

# The Social Customer Experience

*How enterprise organizations are using social media to manage the customer experience*





## Executive Summary

This report reveals how enterprise organizations are using social in their customer experience (CX) strategies and shows how leaders can use social media to build exceptional and differentiated customer experiences.

Based on a global survey of over 300 executives at companies with more than 1,000 employees, our research looks at how companies are engaging with prospects and customers at different stages of the customer journey. The report, which contains comparisons between B2B and B2C organizations, and between North America and Europe, also looks at which business functions are using social channels, including marketing, sales and customer service departments.

Organizations understand the importance of differentiating with customer experience. They also know that social has become the connecting thread in how consumers find, discover, and interact with brands. But organizations need to expand social media initiatives beyond the marketing department and proactively meet customers in lower funnel activities such as advocacy and evaluation.

This report was produced by London Research in partnership with Hootsuite.



## Key recommendations

### 1. Map the entire social customer journey

82 percent of companies agree that social is a vital channel for delivering exceptional customer experiences. However, 42 percent of companies lack a defined strategy for integrating social into their existing customer experience programs.

Large companies have become competent at using social channels for top-of-funnel marketing activities. But they are less capable when it comes to harnessing social during the consideration phase and for actual conversion of prospects into customers.

Begin by using social to help build your understanding of customers and the nature of the journeys they take both pre and post-purchase. A good starting point is to map out how different types of social engagement can help at different points of the customer journey, with content and information aligned as far as possible with different needs and requirements.

### 2. Secure early wins with social data

Treat social data as a valuable source of customer intelligence that can help you improve the customer experience. Begin with the data you can access, use it to inform your CX strategy, and build on your capability over time.

Once you've secured a few wins, focus on integrating social data with other marketing platforms. Ultimately, if companies want unified customer data, marketing technology platforms need to be operating in harmony. However, relatively few companies have data integrations in place to connect their social media management platforms with other systems. Less than half of companies (45 percent) have unified customer profiles, though a further 42 percent are aspiring to it.

### 3. Expand strategies beyond brand awareness

While companies are reaping the benefits of social-fueled marketing activities, a more cross-functional approach is required as part of an overarching strategy that builds social into CX programs.

For all business functions apart from marketing (83 percent), only a minority of companies are using social channels to improve engagement with customers and prospects. Fewer than half of companies (48 percent) indicate that their customer service departments are actively using social media, suggesting another missed opportunity within many enterprise businesses. Furthermore, only 43 percent say sales departments are using social to improve engagement.

### 4. Look beyond surface metrics

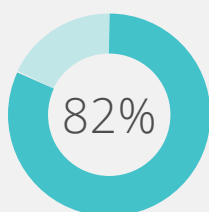
Social metrics should be closely aligned to over-arching business goals such as increased revenues, reduced costs, and improved customer experience. Most organizations rely on social engagement metrics to prove the value of social, but these can be superficial, misleading and may not tie back to commercial objectives.

As an example, if the goal is to drive revenue, KPIs which help attribute social activity to sales are needed; if the goal is to manage customer complaints and inquiries on social, companies should be measuring the reduction in customer support calls.

### 5. Focus on training, culture, and collaboration

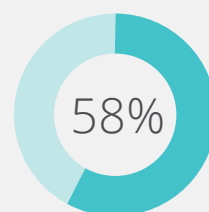
Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of respondents at companies where social has been embedded into corporate cultural values report that staff across the organization are empowered to use social to improve CX, compared to only 24 percent at companies where a social-friendly culture hasn't been nurtured. More than half (53 percent) of companies have internal training programs in place, but most organizations lack documented internal guidelines or other resources such as online learning and staff mentoring.

All employees who interact with customers can tap into the power of social to deliver better experiences, gather valuable data, and become brand ambassadors. Employees are much more likely to feel empowered if social is embedded into corporate cultural values.



of companies agree that social is a vital channel for delivering exceptional customer experiences.

VS.



of companies have a defined strategy for integrating social into existing customer experience programs.

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# Research Methodology

This Social Customer Experience report, produced by London Research in partnership with Hootsuite, is based on a global survey of marketers who completed an online questionnaire in January 2018. The survey was promoted widely through social channels and email by Digital Doughnut, an online community of more than 1.5 million marketers and sister company to London Research.

The report is based on data from 327 client-side respondents working for enterprise organizations with at least 1,000 employees. Respondents without responsibility for social media activities were disqualified.

Survey respondents come from a mixture of business-to-business (27 percent) and business-to-consumer (35 percent) companies (Figure 1). The remaining 38 percent of respondents are from companies focused equally on B2B and B2C.

Figure 2 shows how survey respondents are split by geographical region, with North America and Europe the best represented. The country breakdown (Figure 25; see report appendix) shows that the best-represented nations were the United States and United Kingdom.

See the appendix for further information on profile of respondents, including business sector and level of seniority.

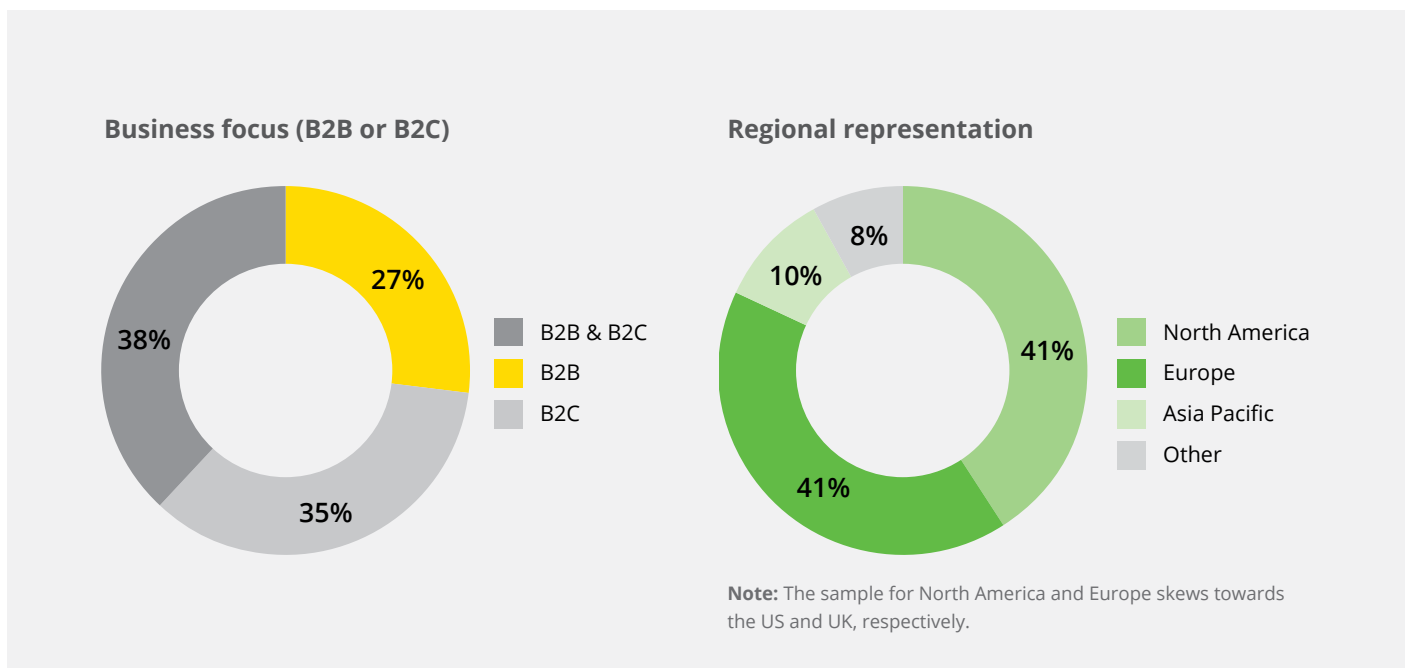


Figure 1: Business focus—B2B or B2C (n=327)

Figure 2: Regional representation (n=327)

# How organizations are using social media to deliver a better customer experience



**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE HAS EMERGED** as a key battleground for companies seeking to compete in an age when consumers' expectations for response time and interaction quality are higher than ever. Social media provides organizations with a range of opportunities to improve their interactions with customers and other stakeholders.

**Organizations are trying to differentiate themselves through customer experience**

**98%**

"Customer experience is important to our organization"

**89%**

"We are trying to differentiate our organization through customer experience"

The overwhelming majority of enterprise companies (98 percent) surveyed for this research see CX as important for their organizations, while 89 percent agree that they "are trying to differentiate our organization through CX."

A growing body of research shows that companies are right to take CX seriously. According to the Temkin Group, consumers who received an excellent customer experience were six times more likely to repurchase from a company than those who had a very poor CX, and 11 times more likely to recommend the brand<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile, research published by Forrester<sup>2</sup> found that CX leaders grow revenue faster than CX laggards, with leaders enjoying a 17 percent compound average revenue growth rate, compared to only 3 percent for their laggard counterparts.

The premise of this report is that social is being underused by organizations as a means of driving better CX. While 82 percent of respondents agree "social media is a vital channel for delivering exceptional customer experiences," the percentage drops to 74 percent for those who "engage with customers through social to help improve the customer experience" and 70 percent for those who "understand how to use social channels effectively to deliver exceptional customer experiences." This suggests there is a knowledge gap when it comes to the implementation and execution of CX initiatives through social channels.

This research has also found that 42 percent of companies lack a defined strategy for social CX, a major explanation as to why many organizations are unable to leverage social channels effectively for a better CX (Figure 3).

