

# THE PURPOSE OF PR 2018



A research report from

**FOURTH DAY**  
PUBLIC RELATIONS



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# INTRODUCTION

This is the second *Purpose of PR* survey from Fourth Day. Our industry is evolving constantly in response to advancements in digital technology and changes within the media, so pinning down the boundaries of PR is harder than ever.

We wanted to find out whether perceptions had changed since our original survey two years ago, so we spoke to 50 people working in marketing and PR, predominantly in the B2B sector. We mixed online and telephone interviews with face-to-face meetings to allow for a wider discussion. I hope you find the results interesting.



**Xanthe Vaughan Williams**

Co-founder and director, Fourth Day Public Relations

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Xanthe".

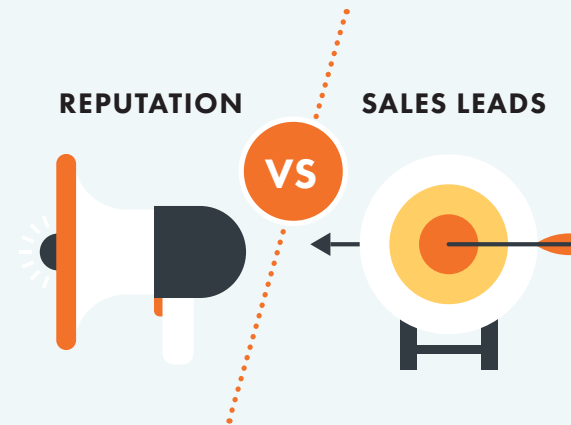
## 1. Brand reputation still matters

Managing brand reputation emerged as the number one reason to work with a PR consultancy, with 81% of respondents citing it as a valued aspect of PR. This is encouraging, as we believe that reputation is at the heart of the discipline, but we should note that two thirds of respondents also want PR to bring them sales leads.

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**“ It seems unlikely that the tension will ever completely disappear between the pure sales and marketing teams, and PR.**

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The desire for sales may be a reflection of the closer integration between PR and content marketing. It seems unlikely, however, that the tension between sales and marketing teams - for whom success equals qualified leads - and PRs, whose job is to build awareness, will ever completely disappear.

## 2. Content reigns supreme

Since our survey in 2016, content has risen up the pecking order dramatically with 74% of respondents now considering it to be an important element of a PR campaign. The inclusion of broader content into the PR domain is consistent with our own experience, and it seems to us that it's a natural place for it to reside.



We frequently find that a campaign idea originating from within a PR team will translate not only into materials for the media, but into all aspects of PR and marketing, from media relations and social media to email campaigns and white papers, webinars and live events. It makes no sense to keep content isolated in silos.

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“ 74% of respondents now consider content to be an important element of a PR campaign.”

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## 3. Spend expected to rise in all areas – particularly content and social media

In spite of mixed economic forecasts, most of our respondents demonstrated the industry's traditional optimism by saying that they expect spend to increase on content, social media and PR. More than half believe that spend will increase on content, and 43% anticipate an increase in their social media budgets.

**INTRODUCTION**  
WHAT WE FOUND

In the next 18 months, more than three quarters of respondents plan to increase activity on LinkedIn compared to 56% for Twitter, indicating a growing recognition of LinkedIn's potential to connect people directly with their sales prospects and influencers. Perhaps more surprisingly, in spite of this anticipated increase in social media activity, 45% of respondents still do not have a social media manager. It will be interesting to revisit the management of social media in our next survey to analyse more closely the relationship between in-house and third parties in this context.



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**66 65% of respondents are using web analytics as a measurement tool for PR.**

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#### **4. Recognition of PR's contribution to SEO and web traffic but measurement still an issue**

In an industry which has traditionally struggled to prove its financial worth, indicators such as web traffic and social media shares have been adopted enthusiastically. 65% of respondents are using web analytics as a measurement tool for PR and 37% of respondents named SEO as an important aspect of PR.

**INTRODUCTION**  
**WHAT WE FOUND**

The downside of this is that less attention appears to be devoted to assessing the improvement in brand reputation, and even to sharing the results. Only 53% consider coverage analysis a significant PR measurement and 80% do not use a media monitoring service at all.

This may be because our survey contained more in-house respondents who are likely to leave this to their agencies or it's possible that the quality of Google news alerts is close to rivalling some of the press monitoring packages on the market.

