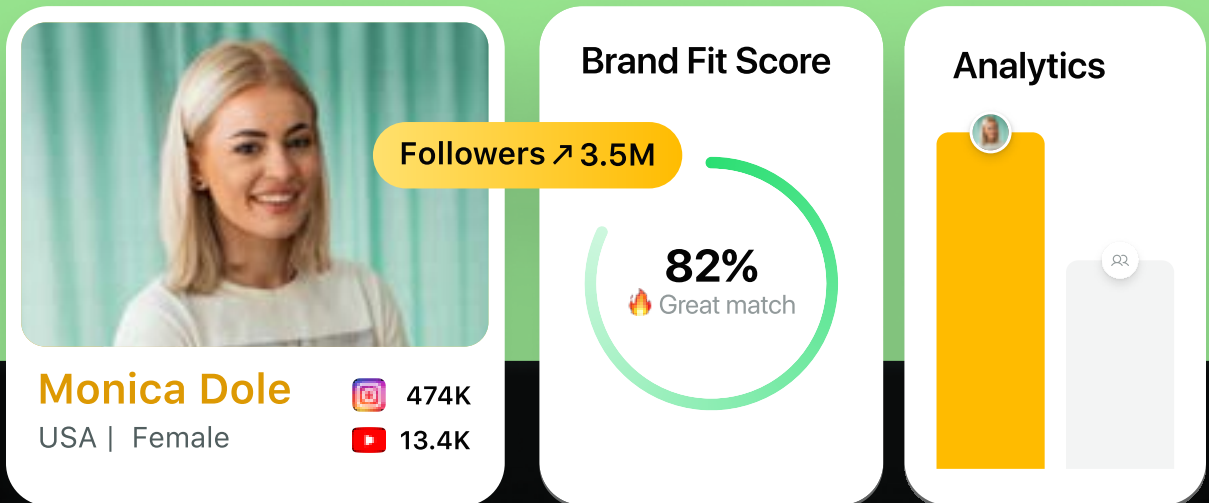
What social media professionals are saying

Wild

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“Wild works with everyone from mega influencers with millions of followers to nano-influencers with 1,000. The size of the influencer’s following has no impact on ROI. It ultimately comes down to the quality of the content and how engaged the influencer’s audience is. We’ve seen influencers with tiny followings that drive massive conversion rates and massive influencers that convert really poorly. Not their engagement rate, but their actual views and link clicks.”

Laura Donadio, Consultant and former Global Head of Influencer & Partnerships, Wild



Canva

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“Our organic efforts map back to brand equity. Our success metrics track sentiment and engagement, but also impressions because we need to understand who is within our brand universe. Are they the people we need to be talking to and engaging? Are we getting the right signals from them? Quantity and volume doesn’t always mean quality. Building brand love and affinity requires thoughtfulness.”

Shirley Tat, Global Head of Social, Canva

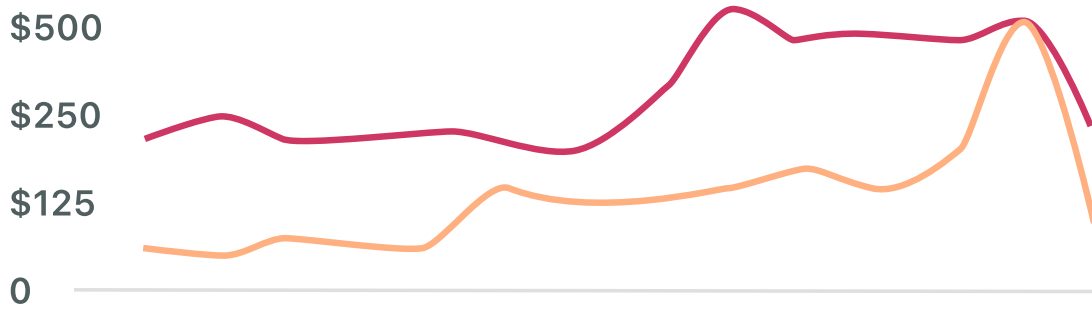
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“When you look at metrics like followers, impressions, likes, comments and shares, you can see that social media is having a positive impact. It’s not exactly measurable ROI, but it does check the vibe and assess the qualitative story. It shows that we’re doing better than the competition.”