### How would you describe your organization's use of social media in the context of the overall customer experience?

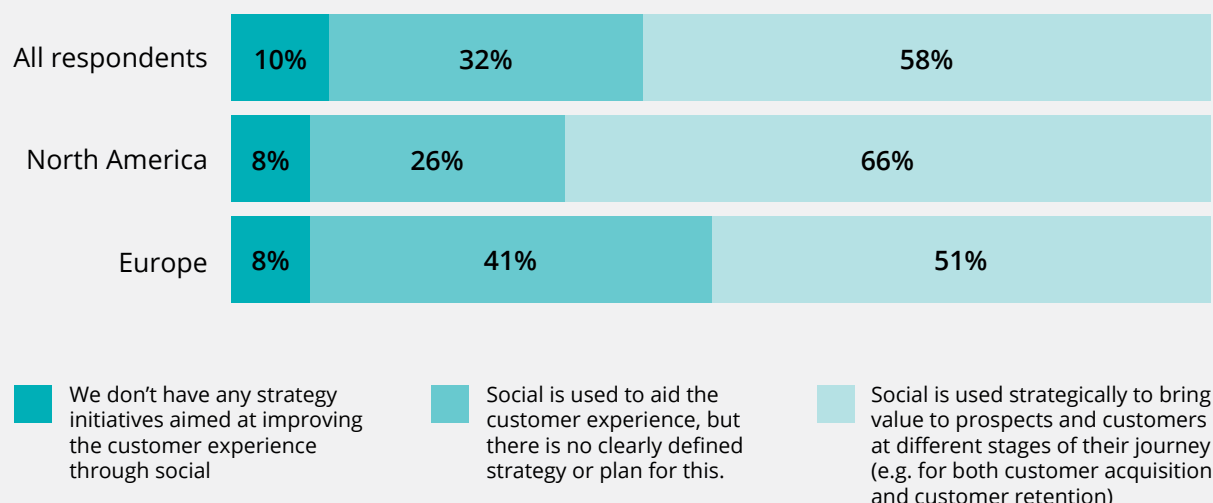


Figure 3: How would you describe your organization's use of social media in the context of the overall customer experience? (n=321)

When asked where their organizations sit in terms of social CX maturity, just under a third of respondents (32 percent) say “there is no clearly defined strategy or plan,” and a further 10 percent say there is no strategy for this at all. In North America, the proportion of companies describing their use of social channels as strategic rises to 66 percent.

As well as a lack of strategy, there are other factors at play which are holding back companies. A siloed organizational structure is also a significant barrier to using social more effectively, with a third of organizations referencing this as a major challenge (Figure 4). B2C-focused organizations are particularly inclined to be held back by in-company departmental silos (Figure 4).

As with customer experience in general, social media ambitions tend to founder in structures where there is a lack of cross-team collaboration, preventing sharing of information and consistency of communications across different touchpoints.

For some B2B companies, a traditional pain point has been a lack of cooperation between sales and marketing teams, which in some cases has been addressed by the appointment of a chief revenue officer or sales and marketing director to oversee both functions and drive closer collaboration.

B2B players are typically further behind on the social media maturity curve than their B2C counterparts, and therefore report more fundamental issues. Lack of dedicated budget (36 percent) and lack of strategy (35 percent) are the most commonly cited obstacles. Three in ten B2B executives (30 percent) report that social is just not a priority—more than twice the level in B2C (14 percent).



For B2B and B2C companies alike, the aim of this report is to shine a spotlight on opportunities to unlock more value from social channels, helping you to overcome challenges, create a compelling strategy, and build a business case for further investment.

#### What is preventing you from using social more effectively to improve the customer experience?

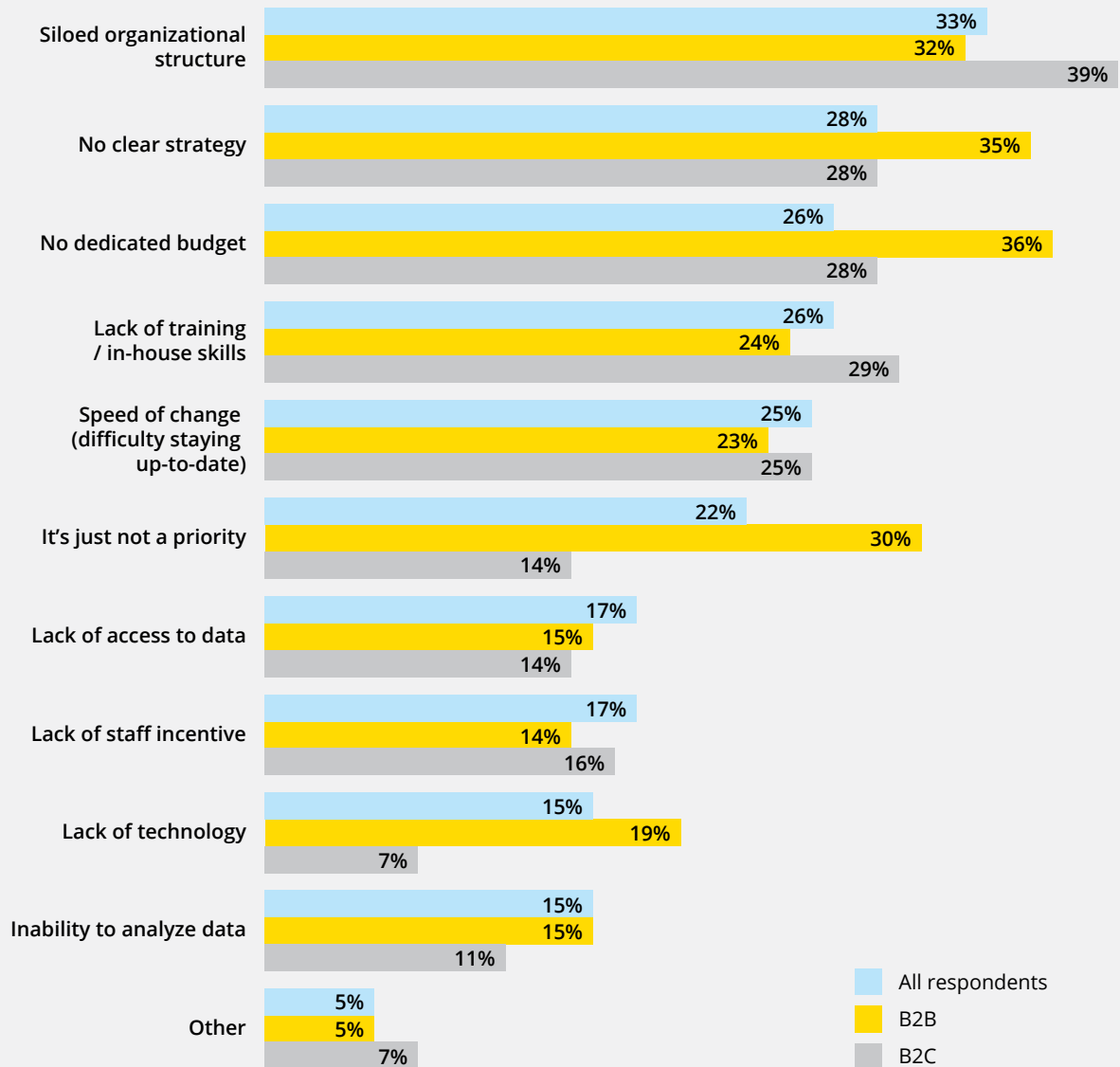


Figure 4: What is preventing you from using social more effectively to improve the customer experience? (Check up to three options, all respondents n=266, B2B vs B2C n=165)

## 1

# Using social media throughout the customer journey



**AS A CHANNEL, SOCIAL IS BOTH** widely prevalent and always on, fueled by the all-pervasive nature of mobile.

According to the Digital in 2018 report<sup>3</sup> published by Hootsuite and We Are Social, two-thirds of the world's 7.6 billion inhabitants now have a mobile phone. More than 3 billion people globally are now using social media each month, with almost all of those users accessing their chosen networks and platforms via mobile devices. Meanwhile, separate research has found that more than two-thirds (69 percent) of US adults<sup>4</sup> and 65 percent of UK adults<sup>5</sup> have at least one social media account.

Social provides an opportunity to engage customers and prospects at almost any time or place, with the chance to influence those intent-rich occasions or “micro-moments”<sup>6</sup> when consumers impulsively use their smartphone to research or purchase products and services, or to make a recommendation. With this in mind, a useful exercise for enterprise organizations is to think in terms of the customer journey and how social can be used in different ways for different business objectives.

## Organizations struggle to extend social media strategy beyond brand awareness

As noted in the previous section, the majority of organizations believe they are acting strategically when it comes to using social to bring value to the overall experience. However, the responses in this section show that the reality is quite different. The data shows there is much room for improvement, along with a greater need to use social throughout all the steps in the customer journey.

Figure 5 shows less than a third of companies (30 percent) in strong agreement that they “have mapped out how different types of social engagement can help at different points of the customer journey”. Given that this type of mapping process is a fundamental step in establishing a social media strategy, this provides further evidence that many companies are not being as strategic around social as they claim to be.

While the customer journey is becoming less linear and more fragmented, it is still useful to think in terms of a sales and marketing funnel. Figure 6 shows how companies rate their use of social channels at different stages of the journey, starting with top-of-funnel brand awareness, through to nurturing and then conversion, and then post-sale activity such as building customer loyalty and encouraging advocacy.