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**“ Less attention appears to be devoted to assessing the improvement in brand reputation.”**

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## AT A GLANCE - THE KEY FINDINGS

81%



say that PR offers most value through **brand reputation**

74%



see **content** as an important aspect of PR

37%



expect their **PR budget to increase** next year

51%



expect **their content budget** to increase next year

76%



want to **increase their use of LinkedIn**

65%



use **web analytics** to measure the success of PR



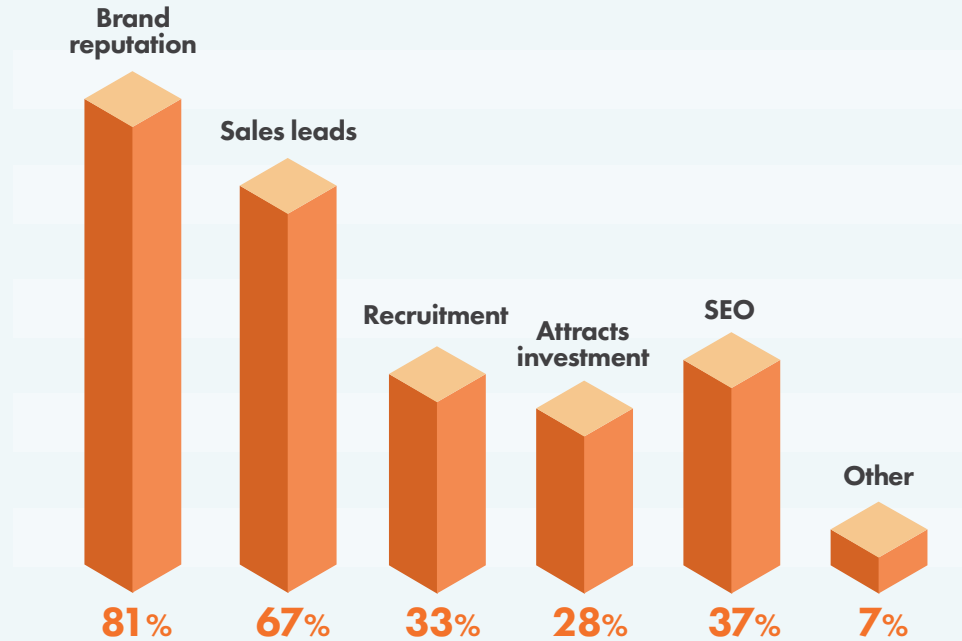


Section 1  
**What's the purpose of PR?**

**SECTION 1**  
WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF PR?

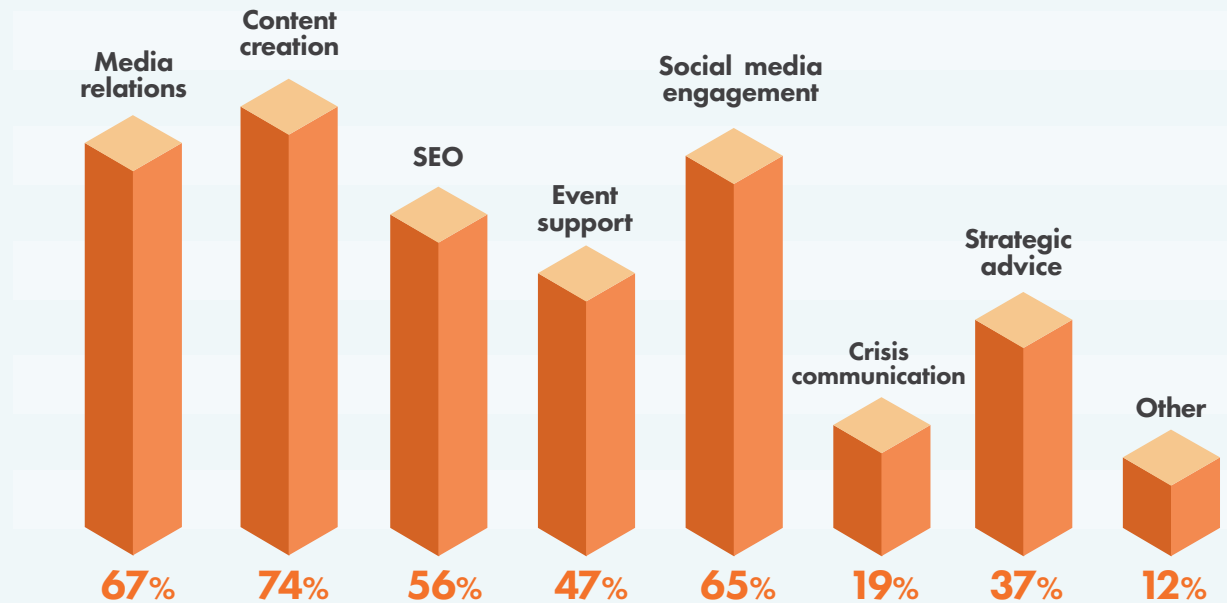
**Q1**

**How does PR offer value to your organisation?**



**Q2**

**Which aspects of PR are important to your business?**



**SECTION 1**  
WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF PR?

**Brand reputation is still the most widely valued aspect of PR, as it was in our 2016 survey,** but 67% of respondents also believe that PR brings them sales leads, while 33% see its value as a recruitment tool and 28% expect PR to help them to attract funding.

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**“ When we develop a story, it’s to reach an audience not only through earned media but also through owned, shared and paid channels as well.**

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When assessing the importance of the various disciplines that fall into the overall category of PR, there has been a significant change. Content creation is considered important by the greatest number of people (74%), outranking both media relations and social media engagement (67% and 65% respectively).

This coincides with our own experience, which indicates that high quality content is at the heart of many PR campaigns. When we develop a story, it’s to reach an audience not only through earned media but also through owned, shared and paid channels as well. And increasingly we are finding that all of these are managed through the PR function.

Further underlining the increasing closeness of the relationship between PR and marketing, 56% of respondents selected SEO as an aspect of PR that was important to them. This shows a growing recognition of the role that high quality media coverage plays in improving search engine rankings.

