

# Social Media Marketing Adoption

## A Short Survey of Marketers Exploring Social Media

A MotiveLab Marketing Brief | Summer 2008



In the summer of 2007, MotiveLab launched a white paper offering 12 Essential Tips for Success in Social Media. Over the following year, more than 3000 people downloaded the white paper, and over 1800 filled out a short survey about their attitudes toward social media as a marketing function. The results of the survey are offered here as one small view onto the adoption of social media marketing.

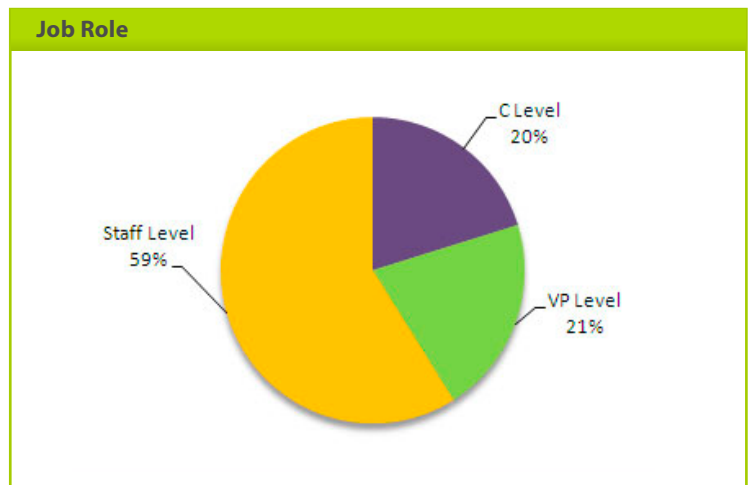
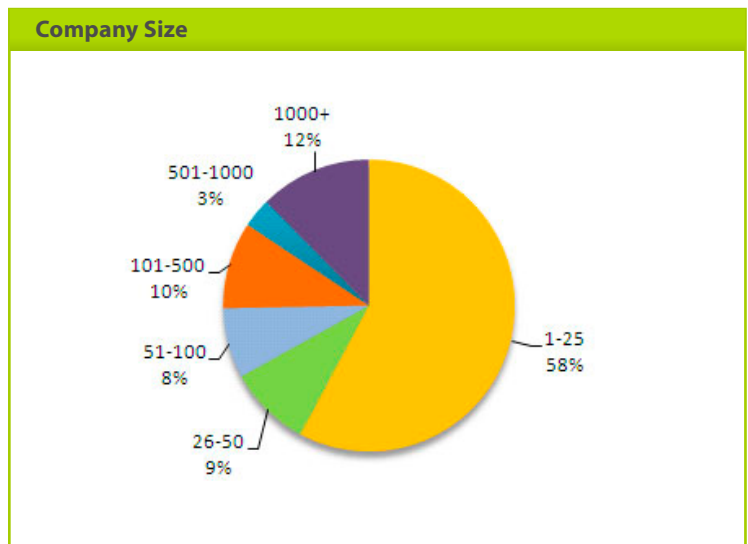
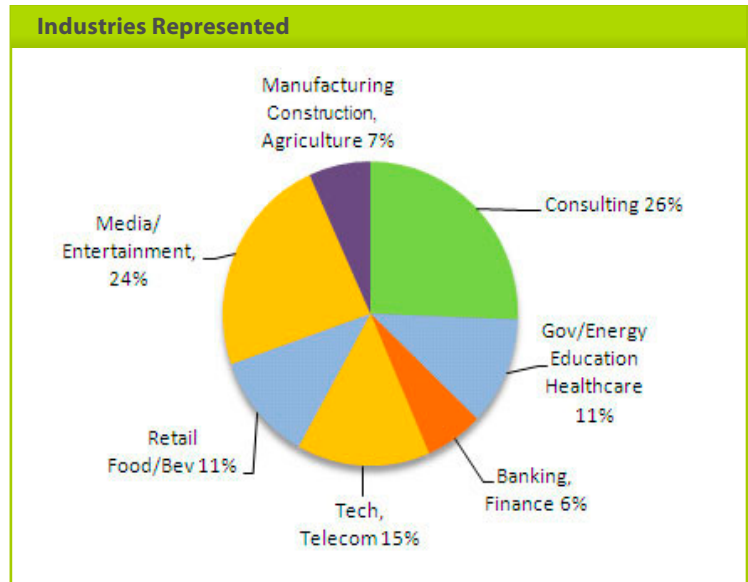
While there are few surprises in the survey results, there are some interesting trends, and a couple of data points that quantify what many marketers suspect, judging from the online discussions about social media adoption. Key among these findings are the increasing pace of social media adoption as a marketing practice, and very clear notions of which resources and partners are most relied upon to help implement social media marketing programs.

