

2009 Social Media Marketing & PR Benchmark Guide

Benchmarks and best practices for harnessing the power of the social marketplace

Note: This is an authorized excerpt from the full MarketingSherpa 2009 Social Media Marketing and PR Benchmark Guide. To download the entire Report, go to: <http://www.SherpaStore.com> or call 877-895-1717

Introduction

"These are the times that experts will look back and officially classify as the Social Revolution, distinctly and separately from the Internet Revolution," said Brian Solis, a thought leader among those who have helped pave the way for social media.

Social media is changing the way companies communicate in the pursuit of commerce. Social media, as it relates to the practice of marketing and PR, is a rapidly emerging topic with a continually evolving definition. Ask a hundred communications professionals what social media marketing and PR is, and you'll get a hundred different answers. So, after months of research and deliberation on this subject, we decided to establish a definition for the purpose of this study.

'Social Media Marketing and PR' Defined

Social media marketing and PR is the practice of facilitating a dialogue and sharing content between companies, influencers, prospects and customers, using various online platforms including blogs, professional and social networks, video and photo sharing, wikis, forums and related Web 2.0 technologies.

The Difference between 'Social Media' and 'Social Media Marketing and PR'

'Social media' signifies a broad spectrum of topics that have a number of different connotations. In the context of Internet marketing, social media refers to a collective group of properties whose content is primarily published by users, not direct employees of the property (e.g. the vast majority of video on YouTube is user generated content).

'Social media marketing and PR', on the other hand, is about the commercial practice of building ways for fans of a brand or company to promote it themselves in multiple online social media platforms. Social media marketing and

PR is about collaboration between people. It is about participating with everyone and sharing information. It is as much about giving as it is about receiving from the group. The premise of social media marketing and PR is engaging the consumer in conversation in a way that provides mutual value.

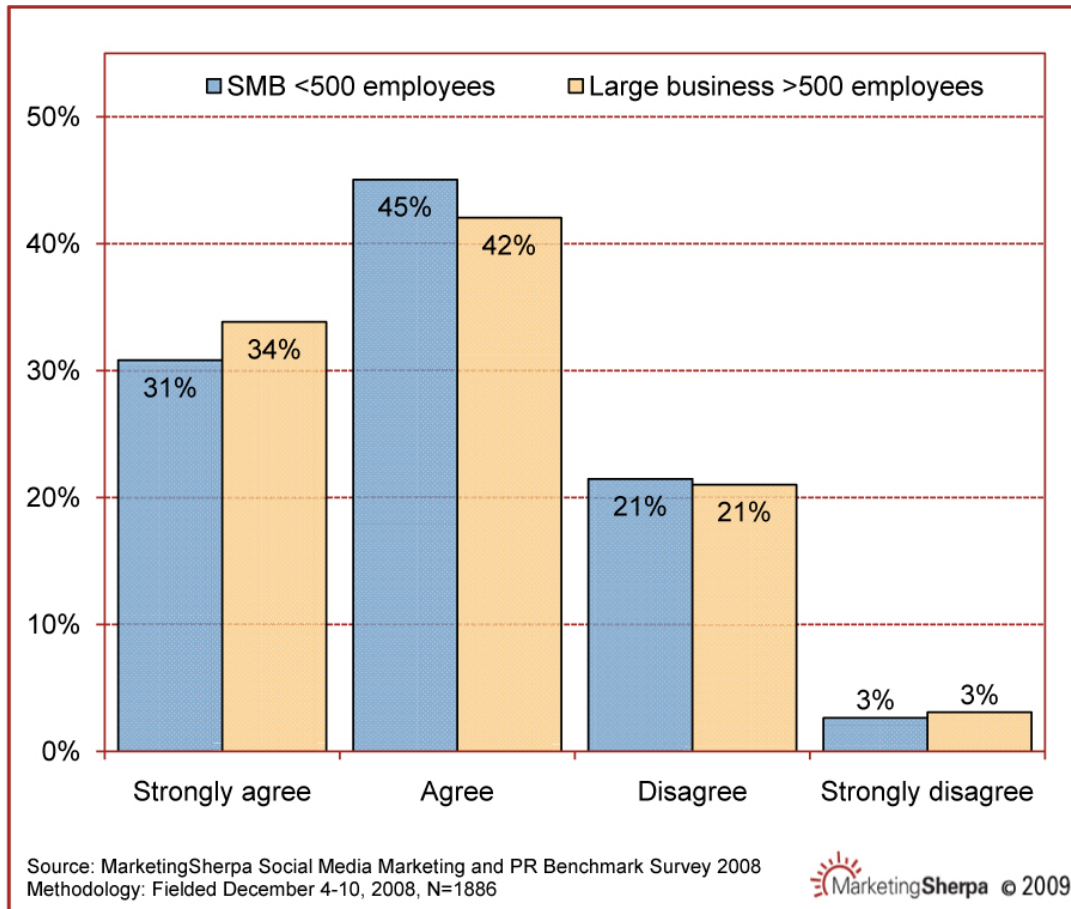
This benchmark study is MarketingSherpa's first edition on this topic. It comes at a critical point in the emergence of social media marketing and PR, as organizations seek new ways to generate maximum revenue with minimal investment – a pressure exacerbated by the impact of a worldwide economic recession.