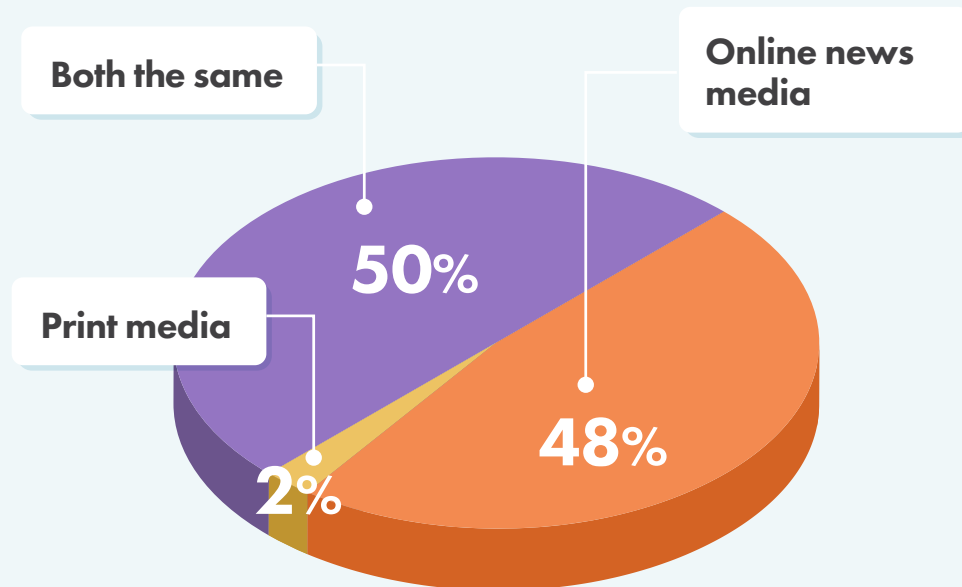


Section 2  
**Online vs print**



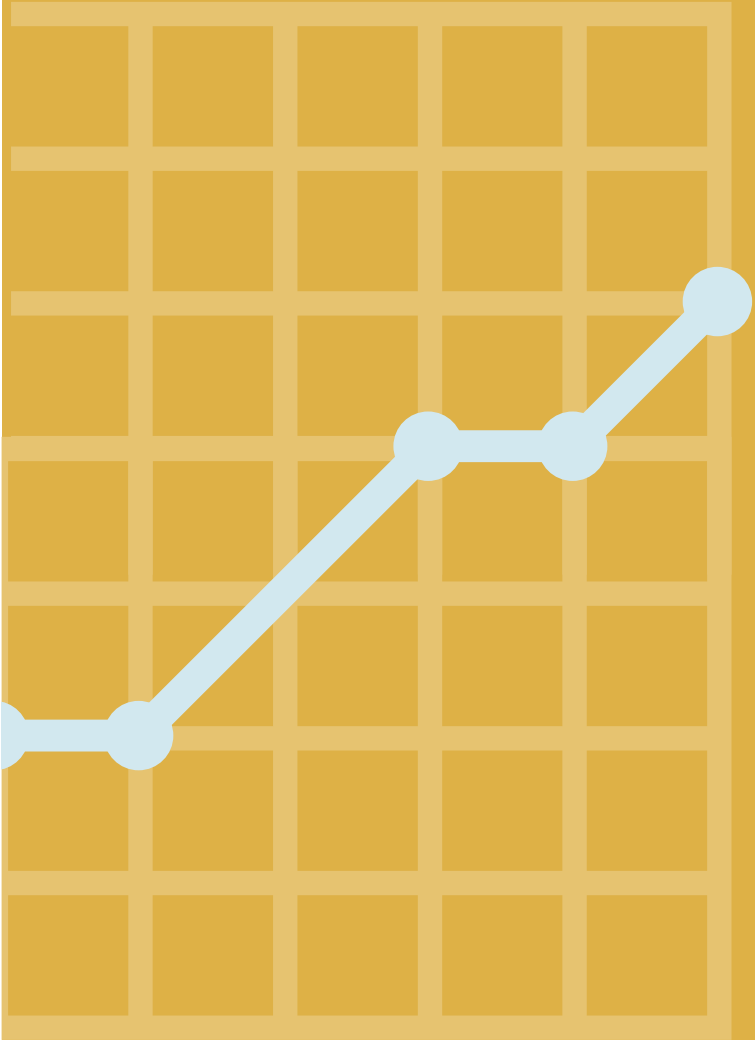
Q3

## Which type of news do you value most?



When Fourth Day carried out this survey two years ago in 2016, 38.5% of respondents said that 'print only' coverage had the most value. It's telling, though not unexpected, that in 2018 only one respondent considered print to be more valuable. This particular respondent's view was based on an environment in which the target audience was disproportionately influenced by a single print publication.

Print is far from dead, however. Half of our 2018 respondents felt that print and online coverage held the same value. As an industry that has always struggled with the question of measurement, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of assuming that online media coverage is all that matters simply because it offers more statistics to present to our clients.