A total of 1858 people filled out a qualification questionnaire while downloading our Social Media white paper over the course of 12 months beginning in June of 2007. In addition to demographic and job responsibility questions, we asked respondents a few questions about their approach toward social media, both personally and as representatives of their organization. We asked about their attitude and approach toward social media—whether they were just getting informed, whether they were already actively pursuing social media programs, or whether they thought social media was a passing fad. We also asked, if they were engaged in social media programs, or planning to engage in the near future, who they would rely on to execute social media programs.

We looked at the collected information both as a single data set, and also as two individual 6-month sets of data, to look for changes in trends over the past year. While the total number of responses in the first 6-month set was roughly double the number of responses in the second 6-month set, the distribution of data for job roles and demographics was consistent, as was the distribution of responses for most questions in the survey. The only significant outlier was how respondents answered the question of how they view social media as a marketing function, which we discuss in detail below.

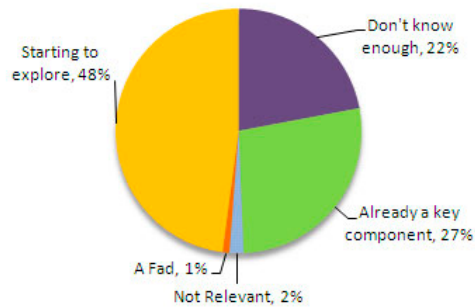
### Demographics

By far the largest group of respondents represented companies of less than 25 people, although the total size of the sample remaining was enough to validate that the data wasn't unreasonably skewed by that population. Perhaps surprisingly, at least for the questions we asked about attitudes and approach to social media, there were no remarkable differences in responses across companies of different sizes or different industries. This is probably due in large part to the self-selecting nature of an audience downloading a social media white paper. For that reason, our analysis focuses less on parsing different attitudes across audience drill downs, and more on the general attitudes and changes in attitudes over the course of the year.

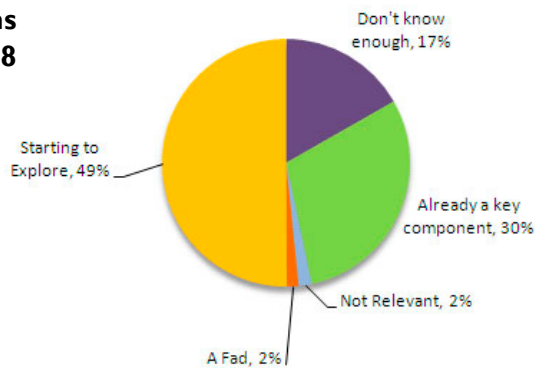


## Attitude and Approach Toward Social Media

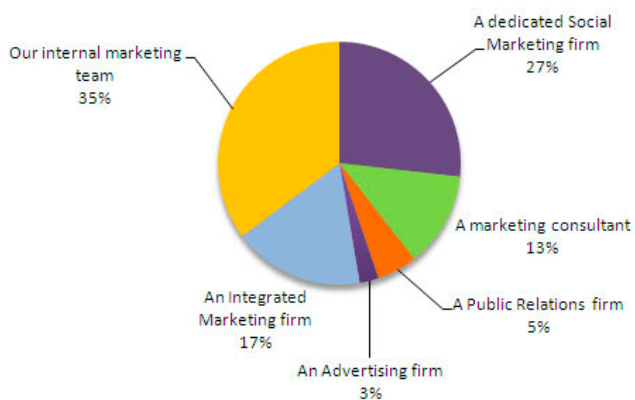
### 6 Months Ending 2007



### 6 Months Starting 2008



## Who Do You Rely On to Help Implement Social Media Programs



## Attitudes

We asked respondents to tell us their attitude toward social media, whether they didn't know enough to have a strong opinion, whether they were just starting to explore the field, whether it was already a key component of their marketing, whether they thought it was interesting but not relevant to the marketing plans, or whether they thought it was a passing fad.