The findings of this study will give you the advantage of understanding what works (and what doesn't), based on the many social media marketing and PR practitioners who have generously shared their knowledgeable experience with us.

Executive Summary

1. Communications is Evolving: Adapt or Become Extinct

Do You Agree that Social Media is Changing the Way Your Company Communicates?



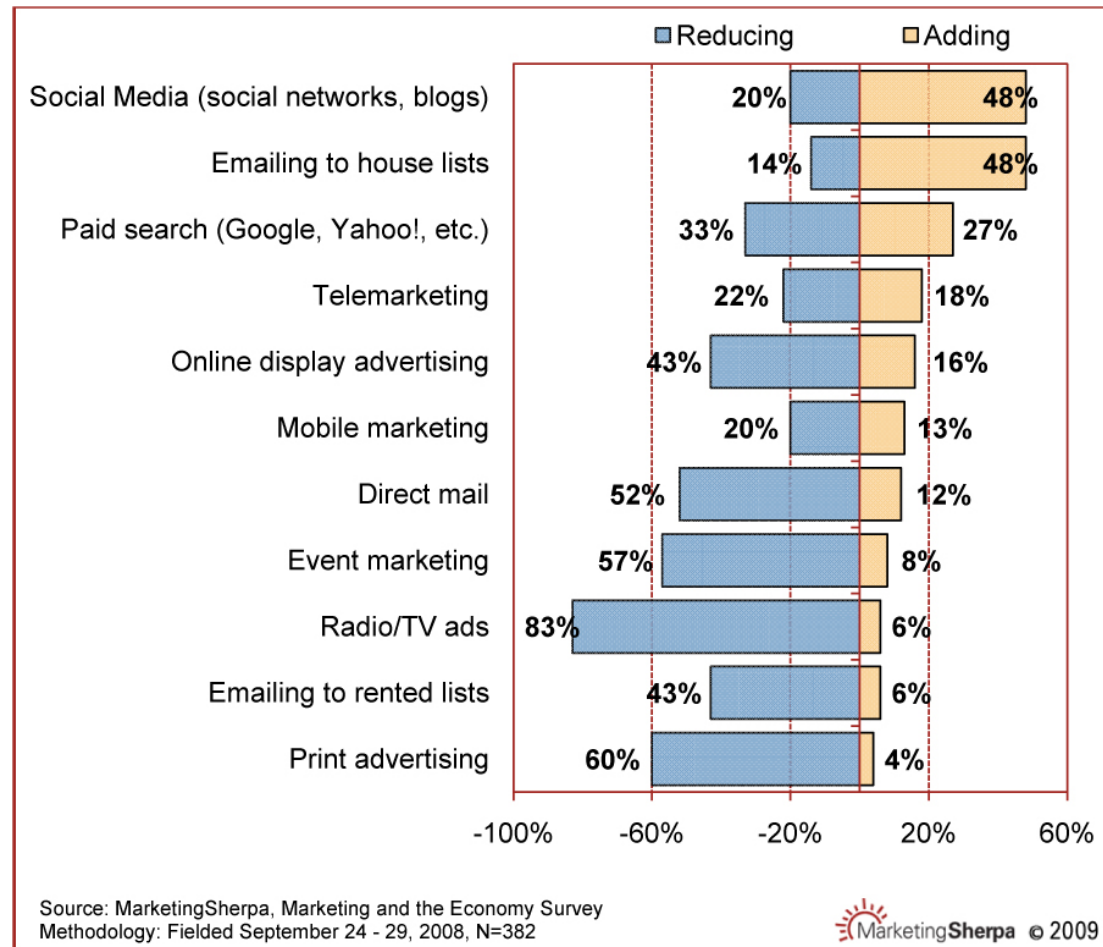
The practice of marketing communications and public relations as we know it is certainly not dead, but it is just as certainly changing. Social media, and its ability to create virtual communities of common interests and trusted conversations between companies and their prospects and customers, is the catalyst of this change. And 68% of the 1886 marketing and PR professionals responding to our recent benchmark survey agree.