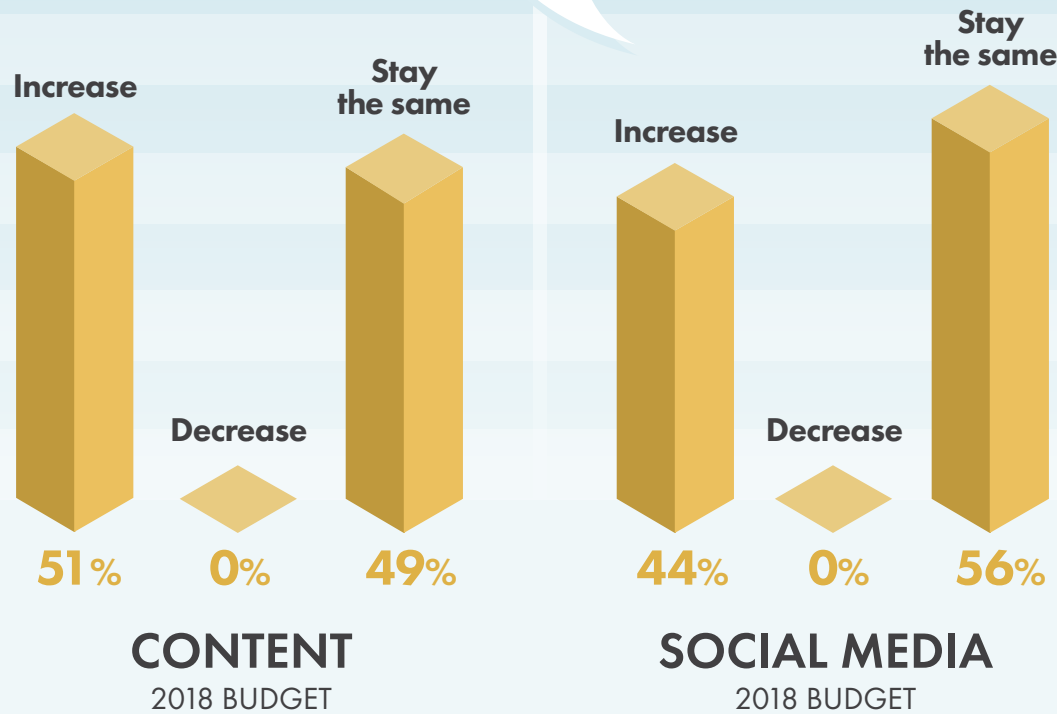
Section 3  
**Spending choices**



**SECTION 3**  
SPENDING CHOICES

**Q4**

**Over the next year, what do you expect to happen to your content and social media budgets?**

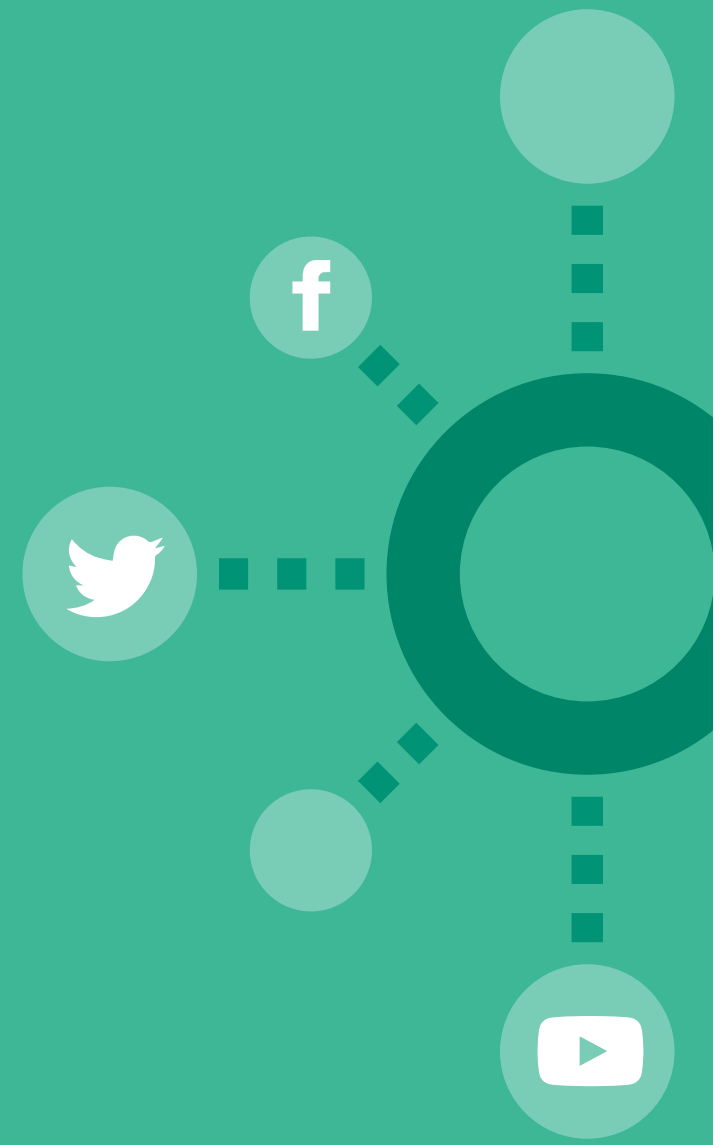


Content and social media emerged as the two disciplines on which more money is to be spent. 51% expect their content budget to increase in the next year, while 44% believe that they will be spending more on social media.