Companies are focusing too much at the top of the funnel (the awareness stage), while neglecting the middle- and lower-funnel.

More than three-quarters (77 percent) of survey respondents describe their organizations as “excellent” (36 percent) or “good” (41 percent) at building initial awareness, but these percentages drop as we move through the customer journey. Only 55 percent of respondents score themselves as highly for nurturing prospects, and the percentage falls to 46 percent for converting prospects into customers.

There is a slight improvement for improving customer retention and loyalty (51 percent) and for encouraging advocacy (54 percent), but it is evident that many companies have a lot of work to do to become more proficient at addressing needs at different stages of the customer journey.

When juxtaposing the results from this research with consumer studies, there is a clear mismatch between what customers want and what companies are delivering. For example, a separate survey found that 46 percent of consumers said they have made a purchase after watching a product video on social media<sup>7</sup> indicating the potential for social to drive conversions. However, 25 percent of companies have rated their use of social channels for converting prospects into customers as “poor”.

#### We have mapped out how different types of social engagement can help at different points of the customer journey

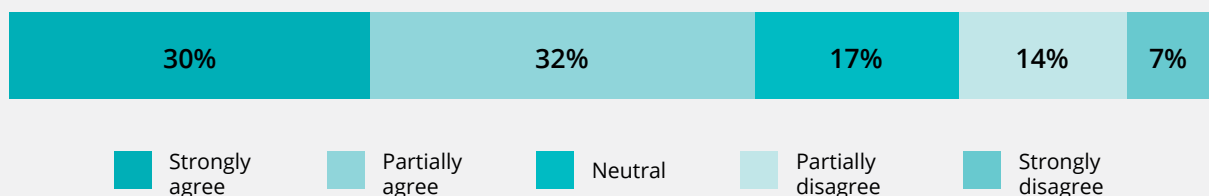


Figure 5: We have mapped out how different types of social engagement can help at different points of the customer journey (n=300)

## How would you rate your use of social channels at different stages of the customer journey?

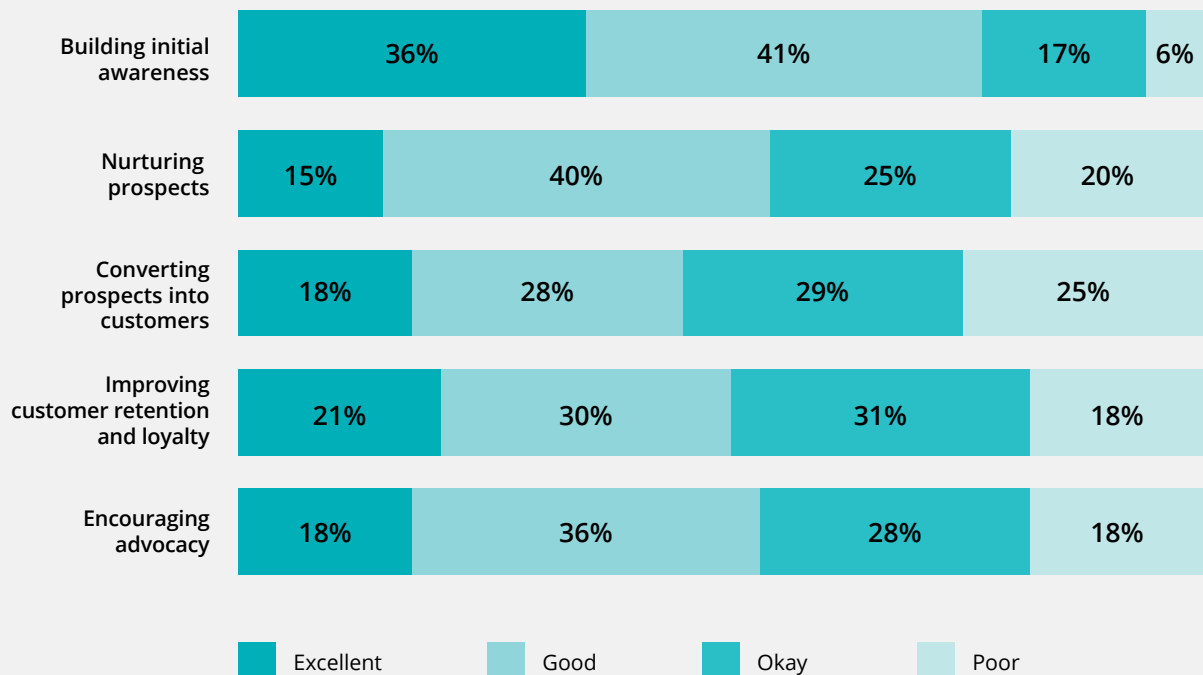


Figure 6: How would you rate your use of social channels at different stages of the customer journey? (n=300)

Social media engagement is a strong component in moving consumers along the buyer's journey. As consumers, we are now more likely to engage with brands through digital channels such as social media and email than we are to contact them by telephone. Positive interactions with a brand on social media reinforce our confidence in that company, making us more likely to purchase from them.

For companies seeking to move beyond using social solely for brand awareness, social ads can be an effective tool for driving revenue with social. Ads enable effective targeting and give brands the ability to test messaging and creative assets to maximize impact, resulting in better bottom-of-funnel conversion when managed effectively. Companies without social influencer and advocacy programs already in place should also consider these to influence both consideration and loyalty.

## B2B organizations lag behind B2C in using social for customer retention and loyalty

On the B2B side, with the exception of building initial awareness, only a minority of these companies rate themselves highly for these different facets of the journey (Figure 7). Only 36 percent of B2B enterprise respondents rate themselves as excellent or good at using social channels to improve customer retention and loyalty, even though separate research has found that the vast majority of B2B companies (82 percent) believe that retention is cheaper than acquisition<sup>8</sup>. This discrepancy shows that more B2B companies in particular should be focusing their efforts on using social channels to improve retention.

Proportion of respondents rating their use of social channels at different stages of the customer journey as “excellent” or “good” (B2B versus B2C)

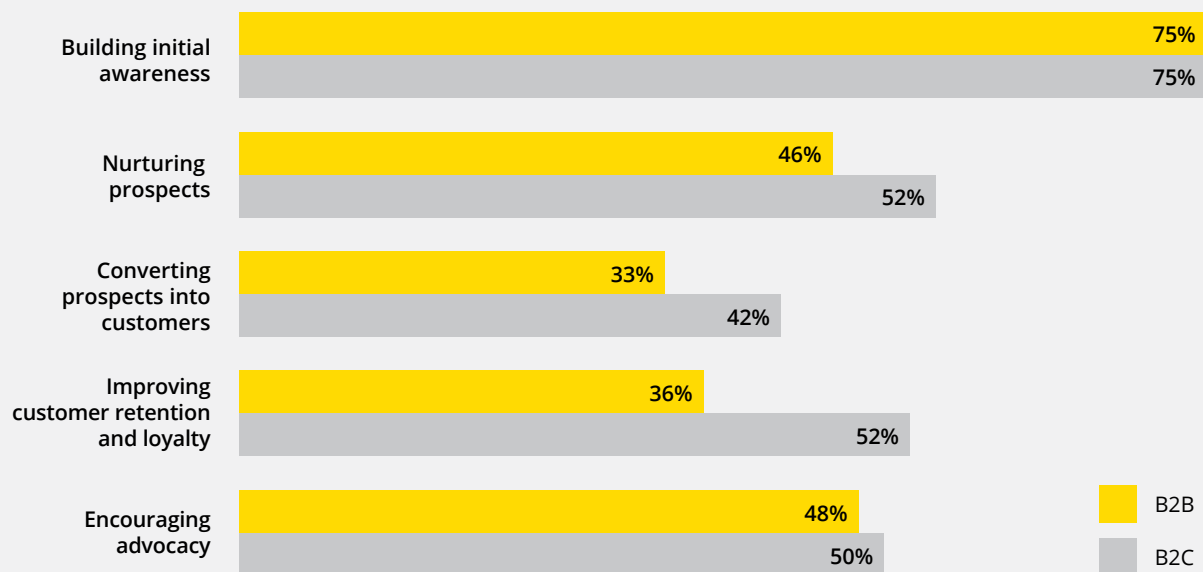


Figure 7: Proportion of respondents rating their use of social channels at different stages of the customer journey as “excellent” or “good” (B2B versus B2C) (n=172)

## 2

## Integrating social media across the organization



**WHILE MARKETING TYPICALLY BENEFITS** from social media programs, a more cross-functional approach is required as part of an overarching strategy that incorporates more organization-wide planning.

Marketing is a good starting point for social media initiatives aimed at improving CX, but companies focusing solely in this area are significantly restricting their chances of success. For enterprise businesses that can take a more unified approach that incorporates cross-functional social programs, there is a chance to differentiate from the majority of companies that are failing to do this.

### Marketing departments lead in use of social media

This research shows that, beyond building awareness about products and services, many companies are missing opportunities to use social for an array of different business functions and objectives. As Figure 8 demonstrates, marketing (83 percent) is the business function most likely to be using social. For all other functions, only a minority of companies are using social to improve engagement with customers and prospects.

Fewer than half of companies surveyed (48 percent) indicate that their customer service or customer support departments are actively using social media to improve engagement, suggesting a missed opportunity within many enterprise businesses.