The impact of this change is not limited to the way marketers communicate with customers and prospects; it is having an even greater impact on how PR agencies and in-house publicists communicate effectively with journalists and other influencers.

In delving deeper, we found that 83% of agencies and consultants, whose opinions are based on a broader range of client experience, agreed with the question of change compared to 70% of client-side marketers.

2. Social Media Receives the Most Additional Funding in 2009

Which Marketing Budget Line Items Will Your Company Increase or Decrease in 2009?



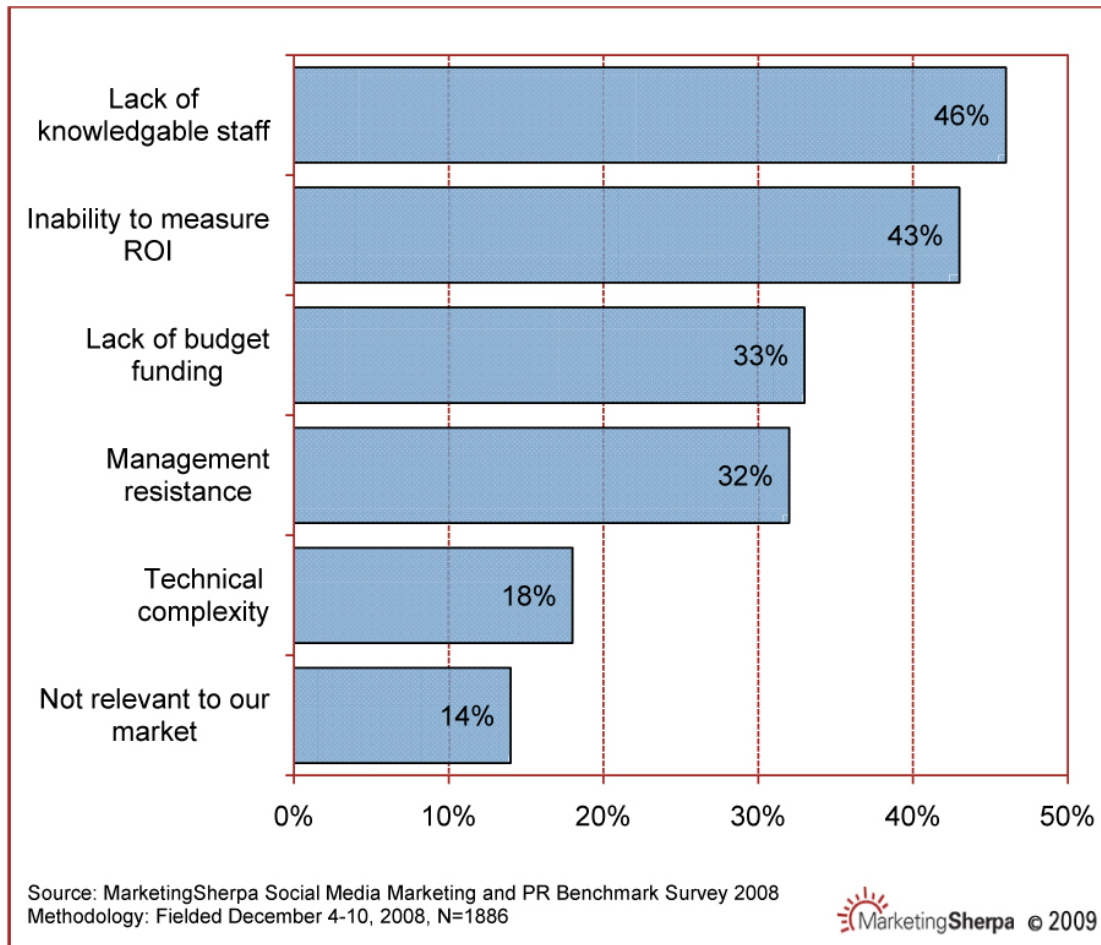
During this period of continued economic uncertainty and the resulting pressure to cut marketing budgets further, social media has benefitted from the perception that it requires minimal capital investment to implement effectively. As one marketer told us, "I don't understand big budget social media tactics. We use social media because it's effective and FREE. The only cost associated with it in our organization is time (employee salaries), design (in-house) and occasional programming (in-house)."