Jordan Tennenbaum,
Head of Social, Talkdesk

Paid Engagement



Social media investments will command a *greater share* of marketing funds

Capturing and converting consumer attention has never been more difficult.

Economic uncertainty, the rise of zero-click search and an endless stream of content have intensified the strain on marketing leaders to deliver results.

The traditional playbook isn't breaking through like it once did. Amid the noise, social media is becoming a central force in how people discover, evaluate and buy, and investments are finally starting to match social's outsized impact on the customer journey.



Social media is becoming a bigger piece of the marketing pie

Overall, 80% of marketing leaders plan to reallocate funds from other channels to social, signaling a shift in prioritization as budgets stall. 87% anticipate increasing their paid spend, while just over 80% will increase their spend in influencer marketing and organic social.

B2B leaders are especially likely to divest from out-of-home and TV advertising, compared to their B2C and B2Any counterparts.

Interestingly, 81% are reallocating funds from traditional SEO to organic and paid social and influencer marketing. Over half of brands already have a SOSEO strategy in place and another 43% are experimenting with social search.

// Practitioner takeaway

Optimizing for social—from SOSEO to organic to influencer—doesn’t mean posting more, it requires posting more *strategically*. Just like with traditional marketing tactics, matching audience intent and delivering quality are more important than sheer volume.

How marketing leaders are reallocating funds from other channels to social

	Allocating funds to organic social	Allocating funds to paid social	Allocating funds to influencers	No plans to reallocate funds
Display ads	30%	31%	24%	15%
Email ads	32%	30%	22%	16%
Media relations / PR	25%	32%	25%	18%
Out-of-home ads	29%	29%	26%	16%
Paid search ads	26%	33%	22%	19%
Traditional SEO	32%	28%	21%	19%
TV ads	34%	30%	23%	13%

Specialized focuses are getting more headcount

Three-quarters of marketing leaders anticipate increasing headcount for their social teams in the next year (though this decreases to half for B2B leaders). More than 50% say they want to hire for specialized roles—including social media search optimization, social customer service and support, paid social, influencer marketing, and social analytics and listening. Leaders rank content creation *beneath* these roles in order of hiring importance, which is unexpected as so many think their brands need to post more.

Another 71% of leaders also indicate they've upped their investment in agencies and freelancers since adopting AI, indicating implementation is driving third-party resourcing.

// Practitioner takeaway

More budget and headcount is a major win for social marketers everywhere. But it also means your team's list of roles and responsibilities will grow, along with the pressure to prove ROI. To prepare, it's critical to work with your analytics team to build the reporting infrastructure you'll need. Start with the primary metrics you want to track and work backward.

The top 5 roles marketing leaders are hiring for

1. SOSEO
2. Social customer service & support
3. Paid social
4. Influencer marketing
5. Social listening & social analytics

What social media professionals are saying

Wild

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“It isn’t just that brands should increase investments to social, it’s that they should incorporate social insights and experiences across the customer journey—from email to out-of-home advertising to their brick-and-mortar stores. Social should be at the center of everything you do.”

Laura Donadio, Consultant and former
Global Head of Influencer & Partnerships, Wild

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“I won Talkdesk’s version of the Employee of the Year Award, and was one of five marketers selected to join the Sales President’s Club trip this year. I’m not saying this to brag, but to demonstrate that leadership understands how important social media and the people behind your brand presence are. It’s a cultural shift. Our CEO and CTO have told me customers approach them to talk about our social.”

Jordan Tennenbaum,
Head of Social, Talkdesk

Canva

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“In the near future, I foresee more investment in user-generated content, and turning that organic content into high impact paid ads. It’s important to be able to identify that content about your brand. But it requires evolving people’s roles. We need to be able to equip our entire team with AI skills so they can automate manual tasks and spend more time on specialized work.”

Shirley Tat, Global Head of Social, Canva

Social media can't transform business until bold brands *put social first*

Social media is no longer just an awareness lever. It's a measurable driver of revenue, loyalty and decision-making—demanding investment that reflects its full-funnel impact.