A glance at many brands' Twitter feeds shows that the microblogging platform has become the de facto complaint channel for unhappy customers online. There are numerous examples of businesses that have broadened—and sometimes switched—their social media focus from marketing to customer service.<sup>9</sup>

### Which areas of the business are actively using social media to improve engagement with customers and prospects?

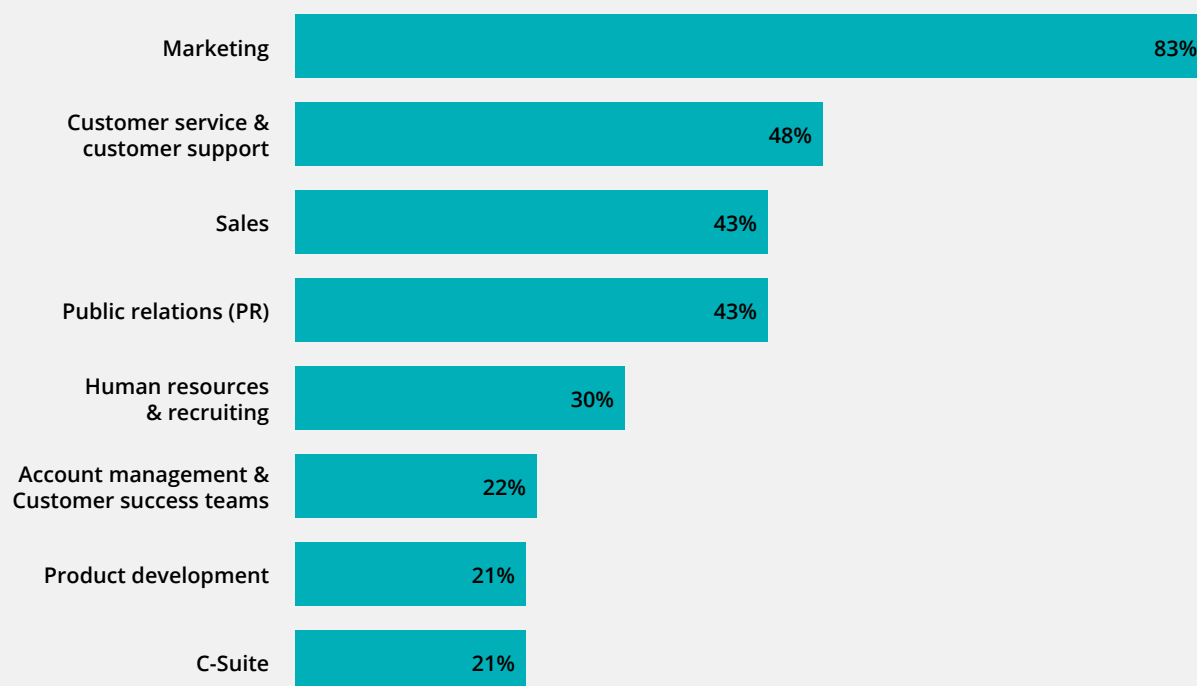


Figure 8: Which areas of the business are actively using social media to improve engagement with customers and prospects? (n=280)

Sales and account management are two other departments that can benefit from social media engagement, though only 43 percent and 22 percent of respondents respectively say these departments are using this approach. Other business functions are also failing to capitalize on social to fulfill specific business requirements. While 43 percent of respondents say that public relations teams are using social to improve engagement, the numbers are much smaller in human resources (30 percent) and product development (21 percent).

Figure 9 provides further evidence that organizations are using social primarily for marketing-related objectives, namely building awareness about products and services (68 percent), understanding market trends (51 percent), and enabling more personalized marketing (46 percent).

## Sales departments continue to explore the value of social

Social channels are currently being underused across a range of sales-related business requirements, including identifying sales prospects (39 percent) and nurturing sales prospects at (35 percent).

### Do you use social media to help meet any of the following business requirements?

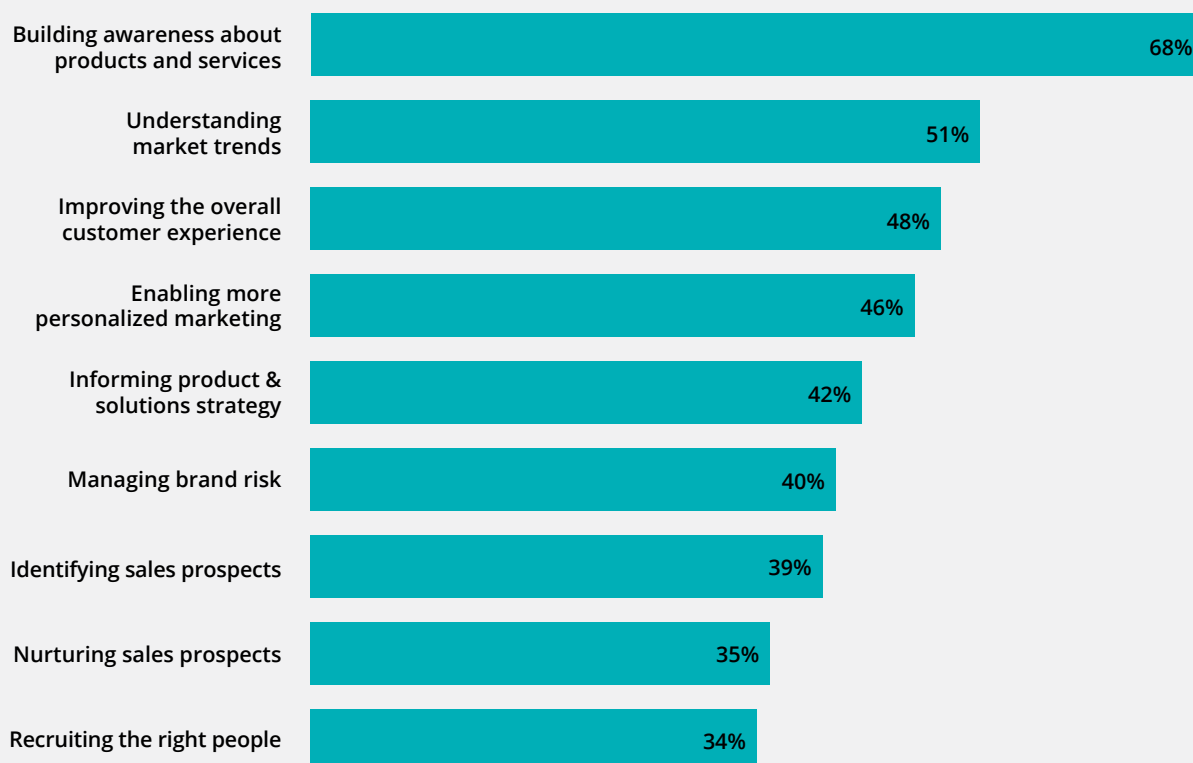


Figure 9: Do you use social media to help meet any of the following business requirements? (n=272)

A Forrester study commissioned by Hootsuite found that 77 percent of B2B organizations either have, or are in the process of, implementing social selling programs. However, only 20 percent of sellers are performing all the sales program activities available through a comprehensive social selling plan.<sup>10</sup>

Once again, the data shows that B2B companies are lagging behind when it comes to using social for different objectives. Figure 10 shows the disparity between B2B and B2C in the use of social media to help with specified business requirements.

While the use of social in areas such as understanding market trends, identifying sales prospects, and recruiting the right people are relatively even between B2B and B2C, other areas such as enabling more personalized marketing and managing brand risk show a sizable gap. However, it is in the realm of improving the overall customer experience that there is the largest variance between B2B (27 percent) and B2C (59 percent)—once again highlighting the irony that while B2B companies typically have the most complex customer journeys, they may be lagging behind their B2C counterparts in maintaining an end-to-end focus.