Social media is a time-intensive tactic and while it may only require a minimal cash investment, unless outsourced, it does require a significant investment in human capital. Salaries will likely be the bulk of additional spending on social media.

An interesting point made by the chart above is that social media and email are the only two tactics on which more companies are planning to increase spending than are planning to decrease spending. In all other online and offline categories, the number of companies planning to reduce spending exceeds the number planning to add to those budgets.

3. “Lack of Knowledge” is the Most Significant Barrier to Social Media Adoption

Which Factors Have Presented the Most Significant Barriers to Social Media Adoption to Your Organization or Client?

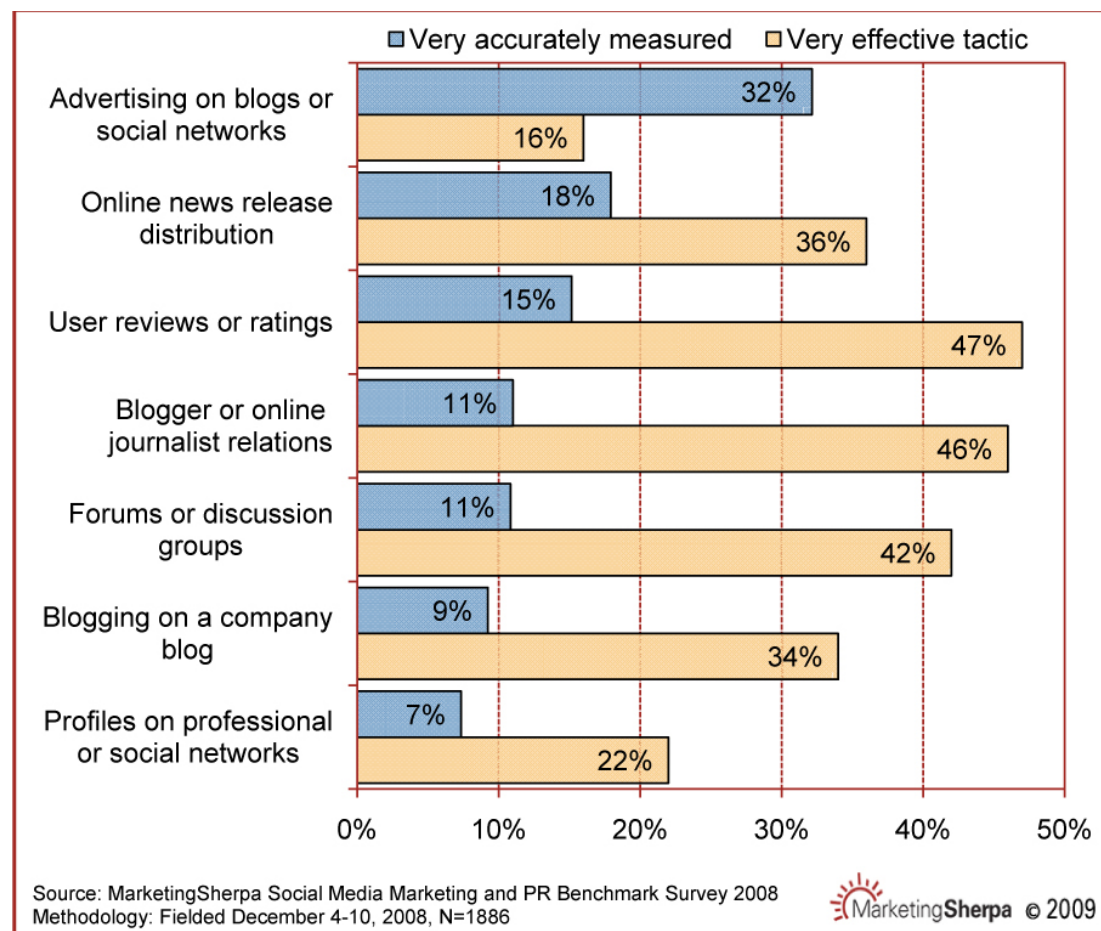


Whether an organization has used social media marketing and PR or not, the most significant barrier to social media adoption named by 46% of respondents is the “Lack of knowledgeable staff.”

