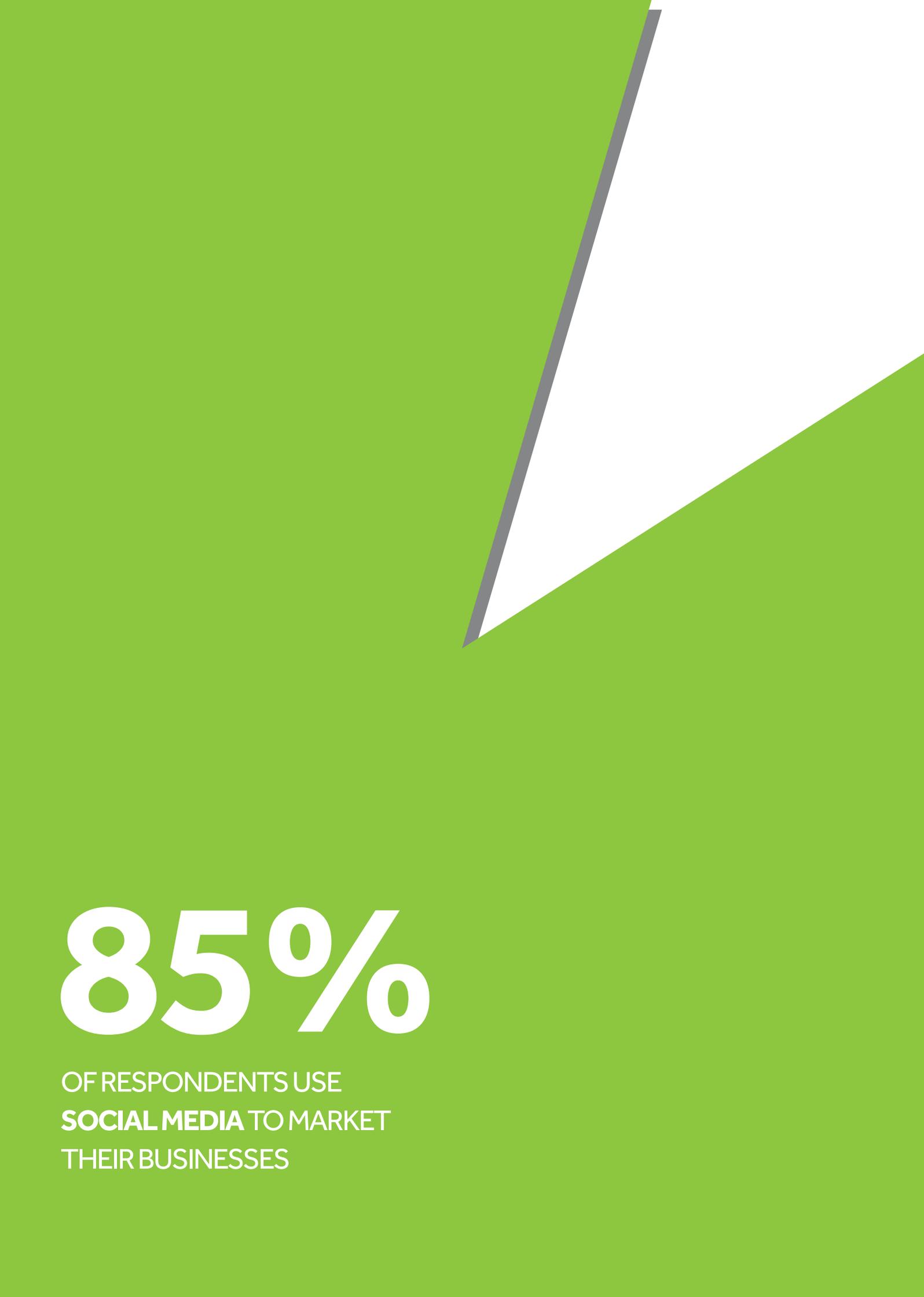
A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a smartphone. The phone's screen is lit up and shows some text. In the background, a laptop keyboard is visible on a desk, and the scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

**SOCIAL MEDIA
MARKETING REPORT**

2015



85%

OF RESPONDENTS USE
SOCIAL MEDIA TO MARKET
THEIR BUSINESSES

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
2. Social media use and its importance	5
3. Time and space	6
4. Types of content	8
5. Return on investment	10
6. Social media advertising spend	12
7. Benefits of social media marketing	14
8. Other marketing activities	15
9. The road ahead for social in real estate	16
10. Conclusions	17

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1. INTRODUCTION

IT IS no longer possible for businesses throughout the real estate industry to ignore the proliferation of social media – a powerhouse of engagement and connection at the world's, and customers', fingertips.