## Do you use social media to help meet any of the following business requirements? (B2B vs B2C)

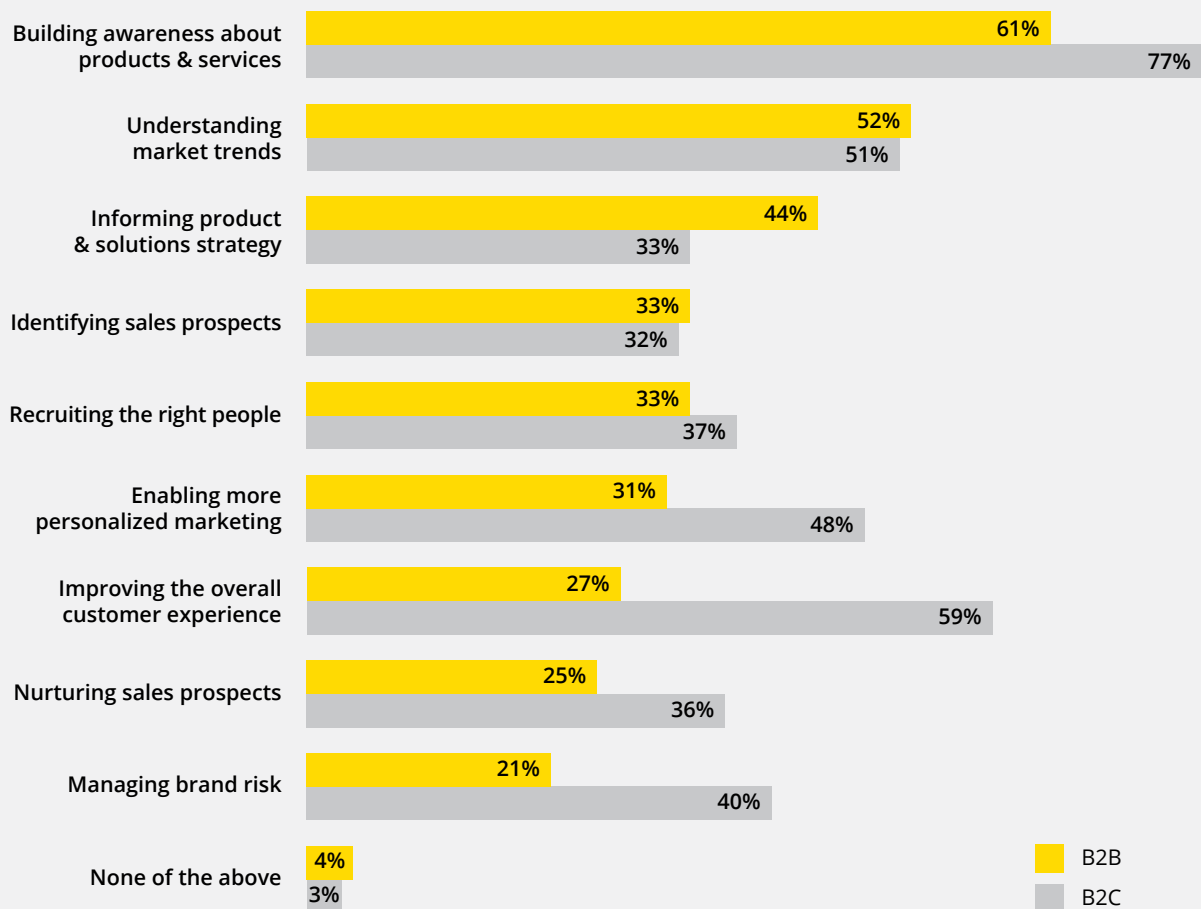


Figure 10: Do you use social media to help meet any of the following business requirements? (B2B versus B2C) (n=169)

## Social customer service is an area of opportunity for organizations

Along similar lines, customer service is a hugely important area for the modern business, but there is still a significant number of enterprise businesses that are not responding to social comments or monitoring how quickly complaints are being addressed.

As Figure 11 illustrates, 69 percent of companies agree that “customer service is set up to respond to comments on social channels.” Similarly, only 67 percent of companies agree that they “monitor how quickly customer questions/complaint are addressed on social media”. This highlights again the tendency for companies to focus too much on the top of the funnel, while forgetting the rest of the customer journey—in particular, the post-purchase experience.

Responding to customer comments and complaints is vital to maintaining a brand's integrity on social media. While only 42 percent of people expect a reply to complaints on social media<sup>11</sup>, those who do expect a reply believe the reply should be prompt. Around four out of five customers (78 percent) who complain on Twitter expect a response within one hour, research has shown.<sup>12</sup>

Companies that already have customer service teams mobilized on social channels are ahead of the game because unanswered complaints are often seen as avoidance or indifference.<sup>13</sup> With comments and complaints usually being public and seen by other customers and prospects, a positive and personalized response can go a long way to winning and retaining customers.

### Use of social for customer service, relationship-building and sales

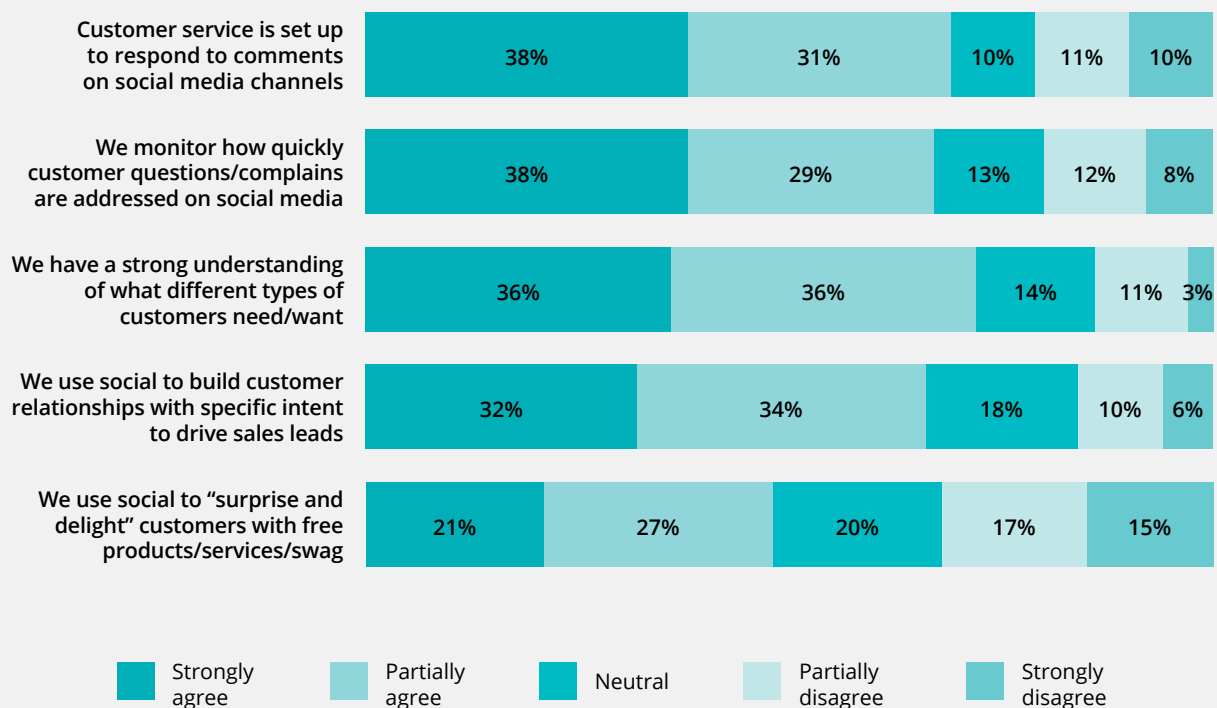


Figure 11: Use of social for customer service, relationship-building and sales (n=285)

## 3

## Finding new customer insights with social data



**THE ABILITY TO ACCESS DATA AND INSIGHTS** is a cornerstone of an effective social strategy that aligns with commercial CX goals. Central to this capability is the requirement for an integrated suite of tools can ultimately draw on the right data at the right time to help facilitate personalization at scale.

The use of technology to manage CX has increased significantly in recent years, with the number of tools available to marketers exploding as new tech categories have emerged. According to the latest Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic<sup>14</sup> published by chiefmartec.com, there are now more than 5,000 marketing technology solutions available, with the vast majority of these impacting CX in some shape or form.

### Automation, CRM, and social media management platforms are top marketing technologies

Figure 12 shows the extent to which enterprise companies are using different types of marketing technology to manage CX, with email marketing or marketing automation technology (79 percent) the most commonly cited, followed by customer relationship management (CRM) solutions (65 percent).

Social media management technology is now being used by almost two thirds (62 percent) of responding enterprise companies, with a further 26 percent saying they are planning to use this. The rapid growth of this type of marketing technology within the enterprise space over the last decade reflects the need for organizations to engage with—and respond to—consumers across an array of social properties.

Social media management platforms complement the wider array of solutions available to enterprise companies seeking to offer a better CX, including—but not limited to—the most widely used tools such as email and CRM.