One of the dangers to the effective adoption of social media as a marketing strategy is the large percentage of those who consider themselves knowledgeable – but have no social media experience. When marketers at organizations that have not used social media marketing or PR were asked how knowledgeable they were about the subject, two-thirds replied that they were “very” or “somewhat” knowledgeable. Without social media experience, this level of knowledge is unlikely, which may be the reason “Lack of knowledgeable staff” was named as the most significant barrier to social media adoption.

4. The Most Effective Social Media Tactics are the Least Measurable

Does the Ability to Measure ROI Accurately Relate to the Effectiveness of the Tactic?



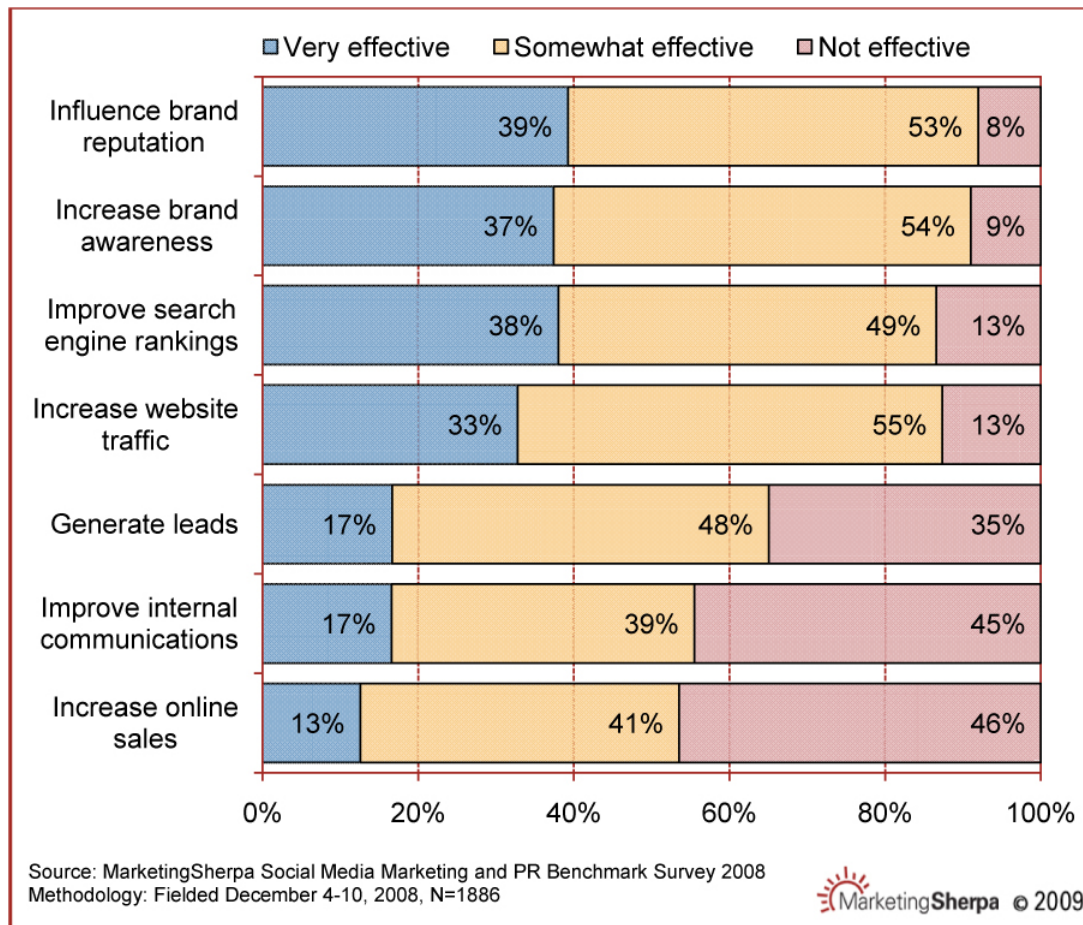
The chart on the previous page showed that the “Inability to measure ROI” was the second most significant barrier to social media adoption. But as the chart above shows, the ability to accurately measure ROI has nothing to do with the effectiveness of the tactic. In fact, “Advertising on blogs or social networks” which was the tactic rated as the most accurately measured (32%), was also rated least effective (16%).

