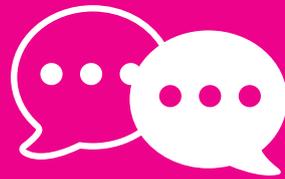


Insight



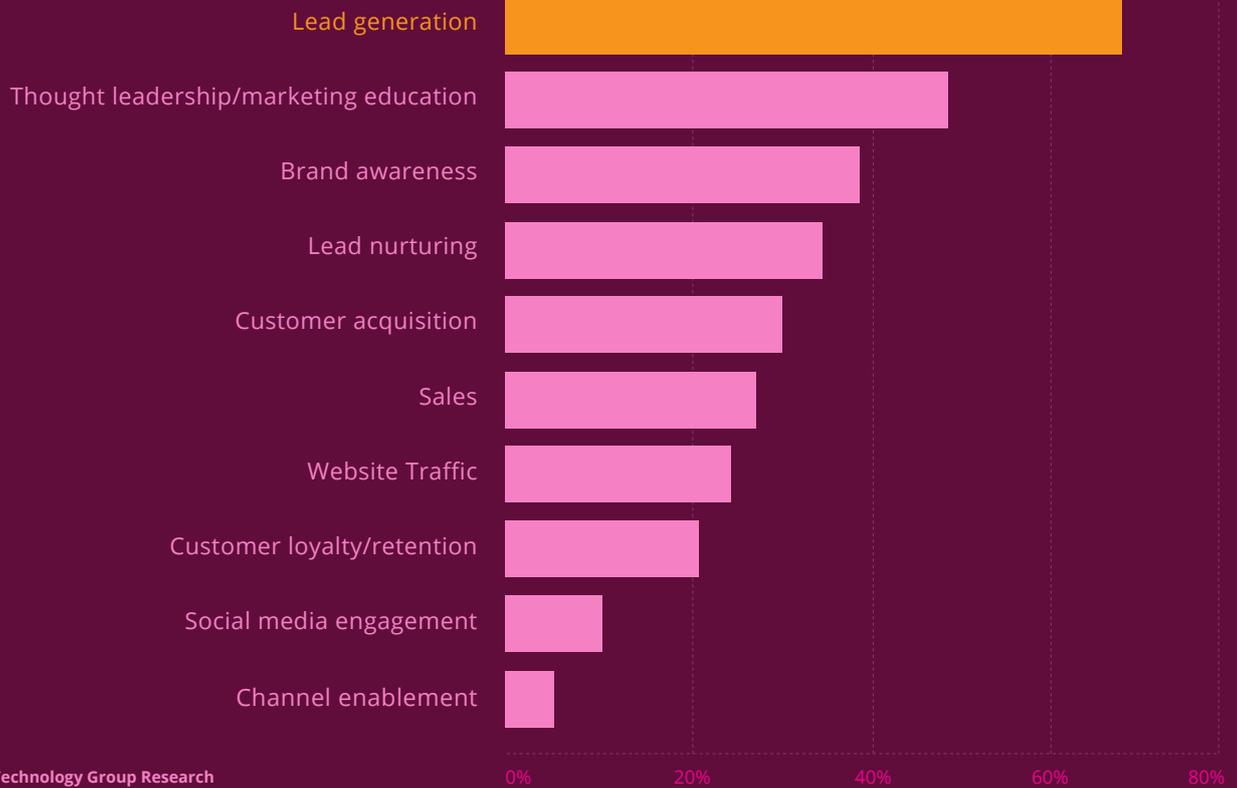
WHY SOCIAL MEDIA DOESN'T ANSWER ALL YOUR CONTENT DISTRIBUTION NEEDS

A B2B TECHNOLOGY CONTENT MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 3 GOALS FOR CONTENT MARKETING?



There is no doubt that content marketing is now a mainstream distinct tactic that's taken very seriously by the B2B technology marketing community. Adoption rates are nearing 90% of all marketers in terms of its usage and 40%+ of companies have a documented corporate content strategy. Budgets allocated to the discipline are increasing across the board and the levels of sophistication around the tactics employed to design, deploy and measure them are developing all the time.

The drivers for this growth centre around the marketing departments increasing need to drive lead generation, thought leadership and education, as well as brand awareness for their businesses. What is surprising and will now be discussed is the over reliance of IT marketers upon social media channels to drive a large proportion of their goals. What needs to happen is a rebalancing of the roles that each of the paid, earned and owned routes plays upon reaching a company's audience.