## Which of following types of technology does your organization use to manage the customer experience?

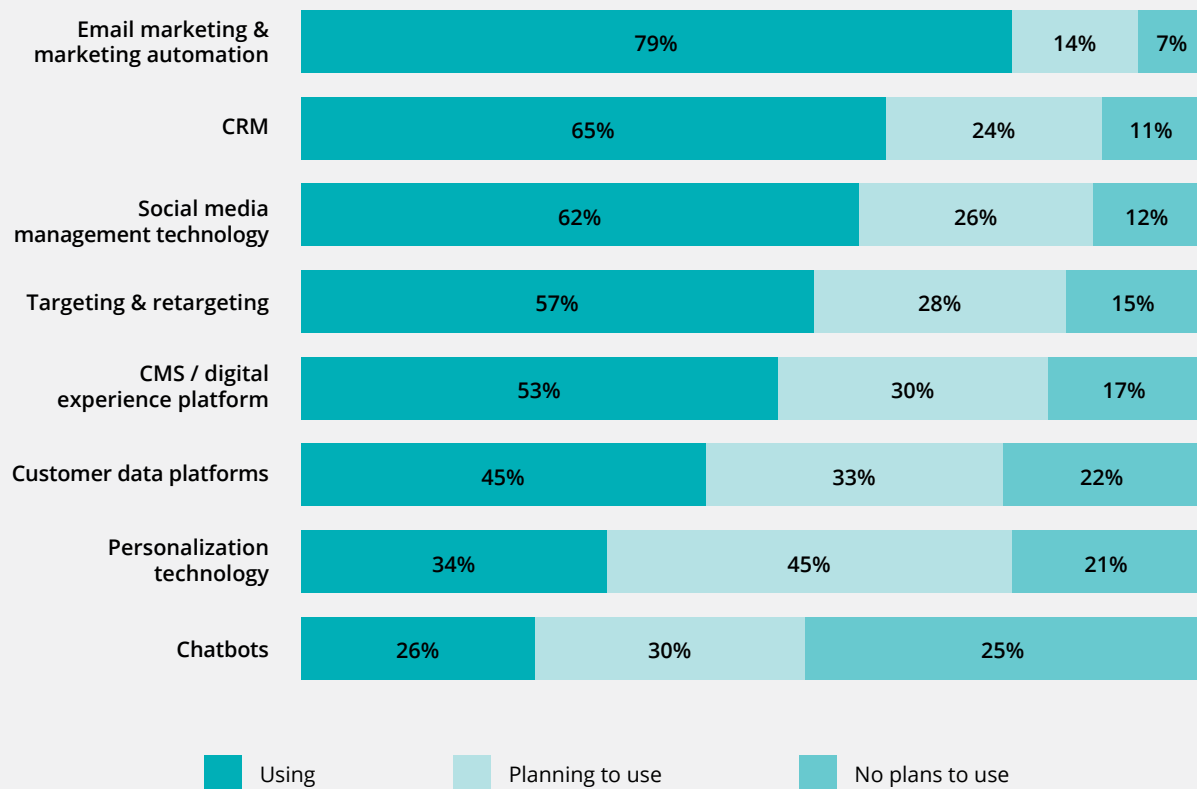
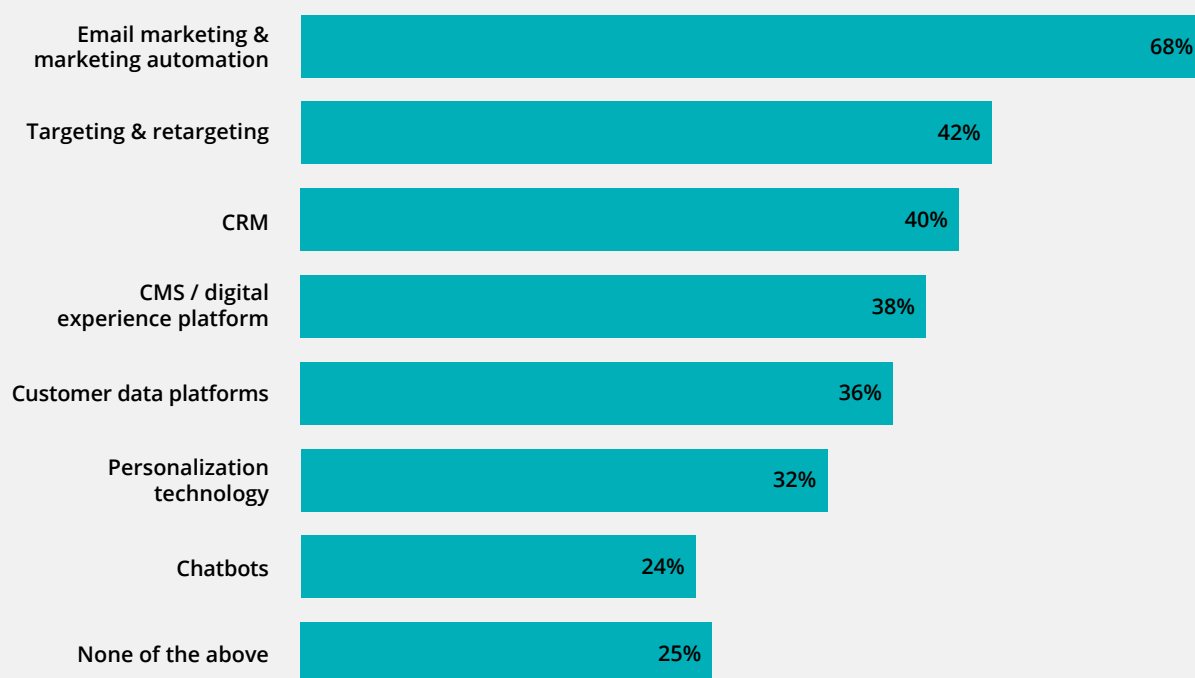


Figure 12: Which of following types of technology does your organization use to manage the customer experience? (n=269)

If companies want to harness social data as effectively as possible, marketing technology platforms need to be operating in harmony. The onus is on businesses to ensure they can use different point solutions in a coordinated way, based on a 360-degree view of the customer.

For companies seeking unified customer data sets, it is becoming a basic requirement to integrate social technology with other platforms in order to enable better attribution, an understanding of socially-driven ROI, and a more seamless experience for the customer. For those aiming to build on this, adding chatbots and more sophisticated personalization tools can help to deliver an authentic experience without the need for human interaction.

**Do you have data integrations between your social media management platform and the following types of technology?**



**Figure 13: Do you have data integrations between your social media management platform and the following types of technology?** (n=166)

## Organizations are missing opportunities to integrate social media management platforms with other systems

Although organizations are using a wide range of marketing platforms to manage CX, only a minority of companies have data integrations in place to connect their social media management platforms with these other systems, apart from email and marketing automation platforms, which 55 percent of enterprise companies say they have integrated with social (Figure 13).

A quarter of companies (25 percent) are not integrating social media management platforms with any other marketing technology, which is a wasted opportunity for these companies to adopt a more holistic approach to their marketing endeavors.

Unified customer profiles can help enterprise businesses realize the dream of a one-to-one approach to marketing, achieved at scale. However, less than half of companies (45 percent) have unified profiles, though a further 42 percent are aspiring to it (Figure 14).

Companies in North America are significantly ahead here, with 55 percent of respondents in this region claiming that their organizations are able to track customer interactions across channels, including social engagement and customer service. In Europe, meanwhile, only 42 percent of respondents claim that their companies can do this.

**Does your organization have a unified customer profile, i.e., the ability to track customer interactions across channels, including social engagement and customer service?**

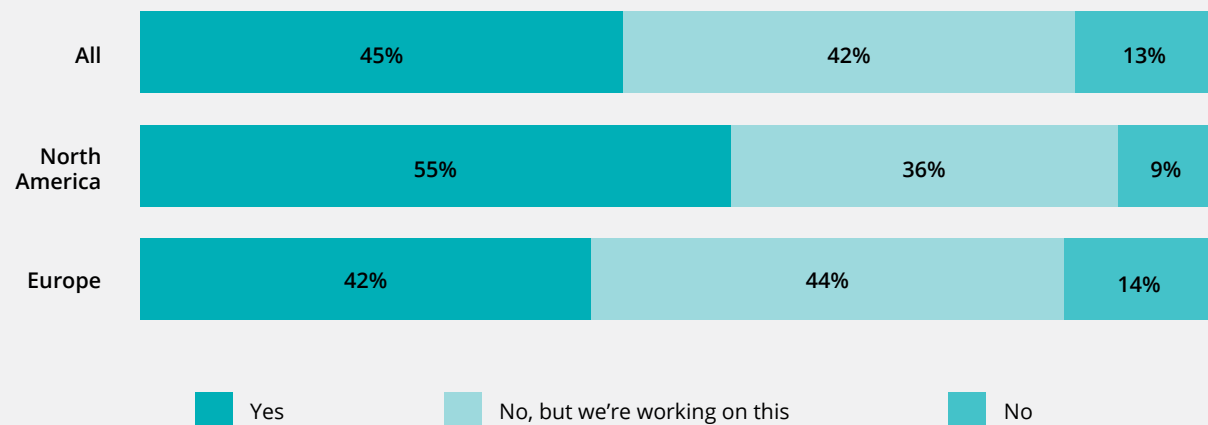


Figure 14: Does your organization have a unified customer profile, i.e., the ability to track customer interactions across channels, including social engagement and customer service? (n=280)

## Social data holds rich data for organizations looking to improve customer experience

While the ability to understand social activity and behavior at an individual level can be extremely powerful as part of a more integrated approach to CX management, the benefits of harnessing social data at an aggregated level should not be underestimated.

Sixty-one percent of respondents agree they are harnessing “social data for insights that will improve the customer experience” (Figure 15).

Companies aspiring to a mature CX strategy should be leveraging social channels for insights that can help to inform product or service development and their competitive positioning. Although a significant amount of social activity is now happening in a more private environment, most obviously on messaging apps, social media channels continue to be a rich source of information for companies seeking to improve CX—for example, through sentiment analysis or early detection of pain points that might be leading to negative perception of a brand.

**We harness social data for insights that will help us improve the customer experience**

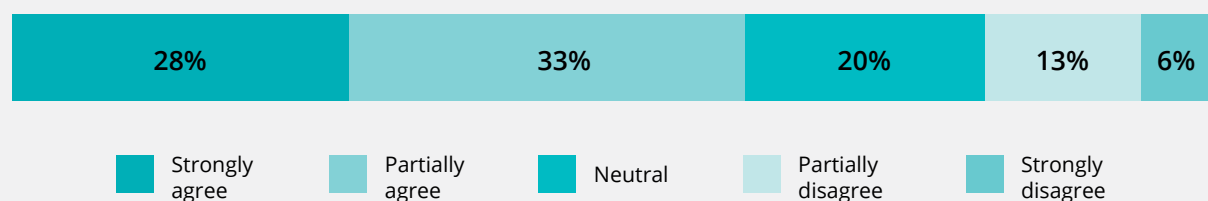


Figure 15: We harness social data for insights that will help us improve the customer experience (agree or disagree) (n=285)

## 4

# Enabling social customer experience through culture and training

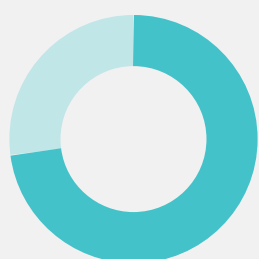


**TO DELIVER A COMPELLING CX**, organizations need to be people-centric. Everyone working for the organization must be empowered to focus on what the customer needs, whether via social media or any other channel, digital or offline.