That is the overarching message from the **Real Estate Industry Social Media Marketing Report 2015**, conducted by Steps, a digital marketing agency focused on real estate. But what really shines through in the data collected from 127 real estate professionals throughout Australia is that while the industry is well aware of the need to start – and continue – conversations with customers using social media, few know how to focus that conversation and to measure its effectiveness.

Most real estate agents agree social media will play a huge part in their ongoing marketing plans, but few understand exactly how that will happen, and how to tweak their strategies to ensure they get a solid return.

A little more than a quarter of agents surveyed said they had only just started using social media in the past 12 months, while about the same number of respondents admitted to being users with five or more years experience.

The **Real Estate Industry Social Media Marketing Report 2015** aims to shine a light on where the industry is sitting in regards to social media use and effectiveness, and the results are both captivating and herald a way forward for the industry.

26%

OF RESPONDENTS SURVEYED SAID THEY HAD ONLY STARTED USING **SOCIAL MEDIA** IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



2. SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

THE scenario is repeated hundreds of thousands of times across Australia every morning. Your phone's alarm goes off and instead of rolling over and smacking the snooze button, you slide the lock across and delve into your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or any other social media app that feeds you all the photos, status updates, videos and other content you desire.

That routine - of instant content gratification delivered to the palm of your potential customers' hands - is what your real estate agency is up against in the social media marketing world. It's no longer you versus your competitors - it's you versus your customers' friends, families, cats, babies, and the rest of the seemingly endless content that goes along with it.

Data from the **Real Estate Industry Social Media Marketing Report 2015** has found that the majority of respondents - the agents, property managers, service providers and principals - want to create a marketing stronghold out of social media, and believe the various platforms, from Facebook, Youtube and Twitter to Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat, are important spaces in which to have a marketing presence.

About 85% of respondents said they were using social media to market their businesses, and a total of 78% said they either agreed or strongly agreed that social media marketing was important to their businesses.

15%

NOT USING
SOCIAL
MEDIA TO
MARKET
THEIR
BUSINESS

16%

UNCERTAIN
OF THE
BENEFITS
OF SOCIAL
MEDIA
TO THEIR
BUSINESS

78%

AGREED OR
STRONGLY
AGREED
SOCIAL
MEDIA WAS
IMPORTANT
FOR THEIR
BUSINESS

85%

USE SOCIAL
MEDIA TO
MARKET
THEIR
BUSINESS



95%

**OF RESPONDENTS
USE FACEBOOK FOR
BUSINESS PURPOSES**

3. TIME AND SPACE

AMONG everything else that demands the attention of real estate industry professionals, 70% of respondents said they spent between one to five hours a week using social media for business purposes. Another 16% said they spent six to 10 hours, and nearly 6% spent a whopping 11 to 15 hours a week using social media for their work.

Not only are real estate professionals dedicating a fair chunk of time to their social digital offerings, but they are spreading that time far and wide across many of the social media platforms available.

It may come as no surprise that Facebook is the big winner for real estate professionals, with 95% of respondents using the platform to engage with their potential or existing clients.

What is more revealing is that LinkedIn comes in second place, with 65% of respondents taking up real estate on the platform. Twitter isn't far behind, but it is clear that video and images are becoming a more important platform for real estate professionals, with Youtube and Instagram building solid user bases

Not only are real estate professionals dedicating a fair chunk of time to their social digital offerings, but they are spreading that time far and wide across many of the social media platforms available

within the industry. The increase in Instagram use is an interesting development for real estate professionals. The demographic for the platform is a young one but suggests those managing social media and utilising it as a platform are using a long-term strategy to stay front-of-mind when this audience reaches the property-buying stage of their lives.

