



New Data Reveals Increasing Impact of Social Media on Businesses' Bottom Lines As Consumer Usage Grows

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Despite social's positive influence across an organization, Sprout Social's 2019 Index finds 53% of C-level marketers say proving the value of social to those outside their department remains a challenge.

Nearly 45% of people have increased their social media usage over the past six months, underscoring the importance of social in both our society and as a marketing channel. But even as social permeates every aspect of our lives, businesses still struggle to realize its power, according to the [Sprout Social 2019 Index: Empower and Elevate](#), released today. The research shows 90% of social marketers agree investing in social media has a direct impact on their business revenue, yet communicating its value across departments remains their largest roadblock.

[Sprout Social](#), a leading provider of social media analytics, engagement and advocacy solutions for business, surveyed 1,000 social marketers about their social goals, challenges and expectations, and cross-referenced their responses with those of more than 1,000 consumers to understand how brands can elevate their social strategies to better serve their audiences' needs as well as overarching business goals. The report found that while 71% of all social marketers agree they are able to provide helpful insights to teams outside of their departments, nearly half (47%) say developing a strategy that supports their organization's goals is the number one challenge they face. While social data provides the insights needed to understand what is driving an organization's goals, social marketers need a better platform to offer feedback and input on overall business strategy.

"Social media is a channel through which billions of people engage with friends, family and brands daily, making it the most powerful tool, with the most insights, throughout the entirety of a business," said Jamie Gilpin, CMO at Sprout Social. "However, far too often these insights never leave the marketing department, keeping valuable data siloed from teams that could benefit from it most. Businesses that break down these barriers will fuel more data-driven strategies across product development, sales, and customer service and ultimately, drive growth."

The 2019 Index further explores how marketers can contribute to revenue goals and facilitate a stronger connection between brands and consumers. Additional key insights include:

- Social listening is crucial for better understanding target audiences. Forty-three percent of social marketers say a major challenge is identifying and understanding their target audience. To address this concern, marketers turn to social data: 63% of practitioners believe social listening will become more important in the coming year.
- Discounts and sales may prompt purchase, but entertainment and inspiration gains greater interest on social, a total flip from last year. More than two-thirds of consumers (67%) say they will engage with social posts that are entertaining, while only 37% say the same about posts that included discounts or sales. That's a big shift from the 2018 report, where 67% of consumers said they were most likely to engage with discounts and more than half (51%) said they would share posts promoting sales.
- Employee advocacy gains popularity among brands and consumers: Today, almost three quarters (72%) of social marketers use their employees as social media advocates. With 45% of consumers saying they are more likely to research a product or service when employees post about it, compared to 32% for influencers and celebrities, employees advocates are quickly gaining traction with marketers looking to push their audience from awareness to consideration.
- Live video, user-generated content and Instagram Stories top the trends charts for social in 2019: Marketers have the opportunity to drive greater interest in their brand, people and products if they are driving content through the most popular consumer mediums. Forty-five percent of consumers say they want to see live video from brands in 2019, followed by 24% wanting more user-generated content and Instagram Stories.

For more on the role of social data in driving business decisions, and the relationship between marketers and consumers on social, download the full data report [here](#).

About Sprout Social

Sprout Social offers deep social media listening and analytics, social management, customer care, and advocacy solutions to more than 25,000 brands and agencies, including Evernote, Grubhub and Edelman. Sprout's suite of solutions supports every aspect of a cohesive social program and enables organizations of all sizes to extend their reach, amplify their brand and create the kind of real connection with their consumers that drives their businesses forward. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Official Partner, Facebook Marketing Partner, Pinterest Marketing Partner, Instagram Partner Program Member and LinkedIn Company Page Partner. Learn more at sproutsocial.com.

About the Data

The Sprout Social 2019 Index is a report based on 1,011 consumer respondents and 1,018 marketer respondents. Both the consumer and marketer surveys were conducted online by Lucid between February 20 and 25, 2019. Graphics are rounded to the nearest whole percentage and may not add up to exactly 100%. In breaking down marketing seniority, we qualify 'practitioners' as interns, coordinators or specialists; 'managers' as social media managers; and 'leaders' as VPs, C-level marketers or directors.

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