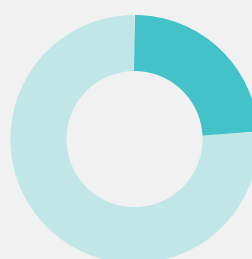
The responses to our survey demonstrate that getting set up for social can be a difficult organizational and cultural challenge.

Encouragingly (Figure 16), a majority of organizations report they have now embedded social into their corporate cultural values (54 percent) and empowered staff to use social to improve the customer experience (58 percent). However, a sizable minority have not yet taken these important first steps.

The research shows that the right cultural values can lead to staff feeling empowered to use social. Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of respondents at companies where social has been embedded into corporate cultural values say that staff across the organization are empowered to use social to improve CX, compared to only 24 percent of companies where social hasn't been instilled into the cultural ethos.



**73%**  
of companies **with** social embedded into corporate cultural values feel staff are empowered to use social to improve CX



**24%**  
of companies **without** social embedded into corporate cultural values feel staff are empowered to use social to improve CX

## Training and policies support organizations' social transformation

As when entering any new space, knowledge and skills are important enablers when it comes to engaging with social media.

Social platforms are distinct environments and require a willingness to adapt quickly and be creative. Not all companies have adapted to these requirements; as Figure 4 illustrates, a quarter of organizations (25 percent) cite speed of change as a key barrier to using social for CX.

For marketers, as an example, the spontaneity required may be foreign to the traditional campaign planning process executives are used to. This, therefore, puts the onus on training to inform executives on areas such as maximizing social, leveraging social-related capabilities such as video and real-time content, and empowering everyone to be a brand ambassador when on social media.

Figure 17 indicates many organizations could be doing more to enable this switch. More than half (53 percent) of respondents report their companies have internal training programs in place. However, a majority of organizations lack documented internal guidelines or other resources such as online learning or video tutorials, staff mentoring, and external training programs. Notably, a fifth (21 percent) of enterprise organizations don't have any social media training at all.

The low penetration of internal guidelines (at fewer than four in ten organizations) stands out as another area of concern. According to Hootsuite, "Whether your company is already well-established on social, or just beginning to build its presence online, all organizations should have a social media policy."<sup>15</sup>

As well as addressing legal and security risks, guidelines can empower employees to share company messaging and amplify brand messaging. Documented guidelines also help create consistency of brand voice and tone across channels.

### Social and the customer experience: extent to which respondents agree with statements

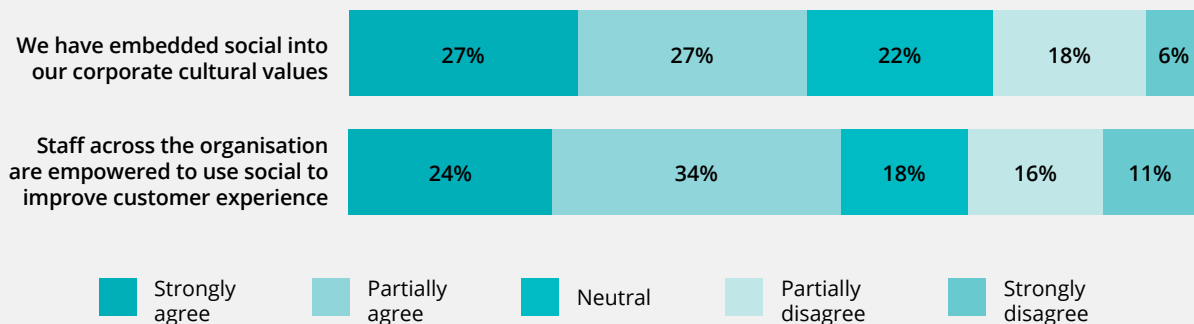


Figure 16: Social and the customer experience: extent to which respondents agree with statements (n=300/285)



**What types of education and training do you have in place to ensure that employees are using social as effectively as possible?**

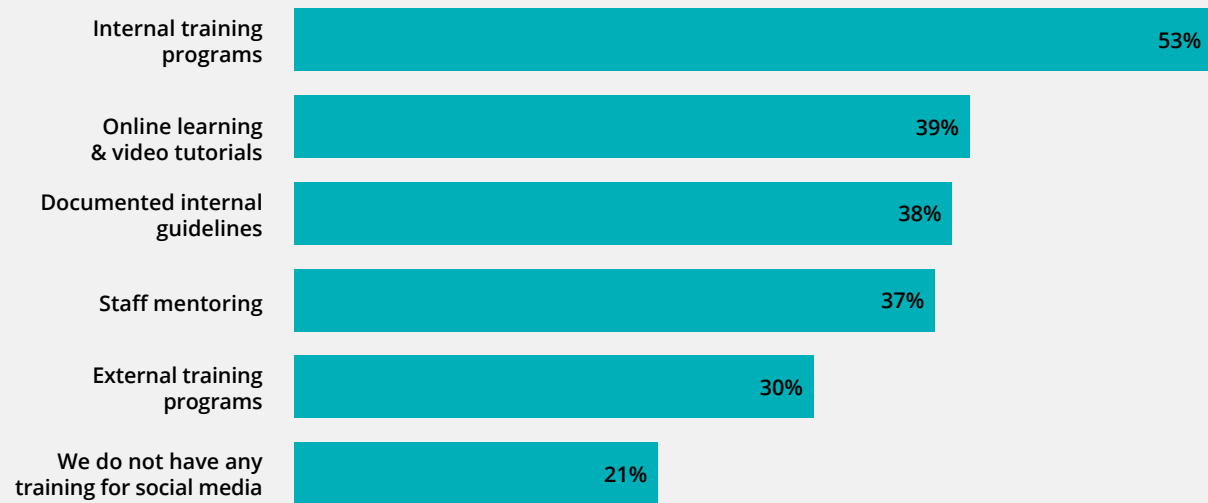


Figure 17: What types of education and training do you have in place to ensure that employees are using social as effectively as possible? (n=277)

## 5

# Measuring the impact of social on customer experience



**SUCCESSFUL MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS** depends on aligning metrics with business goals such as increasing revenue, reducing costs, and improving the customer experience.

A successful social media strategy should be anchored in clear metrics to ensure that campaigns and programs are achieving desired outcomes, whether they relate to sales, marketing or customer service. Measurement is a prerequisite for being able to benchmark, optimize performance, and build the business case for further investment.

According to the CMO Survey, social media spending increased 234 percent from 2009 to 2017, accounting for 12 percent of total marketing budgets. However, only 20 percent of marketers say they are able to prove the impact quantitatively. As part of this research, we asked respondents whether they are able to quantify the extent to which social activities improve the customer experience (Figure 18).

While 83 percent of respondents said they were able to do this, less than half of these (39 percent of all respondents) said that they do this systematically and have metrics in place. The enterprise businesses we surveyed are more likely to say they can only do this “in theory”, without the appropriate metrics and processes.

Those companies able to quantify the impact of social on CX are using a range of metrics shown in Figure 19. The most commonly cited metrics are social engagement (65 percent), customer satisfaction scores (63 percent) and brand awareness (61 percent).

## Are you able to quantify the extent to which social activities improve the customer experience?

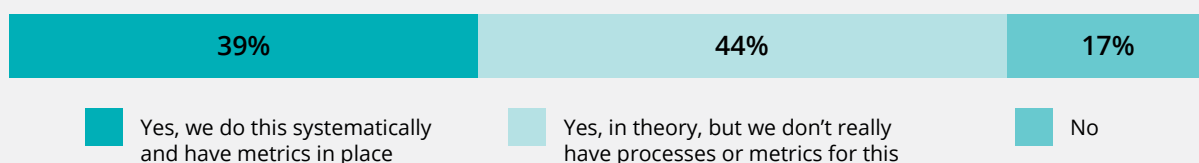


Figure 18: Are you able to quantify the extent to which social activities improve the customer experience? (n=267)

## Organizations begin to move beyond social media “vanity metrics”

Social engagement metrics are important for benchmarking performance internally and against competitors, although there is a danger that when used in isolation they will be dismissed as “vanity” metrics that don’t directly relate to tangible benefits for the business. Used in isolation, social engagement metrics can be misleading and may not tie back to key business goals. If the goal is to drive revenue, metrics need to attribute social activity to sales. If the goal is to manage customer complaints and inquiries on social, reduction in customer support calls needs to be measured.

In terms of hard commercial metrics, it is encouraging to see more than half of companies (52 percent) using sales as a metric, while 45 percent are using number of customer support calls. In the case of the latter, companies should be able to quantify in financial terms the savings that can be made as a result of decreased telephone support, although the reduced opportunities for cross-selling and up-selling may also need to be factored into the equation for some businesses.

Hootsuite’s guide *The ROI of Social Media* explains how companies can ensure they are using metrics that are connected to important business outcomes—for example, improved CX—by ensuring that metrics align with objectives and helping the enterprise make decisions.<sup>16</sup>

While customer satisfaction and net promoter score are useful headline metrics as a basic barometer of CX health, customer retention is another harder metric that can help companies understand the tangible value of their social-focused CX activities.