Time spent on social media for business purposes weekly



70% spend between 1 and 5 hours a day

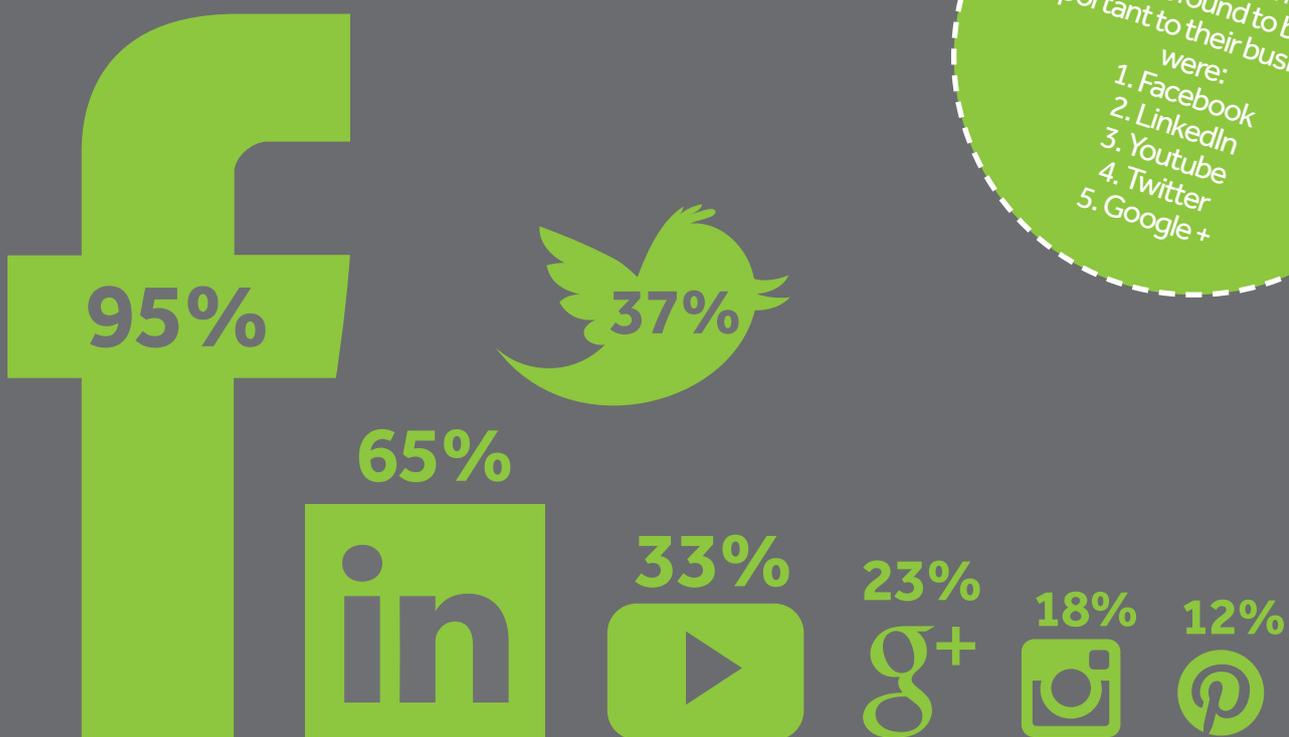


16% spend between 6 and 10 hours a day



6% spend between 11 and 15 hours a day

Percentage of respondents using each social platform



BUT ...
The specific platforms each respondent found to be most important to their businesses were:

1. Facebook
2. LinkedIn
3. Youtube
4. Twitter
5. Google +



4. TYPES OF CONTENT

THE race to win the content space in each real estate professional's area - be it geo-specific or taking in a wider domestic, if not international focus - is certainly an attractive prospect. Never before have agents, property managers or other industry experts had the startling array of formats in which to deliver compelling, insightful and above all useful content, and the seemingly endless ways to amplify it and send it out into the world.

The data shows respondents have realised the importance of building their own audience, instead of someone else's.

Technology has been the great equaliser in this space, meaning that whether you have a team of 20 content and digital marketers or you have one or two staff members working away creating knowledge bombs for your audience, the real differentiating factor is creativity, not numbers.

And it seems words have been the victor among real estate professionals. About 84% of respondents said original written work was the most-used type of content in their social media marketing. Curation of other people's content was also popular among respondents (56%).

WORDS WIN

59% of respondents said original written work was the single most important type of content for their businesses

When asked what type of content was most important for their social media strategy, nearly 59% said their original written content was the single most important in their social media marketing. Original video beat out curation of other people's content in this area, with nearly 25% of respondents singing its praises for their business. Only 10% said curation was their most important.