But as more budget shifts to social, teams will be under even more pressure to prove the value of their work.

To show these receipts, teams need better attribution models and tech integrations that bring social insights into the wider marketing mix. They also need the skills, bandwidth and executive support to transform insights into strategic action.

Teams can start winning that executive trust by reframing reporting to align with business impact, and show not only what's possible today—but what they *could* achieve with the right data infrastructure. The future belongs to businesses that lead with social. Not only in how you connect with audiences externally, but the priority you place on social data *internally*.



Meet the social media professionals



Wild

Laura Donadio, Consultant and former Global Head of Influencer & Partnerships, Wild

Laura is an influencer and social marketing expert with over 12 years' experience, currently leading Influencer & Partnerships at Wild, Unilever's sustainable deodorant brand. She has a background in consumer tech, lifestyle, and entertainment, and enjoys building effective campaigns and brand collaborations.



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Jordan Tennenbaum, Head of Social, Talkdesk

Head of Social Media at Talkdesk, Jordan Tennenbaum is a social media marketer with 10+ years of experience in B2B SaaS and currently works in the CCaaS space. With a background in sales and AI, he has mastered top-filling funnels with high quality leads from social media. Jordan is an expert at leveraging AI through engaging video content, powerful employee advocacy and executive-level thought leadership.



Canva

Shirley Tat, Global Head of Social, Canva

Shirley is the Global Head of Social Media at Canva, overseeing all social media marketing, influencer partnerships and community engagement. She has over 18 years of industry experience in Digital & Social, working both agency side and in-house for some of the world's most iconic brands including Coca-Cola, Nike, Airbnb, Microsoft, Dyson, Target and more.

APAC



Australian marketing leaders are setting the curve.

These leaders are the most likely to say their team are experts in developing content strategies rooted in business objectives and measuring social's business impact, compared to UK and US leaders. And 71% of teams use social media management tools, compared to 55% globally.

61% say their team already has a content strategy optimized for SOSEO, compared to 53% globally.

These leaders are more likely to tie social to acquisition.

71% believe social media has a direct impact on customer acquisition, and 78% believe engagement metrics define social ROI. Another 65% see the throughline from social to revenue metrics, compared to 57% globally.

Australian marketing leaders want to use social to drive customer experience and their employer brand.

84% want their customer experience and care teams to use social insights to drive decisions, compared to 58% of leaders globally. Another half want their people management team to access social media data, compared to only 33% globally.

EMEA



UK marketing teams have an intermediate grasp of social.

Most UK leaders say their teams are evolving (49%), rather than emerging or expert when it comes to both aligning their content strategies to business objectives and measuring social's business impact.

UK marketing teams rely on TikTok.

TikTok is the #1 platform for driving business impact in the UK, per 66% marketing leaders, compared to Facebook worldwide. Facebook and YouTube are close behind.

Laser focused on quality and resonance.

UK marketing leaders are more likely to say their teams should decrease their publishing volume, compared to their global counterparts.

These leaders are also most likely to define social ROI with conversion metrics, instead of engagement and revenue metrics like their global counterparts.

NAMER



Most US marketing leaders say their teams are emerging or evolving (57%) when it comes to measuring social's business impact.

While this is on-par with the UK, it trails Australian teams whose leaders are most likely (54%) to rank them as experts.

American marketing leaders are the most likely to be underwhelmed with social reporting.

They're most likely to say their teams' ability to drive overarching impact and develop a content strategy aligned to business objectives is emerging or evolving compared to their global counterparts.

The US hiring focus is on SOSEO and customer care.

American marketing leaders are more likely to hire for social media search optimization and customer care roles than their global counterparts, but more than half still prioritize influencer and analytics roles.

All Business is SocialSM

Glossary

Attribution

The process of determining which marketing touchpoints contributed to a conversion. **Multi-touch (or multi-channel) attribution** looks at the full customer journey to understand how each interaction—especially early, top-of-funnel ones—played a role in driving the final outcome.

Awareness

How well your target audience recognizes and understands your brand, including its identity, values and offerings.

Closed-won deals

Sales opportunities that result in a signed contract or completed purchase—officially turning a prospect into a customer. This terminology is more common for B2B companies.