### What metrics does your organization use to quantify how social improves the customer experience?

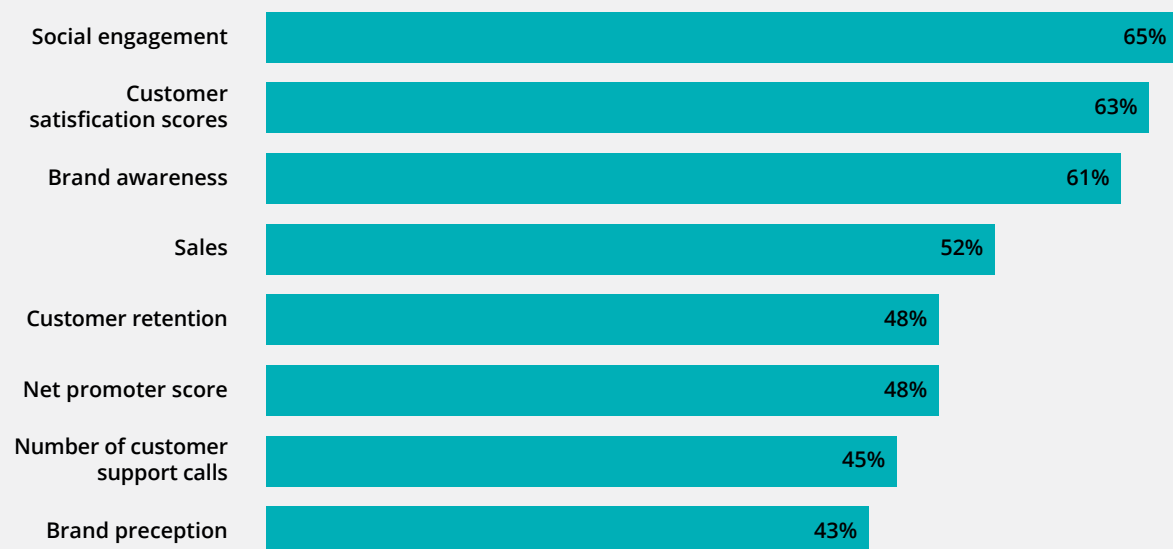


Figure 19: What metrics does your organization use to quantify how social improves the customer experience? (n=103)

# Conclusion



**THE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT WHILE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE** has emerged as a key differentiator for companies competing in an age with high consumer expectations, many enterprise organizations are underusing social channels to drive improved customer interactions. Delivering a great customer experience requires that organizations consider integrating social in the following areas to have the biggest impact:

## 1. Map the entire social customer journey

Organizations should start by mapping the different types of social engagements across the customer journey. This will identify where an organization's strengths in social are and where they can improve. According to this research, organizations should focus on improving lower funnel touch points, specifically converting prospects to customers, and building loyalty and retention.

## 2. Secure early wins with social data

Social data is a valuable source of customer intelligence. Analyzing social interactions can not only help improve social strategies by learning what content resonates with your audience, but can also be leveraged to drive improvements in other areas of the business. For example, monitoring customer complaints on social media can identify product and service gaps. Begin by analyzing the social data you have access to, and share insights beyond the marketing team. Then focus on

integrating social media management tools with other business critical technologies to improve data at each stage of the customer journey. The goal is to have a centralized view of the customer across all touchpoints.

### 3. Expand strategies beyond brand awareness

Social media is predominantly used by marketing, and specifically to drive top-of-funnel initiatives, however, other departments are increasingly showing interest. Two key departments to activate on social are sales and customer service/care. Research shows that in today's economy social media has a significant impact on purchase behaviors. Equip your sales team with the training and tools to engage with customers and track the impact of their activities. Additionally, managing customer pain points quickly on social should improve customers satisfaction, and deliver cost-savings relative to other support channels (telephone).

### 4. Look beyond surface metrics

It is ingrained into social marketers to measure traditional social metrics (e.g. engagement rate, reach, etc.). However, when thinking about the use of social media for managing customer experience, it is important to measure social in the context of the touch point you are seeking to improve. The right metrics may not even be within social. As an example, if the goal is to manage customer complaints and inquiries on social, companies should be measuring the reduction of customer support calls.

### 5. Focus on training, culture, and collaboration

Social media is no longer a channel, it's an integral part of the customer experience. As a result, it's imperative to establish a corporate culture that empowers the use of social media across all departments. Implement a social media policy to provide direction on its use, while educating employees with training on how to best leverage social media to impact their part of the social customer journey.

# Appendix: Respondent profiles

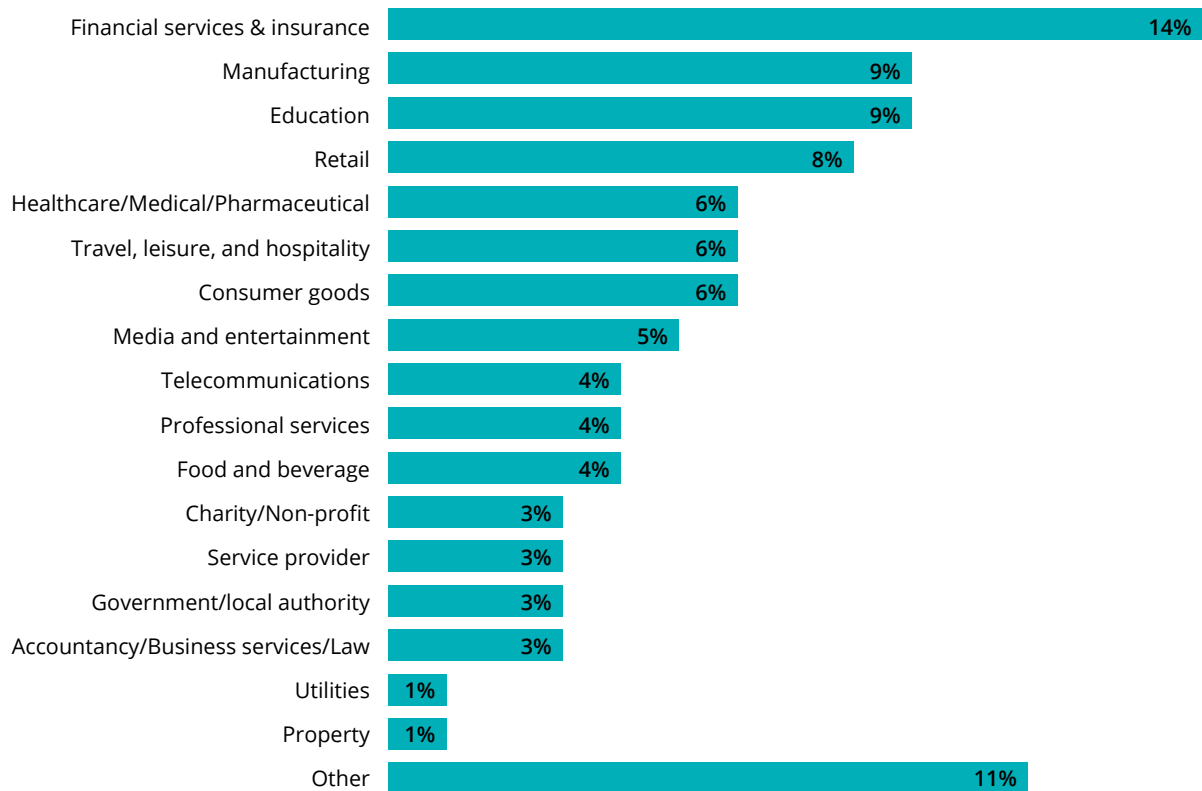


Figure 20: In which business sector does your company primarily operate? (n=327)

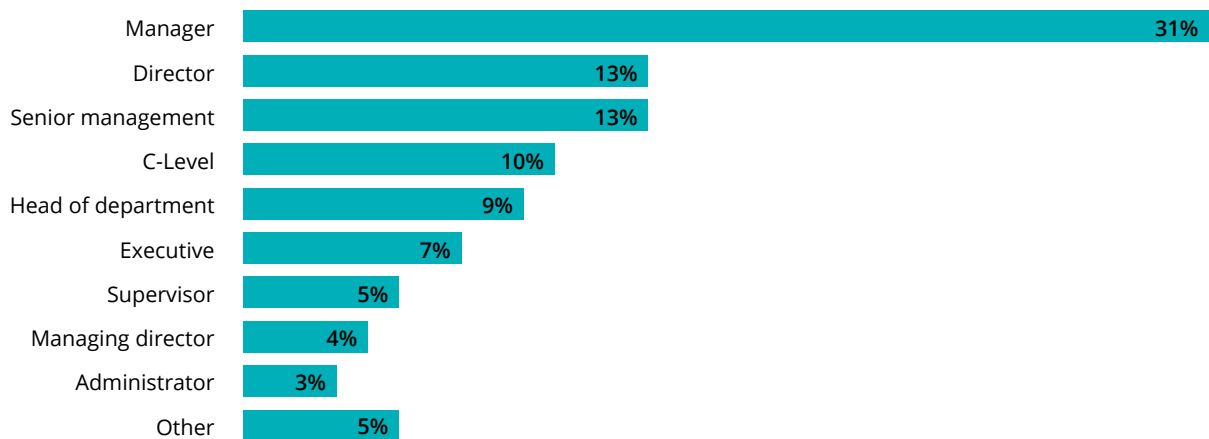


Figure 21: Level of seniority (n=327)

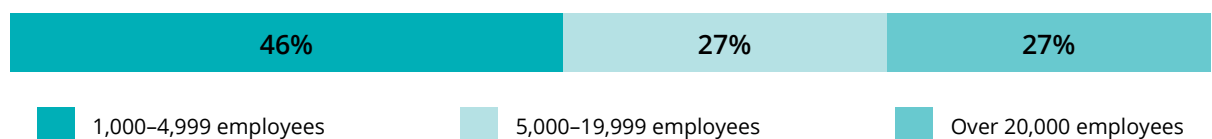


Figure 22: Number of employees worldwide (n=327)

## Endnotes

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