This suggests real estate professionals are spending too much time curating other people's content instead of creating their own, at least in the video arena. Topping this off, 48% named the creation of visual content such as infographics and memes as the No.1 medium they would like to learn more about. How to create compelling videos was just behind at 46%.

Types of content respondents use most in social media marketing



84% original written content



30% original video content



56% curation of other people's content

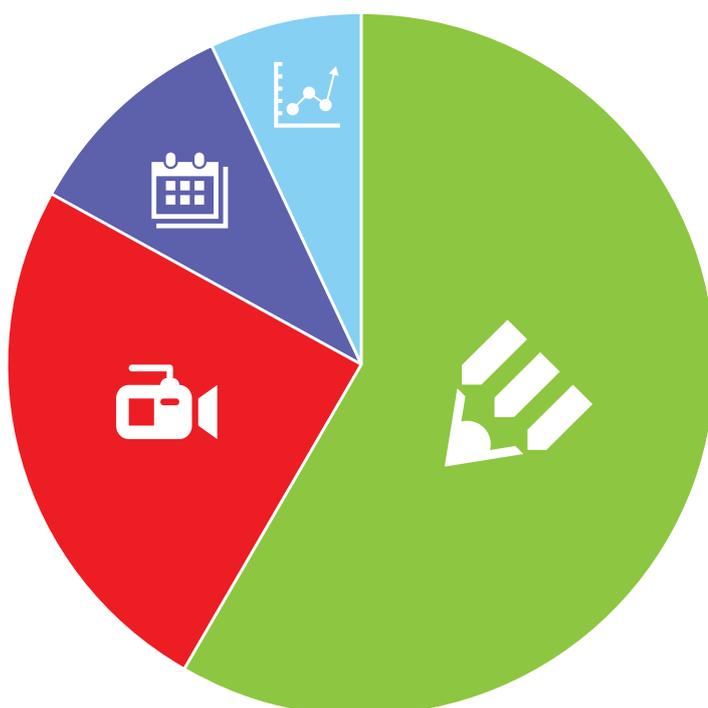


21% original visual assets (infographics, memes)



7% original audio content (podcasts)

Single most important type of content for respondents' business



48% of respondents said creating visual assets such as infographics and memes was the content format they most wanted to learn more about. Video came in just behind at 46%.

5. RETURN ON INVESTMENT

THERE'S no doubt it's the big one.

For every dollar spent in the marketing department, real estate professionals demand to see a solid return for the time, efforts and assets used to drive leads and sales. Managing social media is not free and you should monitor the amount of hours spent using it for your business to assist in calculating an ROI.

However, despite the digital world offering a seemingly endless number of ways to measure how customers interact and make decisions online, 54% of respondents admitted they were uncertain about how to measure the return on investment in their social media activities. About 22% agreed that they could measure the ROI but only 1.5% said they had social media marketing measurement down to a fine art. About 22% said they could not measure ROI on social media marketing.

These statistics provide a captivating paradox, because even though more than half of the respondents said they were unsure about measuring social ROI, a massive 78% said they either agreed or strongly agreed social media marketing was important to the future of their business. In short, we know it is the way to go, we just don't know why.

Add to this that half of respondents said they regularly analysed their business's social media marketing activities, and the picture it paints is one of an industry already heavily using the mediums but hungry to learn how to truly turn it into even more of an advantage.

54%

ARE UNSURE
HOW TO
MEASURE
THE ROI
FROM THEIR
SOCIAL
MEDIA
MARKETING



BUT

50%

REGULARLY
ANALYSE
THEIR
SOCIAL
MEDIA
MARKETING
ACTIVITIES



78%

AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED SOCIAL MEDIA WAS IMPORTANT FOR THEIR BUSINESS



70%

SPEND BETWEEN 1 TO 5 HOURS ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING A WEEK...

THIS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS A WEEK WASTED IF ROI CAN'T BE PROPERLY MEASURED



REMEMBER...