Conversion

Any meaningful action a person takes that moves them closer to becoming a customer, such as signing up for a newsletter, downloading a resource or adding a product to their cart.

Cost per click / Cost per action (CPC / CPA):

In paid advertising, CPC is what you pay each time someone clicks your ad; CPA refers to the cost for a specific action (like a form submission or sign-up) driven by that ad.

Cost per lead (CPL)

The average amount spent to generate a single lead through marketing campaigns or paid efforts.

Customer acquisition

The process of turning a prospect into a paying customer through marketing, sales and customer experience efforts.

Customer lifetime value (CLV)

The total revenue your brand can expect from a single customer across the entirety of their relationship with your business.

Engagement

A measure of how audiences interact with your content on social media—including likes, comments, shares and other meaningful actions.

Lead generation

The practice of attracting potential customers and nurturing their interest with the goal of converting them into buyers.

Marketing funnel

A model that represents the steps people take from first learning about your brand to making a purchase. It's often broken down into top (awareness), middle (consideration) and bottom (decision) stages—but can be adapted to reflect your unique customer journey.

Media value

The estimated dollar value of the exposure your brand gets through content.

Earned media value comes from unpaid sources like press mentions or user-generated content. **Owned media value** reflects exposure on your own channels, like your brand account, website or blog.

Net promoter score (NPS)

A customer loyalty metric based on how likely someone is to recommend your brand. It's calculated using a 0–10 scale and used to assess overall satisfaction and referral potential.

Pipeline

The set of stages a potential customer moves through in your sales process—from initial contact to final close. **Pipeline impact** refers to the influence of marketing activities on creating or advancing these opportunities.

Reach

The number of unique individuals who see your content. Unlike impressions, which count every view, reach counts each person only once—regardless of how many times they saw the post.

Revenue

The total income your business earns. **Gross recurring revenue (GRR)** specifically refers to the portion of revenue retained from existing customers over time, not counting additional sales.

Return on investment (ROI)

A metric that shows how effectively your efforts generate profit. A basic ROI formula is: $\text{Net profit} - \text{Investment cost} = \text{ROI}$.

Return on ad spend (ROAS)

A metric that shows how much revenue you earn for every dollar spent on advertising. It's commonly used to evaluate campaign performance.

Sentiment

An analysis of how people feel about your brand, product or campaign—positive, negative or neutral. Sentiment is often measured using natural language processing (NLP) tools that analyze online conversations and feedback.

Share of voice (SOV)

Your brand's presence in market conversations compared to your competitors. A higher share of voice usually signals greater visibility, authority and mindshare.

Social listening

The process of monitoring and analyzing online conversations across platforms to surface insights about your audience, competitors and industry trends.

UTM parameters

Short bits of code added to URLs that help track where your web traffic comes from. They're especially helpful for measuring the performance of individual campaigns or even specific social posts.

About the data

This report was conducted online by Glimpse on behalf of Sprout Social in the US, UK and Australia. Participants included 1,200 marketing leaders whose seniority ranged from manager to CMO, and who listed social media among their responsibilities. All surveys were conducted from May 30 to June 20, 2025.

*The Q2 2025 Sprout Pulse Survey conducted online by Glimpse on behalf of Sprout. Participants included 2,280 social media users across the US, UK and Australia. The survey was conducted from April 23 to May 5, 2025.

**The 2025 Content Benchmarks Report analyzed nearly 3 billion messages from 1 million public social profiles that were active between February 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025. Data includes posts from Facebook, Google My Business, Instagram, LinkedIn company pages, Pinterest, TikTok, TripAdvisor and X.

About Sprout Social

Sprout Social is a global leader in social media management and analytics software. Sprout's intuitive platform puts powerful social data into the hands of more than 30,000 brands so they can deliver smarter, faster business impact.

With a full suite of social media management solutions, Sprout offers comprehensive publishing and engagement functionality, customer care, influencer marketing, advocacy and AI-powered business intelligence. Sprout's award-winning software operates across all major social media networks and digital platforms.

[Learn more at sproutsocial.com](https://sproutsocial.com)

[Schedule a demo](#)