Social media measurement is one of those topics about which everyone has an opinion, but nobody agrees. Like any tactic that is more aligned with PR than direct marketing, results are difficult to measure quantitatively. What marketers can do is measure the value of the resulting conversations and relationships qualitatively, and not focus on moment-in-time transactions like traffic, hits, etc.

Marketers obsessed with only tracking social media results quantitatively are missing the point and may find themselves employing much less effective social media tactics for the sake of measurability.

5. Achieving Branding Goals is Most Effective Use of Social Media

How Effective is Social Media Marketing and PR at Accomplishing These Goals?



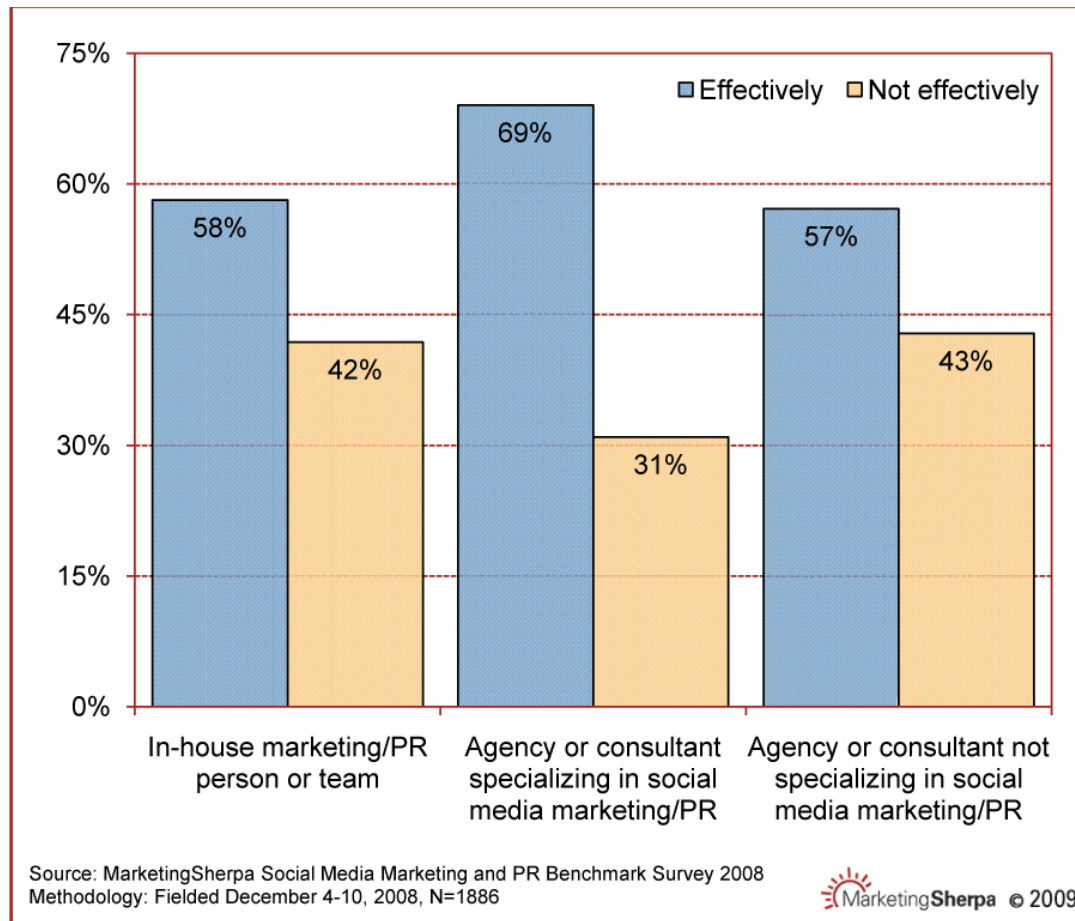
Which strategic goals do you expect social media to accomplish for your organization or client? More than 90% of companies believe that social media is most effective in accomplishing brand building goal, followed closely by goals for attracting website visitors.