24%

AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THEY COULD MEASURE THE ROI ON THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING



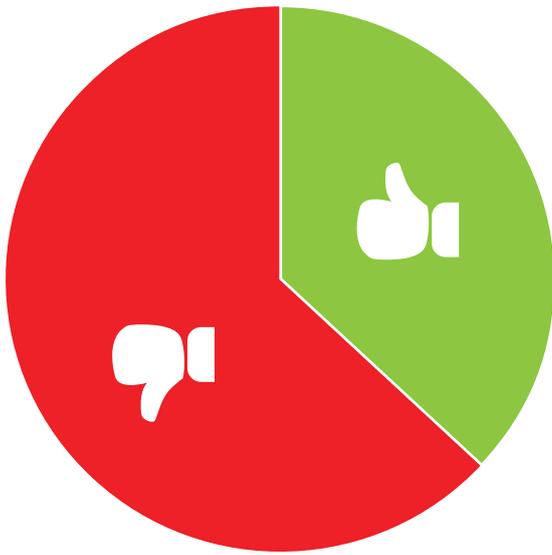
22%

SAID THEY COULD NOT MEASURE ROI OF THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING



6. SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING SPEND

Do you pay for advertising on social media?



37% Yes

63% No

How much do you pay for advertising on social media?

① 16% spend \$0-\$50

② ③ 3.31% spend \$51-\$100

④ ⑤ 9.92% spend \$100-\$200

⑥ ⑦ ⑧ 1.65% spend \$200-\$300

⑨ ⑩ ⑪ .83% spend \$300-\$400

⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯ 2.48% spend \$400-\$500

⑰ ⑱ ⑲ ⑳ ㉑ ㉒ 7.44% spend \$500+

How do you intend to change your social media advertising spend?

50%

PLAN TO INCREASE THEIR AD SPEND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

FAST FACT
None of the respondents planned to decrease their social media advertising spend.

23%

PLAN TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THEIR AD SPEND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

21%

NO CHANGES PLANNED

6%

NO PLAN TO SPEND ON SOCIAL ADS

7. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

SOCIAL media marketing experts will tell you having a firm focus on what each of your social channels is trying to achieve is half the battle.

Whether it's to increase brand recognition, customer loyalty or to find and nurture leads, real estate professionals want purpose behind the marketing they send into the world.

Respondents overwhelmingly said their social media marketing was most effective at helping them to increase their business's exposure (75%). About 37% found it helped them to increase traffic to their company website, while lead generation (30%) and developing loyal fans (29%) also performed strongly.

Only 15% said that social media marketing had helped them to reduce their overall marketing costs, and 14% said it had helped improve their search engine optimisation. Another 26% said their social media marketing helped provide marketplace insight, taking the temperature of potential customers.

37%
INCREASED TRAFFIC TO
THEIR WEBSITE

30%
LEAD GENERATION

29%
CREATING CUSTOMER
LOYALTY

26%
GAINING MARKETPLACE
INSIGHT

75%

OF RESPONDENTS
SAID SOCIAL WAS
MOST BENEFICIAL
FOR INCREASING
BRAND EXPOSURE

8. OTHER MARKETING ACTIVITIES



84%

USE EMAIL MARKETING



18%
SEARCH ENGINE
MARKETING



28%
SEARCH ENGINE
OPTIMISATION



34%
EVENTS



21%
ONLINE ADS



44%
PRINT ADS



70%
DIRECT MAIL



13%
MOBILE



47%
SPONSORSHIPS



2%
TV ADS



6%
WEBINARS



9. THE ROAD AHEAD FOR SOCIAL IN REAL ESTATE

NEARLY everywhere you look, people have their heads down and their mobile devices up, accessing the information and content they want, when they want it.

The battle to be part of that conversation is only going to get tougher, and real estate brands and professionals have to get creative to take advantage of it.

And the data shows they know it.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents said they planned to drastically increase their social media marketing activities, while only 22% said they planned to stay in their current footings. About 4% said they had no plans to utilise social media marketing.

The challenge now is how do real estate professionals integrate an increased social media marketing presence it into an existing and already hectic work environment? The statistics show they are keen to try.



THE ONLY WAY IS UP

77% of respondents said they planned to drastically **increase** their social media marketing activities, while 23% said they would **outsource** social media marketing strategies to the professionals.