It would be expected that marketers downloading a social media white paper would not be likely to rate social media a passing fad or irrelevant, so we won't draw any conclusions from those responses. By far the greatest number of responses came in the "Starting to Explore" category which, when combined with the "Don't Know Enough" category, is a graphic illustration of just how early social media is in its growth as a marketing practice. Significantly less than 1/3 of all respondents reported that social media is a key component of their marketing programs. But it's interesting to note the change in these responses over the two six-month periods of our survey. In two six-month cycles, the number of marketers reporting that they don't know enough about social media to have a strong opinion dropped by 20%, while the number reporting social media as a key component of their marketing programs jumped 10%. While perhaps not surprising given the amount of attention given to social media, it is a clear and measurable marker of the accelerating exploration of social media as a marketing practice.

The rapid adoption of social media requires resources to carry out marketing programs. So we asked respondents who they rely on to implement social media programs. The answers here were somewhat surprising. While nearly a majority of respondents are only just beginning to explore social media marketing, more than 1/3 are driving these initiatives internally. We see this as a very good sign. While outside partners can often help marketers understand and execute effective programs—that is, after all, our primary job at MotiveLab—customer intimacy is something that should never be outsourced. The best partnership is between a strong and confident internal team and a strong and experienced supporting partner.

Unfortunately, the data doesn't bode well for those traditional public relations and advertising firms aggressively repositioning themselves as social media experts. Only 5% of marketers cited PR as a resource for social media programs, and only 3% cited advertising as a resource. In some senses, the data isn't surprising: PR and advertising have never truly been about forging relationships directly with customers, which is the essence of social media. PR's DNA is forging relationships with reporters and analysts, while advertising's DNA is about forging relationships with media buyers and brokers. PR and advertising are still important and relevant for any marketing operation, but simply adding new services like "blogger relations" hasn't made them social media experts in the minds of most marketers. Marketers appear to understand there is a deeper challenge in social media that requires the development of meaningful and direct relationships with customers, not just influencers.

### Conclusion

Clearly you shouldn't take our word—or our data—at face value. We asked questions that we wanted to know the answers to, and although we took care not to skew the data, the answers do support our position as a social media marketing firm. Good for us.

Instead, we would only suggest that this brief report is one more point of confirmation of the growing adoption of social media by marketers across a wide spectrum of industries and specialties. Social media is a real and important phenomenon that every marketer should understand. It's also challenging and fun.

We'll leave off by repeating the conclusions of our original white paper, which we think still ring true a year after they were written.

Social media is an important and rapidly advancing trend that is reshaping many aspects of marketing. Marketers are increasingly adopting social media as a marketing practice, and they often embrace implementation on their own while seeking support from strong partners. While the technology is rapidly evolving—and is often confusing to non-technical marketers—the fundamental drivers are quite familiar. Social media is simply a broad amplification of word-of-mouth. While that basic truth is easy to understand, the implications are a direct challenge to many ingrained marketing practices that treat markets as a passive audience to be influenced with a broadcast message.

As social media engages your customers, it elevates and disseminates information about every aspect of your business. Your customers' own stories will inevitably compete with the story you have to tell, and influential members of your market community can amplify or nullify your carefully crafted positioning.

To respond to this challenging trend, marketers must avoid the temptation to leverage social media as a new technology to manipulate word-of-mouth messages. Such tactics are regularly exposed by consumers and typically cause more damage to a company's reputation than any short-term gains in positioning. Instead, marketers must develop trusted relationships with their market community by leveraging tools that enhance their ability to focus on critical issues, identify key influencers, track market conversations, and engage responsively in market dialog. Such an approach toward social media—using the technology to enhance the development of meaningful customer relationships—provides a competitive advantage by improving market insights, access and acceptance within your market community.

MotiveLab is a marketing agency that helps businesses understand social media trends and incorporate social media technologies into their marketing programs, from launching products and generating leads, to building customer communities and driving referrals. For more information, visit [www.motivelab.com](http://www.motivelab.com).



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