Section 4  
Getting more social





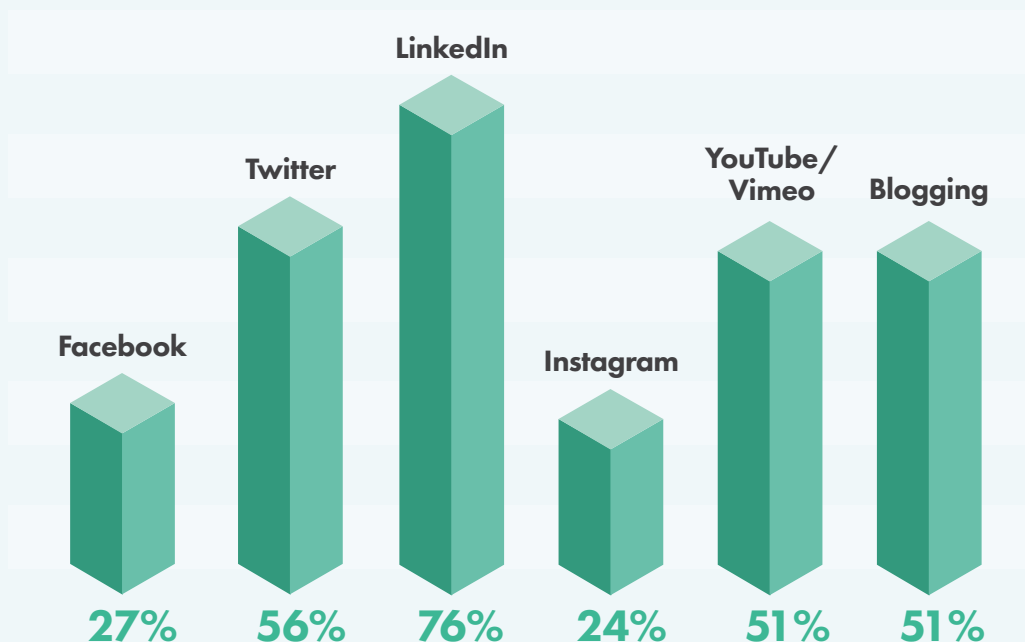
Q5

**Which social channels do you anticipate using more in the next 18 months?**

In terms of the channels marketers anticipate using more during the next 18 months, LinkedIn was a clear winner, selected by over 76% of respondents, with Twitter in second place at 56%.

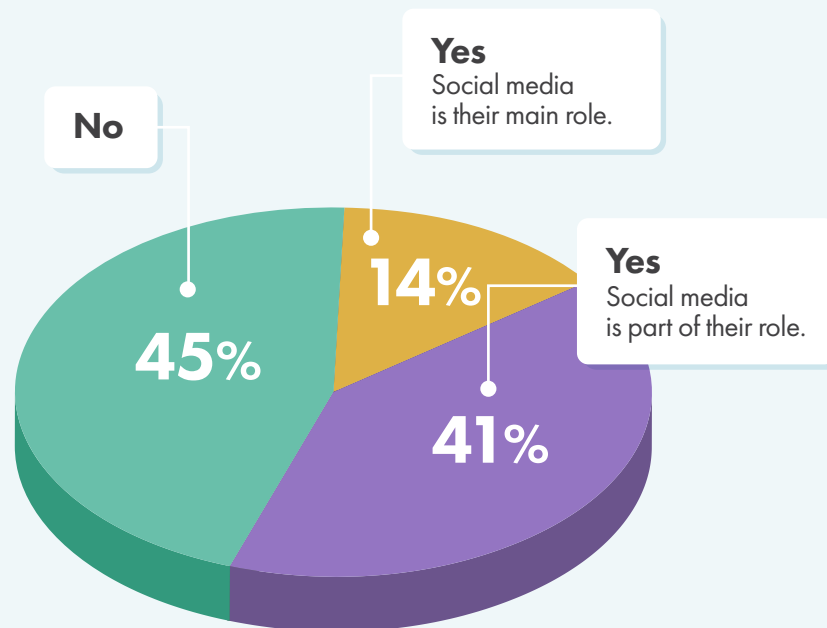
“ **LinkedIn combines a blogging platform with the ability to create and maintain direct business relationships.** ”

There is no doubt that the potential value of LinkedIn, which combines a blogging platform with the ability to create and maintain direct business relationships, is coming to the attention of more marketing professionals. With the renewed focus on content, it's not surprising that more than half of our respondents expect to be spending more on blogging.



Q6

Do you have a full time social media manager?