A little more than 77% of respondents said they had no plans to outsource their social media marketing activities, while nearly 23% said they would put their social media strategies into the hands of the professionals to hone and perfect.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The Real Estate Industry Social Media

Marketing Report 2015 spells it out plainly: Real estate professionals have embraced - or plan to embrace - social media marketing in a big way, and they are hungry to know how to do it better or put it in the hands of people who already know.

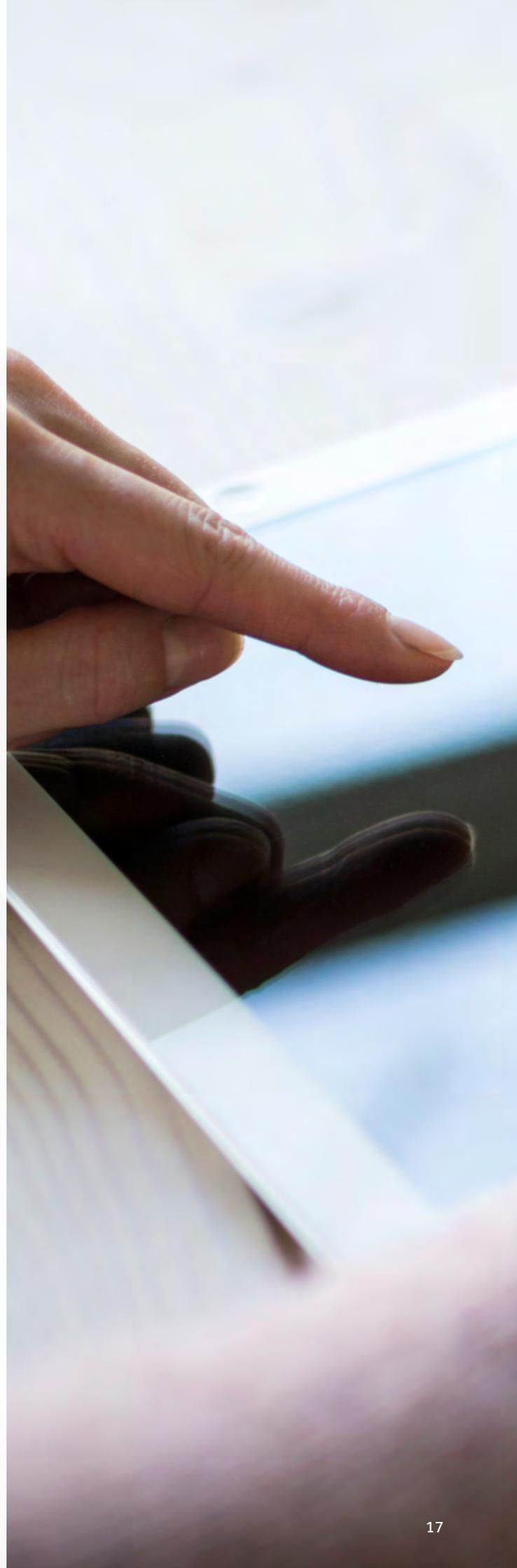
With more than half of respondents using social media marketing to spread original content, attempting to analyse it and seeking to know more about how to measure it effectively, there is no doubt the shift to the space has already happened, with the next phase being as much about education as it is about learning how to generate a solid return on investment.

While original written content and the curation of other people's content dominates the real estate space, the proliferation of original video is undoubtedly where respondents see engagement increasing. This is to the point where many found its importance eclipsing that of curated content, which ranks second as the most-used type of content but third (behind video) as most important.

While the majority of real estate professionals don't spend big dollars on social media advertising just yet, half of respondents said they planned to start or increase their spend in the space, with Facebook (95% of respondents) likely to be the platform drawing the most money. LinkedIn can expect to see more love from the real estate industry as well, as professionals see value in making connections on the platform and may pay to get further access and features.

There's no doubt real estate professionals are looking to shift towards the more measurable, targeted forms of social advertising over print display ads. Somehow, the dreaded direct mail carries on clogging up mailboxes and then, quite quickly, rubbish bins. But email direct marketing reigns supreme, with 85% of respondents using the platform.

Perhaps the most telling statistic from the report is that real estate industry professionals, on the whole, said they planned to spend more time on their social media marketing activities and more time creating the content to feed it. The questions now for the whole industry is: How do you stand out from the crowd? And what will it cost businesses that ignore social media marketing?





STEPPS is a digital marketing agency
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and digital marketing solutions.

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