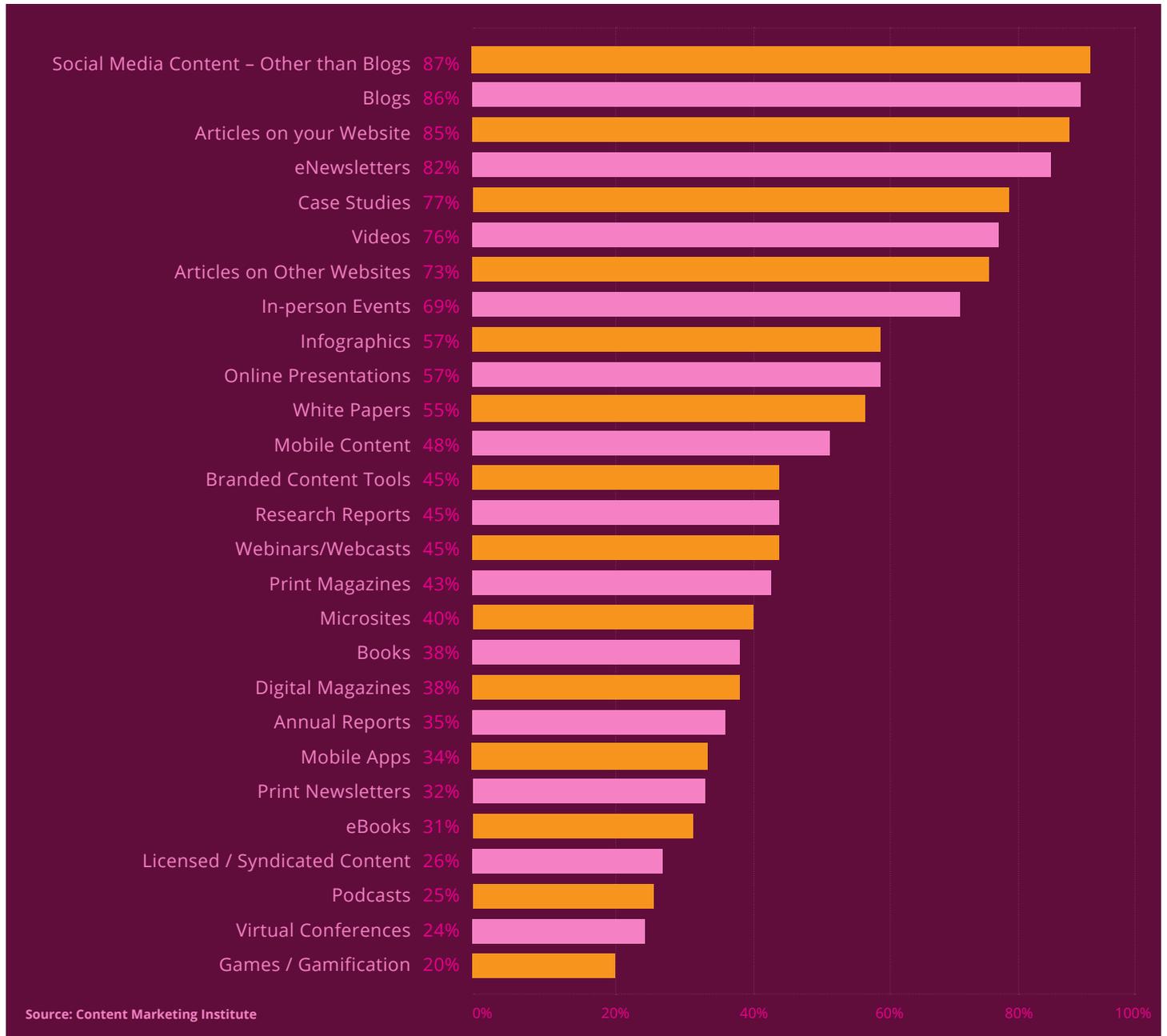
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Why social media has prominence

There is no one single reason why social media channels have gained such disproportionate levels of prominence for content marketing usage by marketers as a whole. It's more a combination of a number of factors that have led to it. If we

look at the graph below we can see that the dominant content marketing tactics used centre around those that are social in nature (social media content and blogs).

CONTENT MARKETING USAGE (by Tatic)





For some organisations these tactics are managed in-house and so relatively cost efficient. It's very easy to view social media as “free”, especially when budgets are tight and you have individuals that are willing and able to contribute and manage.