Objectives that tend to fall into the category of direct marketing, like lead generation and sales conversion, are second tier expectations. You might expect the revenue producing goals of direct marketing to be ranked higher than branding during a recessionary period like this. However, the conversational and relationship building nature of social media is more synonymous with PR and, accordingly, more likely to help accomplish branding goals.

Improving internal communications is often the goal of companies in the early experimental stages of social media adoption. Internal communications is a desirable social media training and proving ground because the risk of exposing confidential information to the public is much less likely to occur in a self-contained internal environment.

6: Social Media Specialists are More Likely to Accomplish Goals

Do Social Media Agencies and Consultants Plan and Execute More Effectively?



Outsourced services like those provided by agencies and consultants are often sacrificed during economic downturns in favor of perceivably less expensive in-house resources. But when you examine which resource is planning and executing programs more effectively, it's not surprising to see that agencies and consultants who specialize in social media marketing and PR are the clear winners. In-house teams, and agencies or consultants who are not specialized in social media are equally effective, or equally ineffective as the case may be, at implementing these new media tactics.

As with any area of expertise that is rapidly evolving, specialists are more experienced and tend to be much more knowledgeable about what works and what doesn't, and they are more likely to help you accomplish your strategic goals. The emerging practice of social media marketing and PR is a good example of this.

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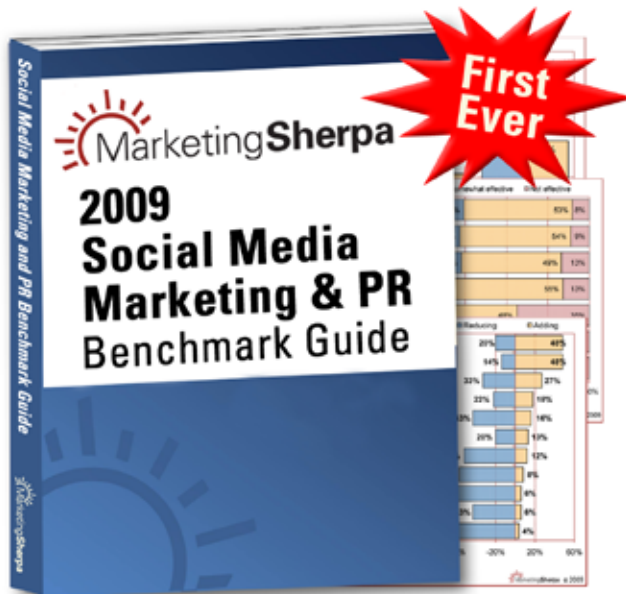
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