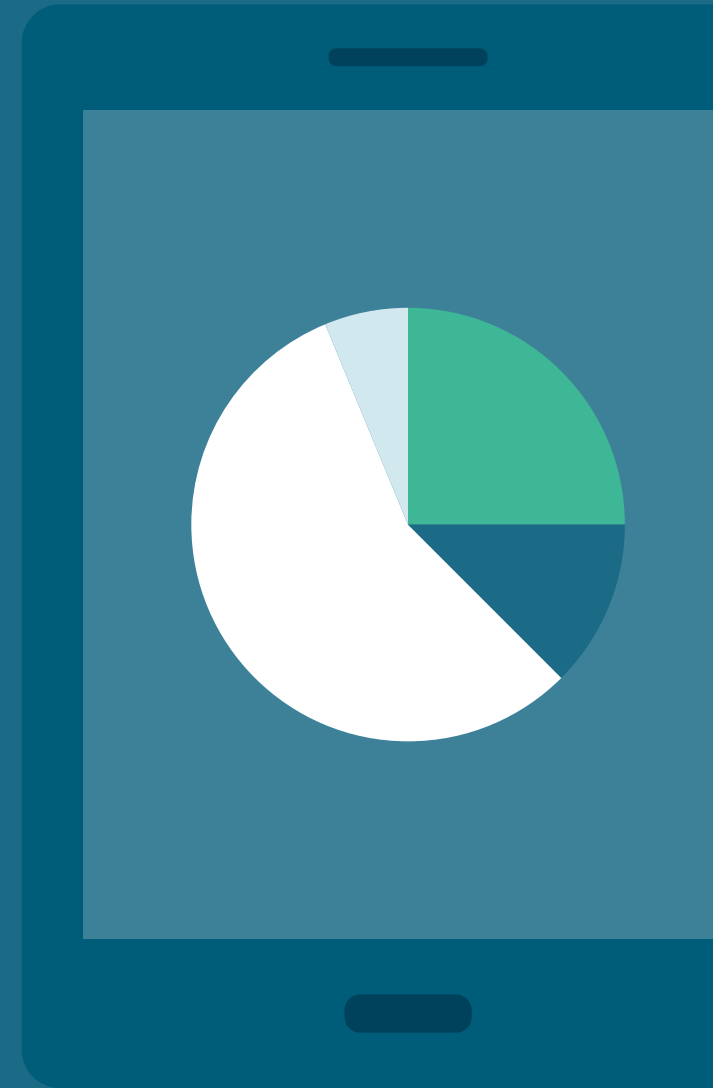


“ It’s a little disconcerting that 45% of people still do not employ anyone in a dedicated social media role.

It’s not just written content that we need to think about, however. 51% of respondents also believe that they will be spending more on video channels such as YouTube or Vimeo in the next 18 months, reflecting the growing importance of video as one of the most powerful ways to communicate a message. One respondent told us that his target audience no longer has time to read written content at all, so his organisation now presents all news and views in the form of audio podcasts.

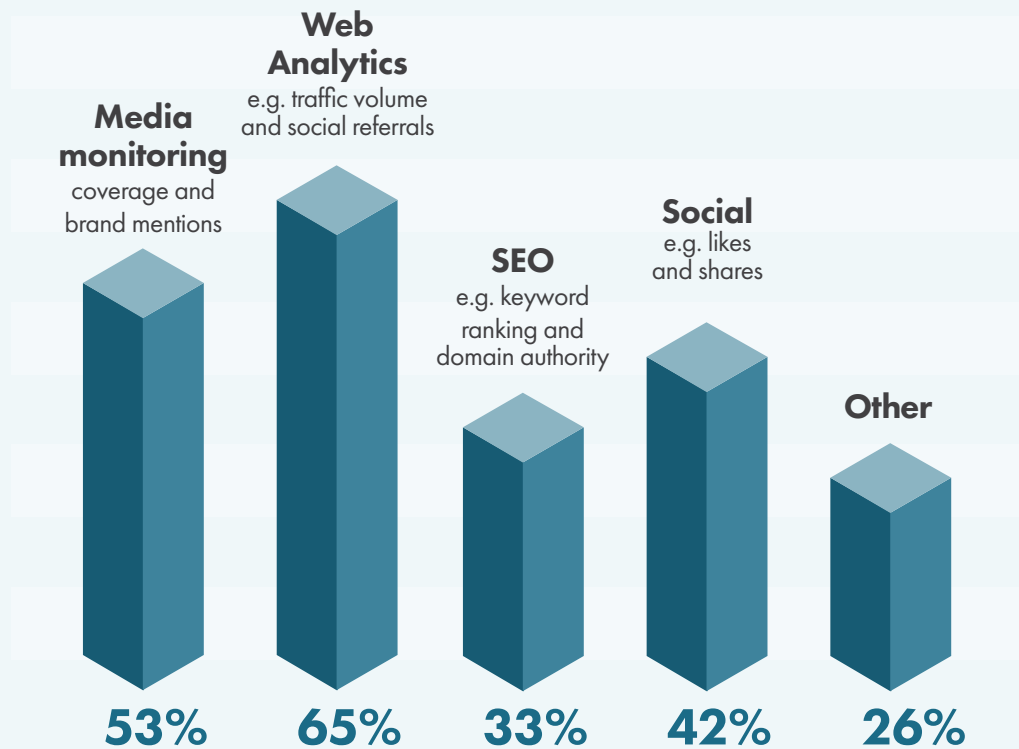
Given all this enthusiasm for social media, however, it’s a little disconcerting that 45% of people still do not employ anyone in a dedicated social media role, whether full time or part time. It will be interesting to see who can fill this gap in many organisations, and whether that will be a new hire, an existing employee or a third party agency.

## Section 5 Measurement



Q7

## How do you measure the success of your PR?



The measurement of success is still one of the most problematic subjects that PRs have to tackle. Of the various methods put forward, web analytics – looking at volume of traffic, social media referrals etc – came top at 65%, with the traditional system of looking at media coverage in second place at 53%. It's surprising though, that almost 80% of respondents said that they do not use a media monitoring service.

“ Almost 80% of respondents said that they do not use a media monitoring service.

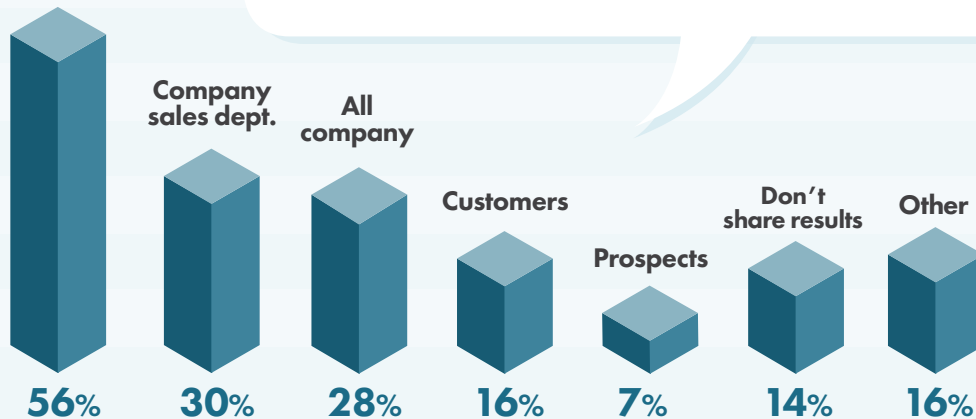
Statistics from web analytics and social media are undoubtedly helpful, particularly when trying to show the correlation between media coverage and sales leads, but they don't provide insight into how customers feel about a brand.

We have already established that 81% of businesses value PR for its effect on brand reputation, so this is potentially a missed opportunity. There is no silver bullet for measuring PR, but we have to reach a position where the ultimate objectives for PR are set right from the outset and based on business impact - something which the Association of Measurement and Evaluation of Communications (AMEC) framework sets out to achieve.

Q9

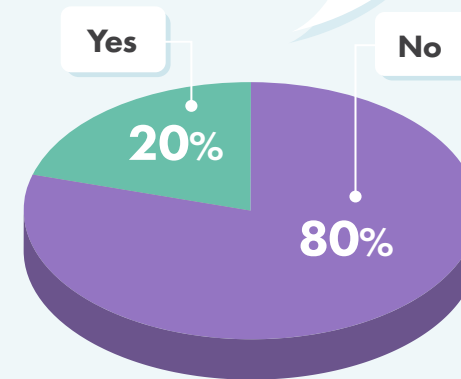
## Who do you share your PR results with?

Director/  
Senior management/  
Board level



Q8

## Do you use any press monitoring services?



We asked our respondents how they shared the results of their PR campaigns – thinking in particular about media coverage – and the answers were surprisingly underwhelming. 56% communicate them to the senior executives within the company, but only 28% share with the whole company and 14% don't share results at all. There is a real danger that in our effort to focus on statistics, we are overlooking the enormous power of these third party endorsements in the form of media coverage.

If you've found this report useful, why not speak to Fourth Day about how PR can help your organisation in 2018?

————— **Get in touch:** —————

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7403 4411

**Tweet:** @FourthDayPR

**Email:** [xanthe@fourthday.co.uk](mailto:xanthe@fourthday.co.uk)

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