For those organisations that outsource some part or all of their social media strategy, channels and/or content management there are a multitude of agency businesses that are specialists and are very capable of doing so. PR agencies have done a very good job of reinventing themselves over the last few years and increasing their revenue streams with social content strategy and management.

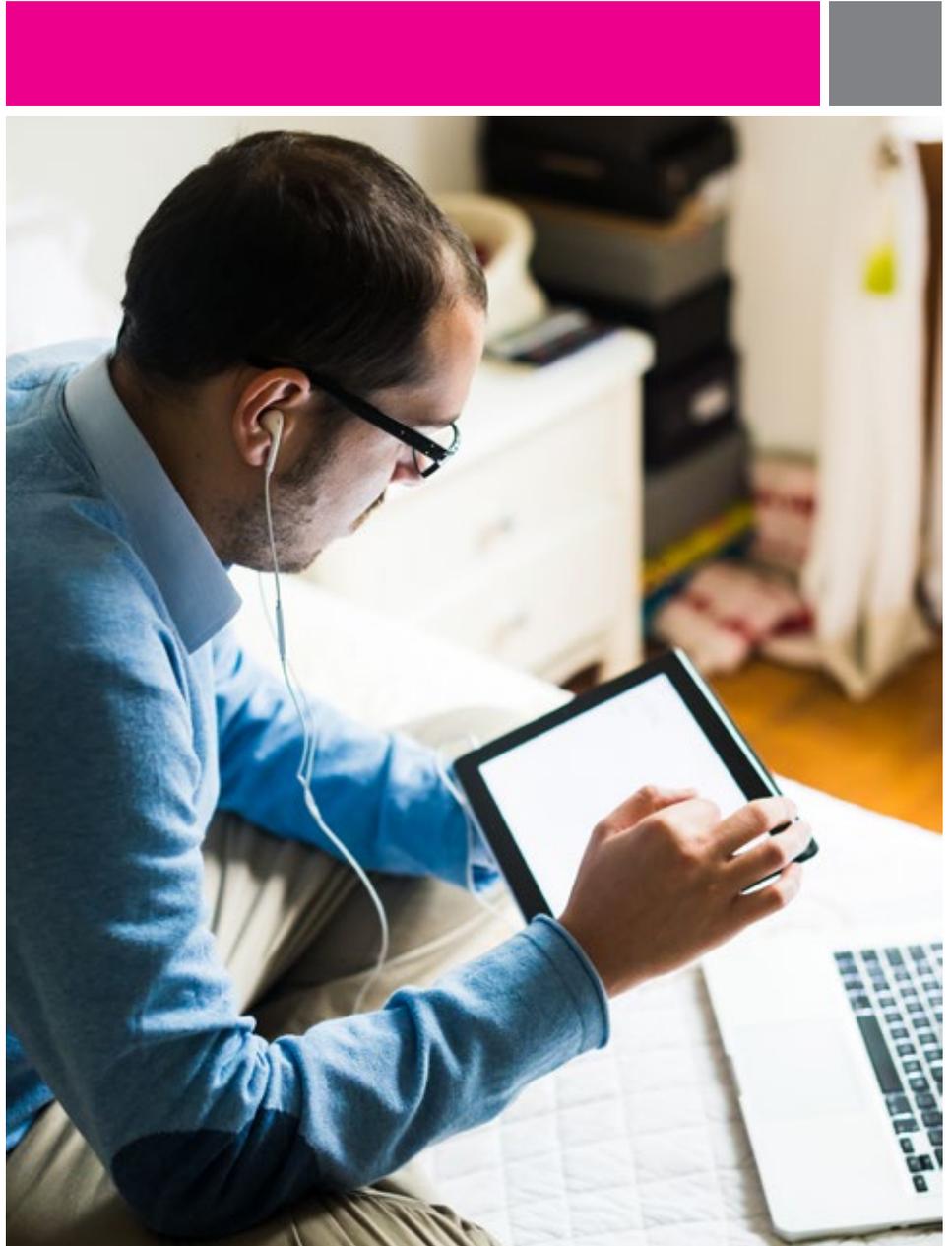


Social Media

More general creative, digital and direct marketing agencies have embraced social media and seized the opportunity of aligning their company program recommendations with social media, often linking them to the management of a company's web site content, broader inbound marketing and SEO strategy.

This is not to say it's not important, however, an agency will normally recommend a strategy that plays to their strengths and derives broader revenue streams for them. Therefore, often a social media management and distribution strategy from these types of agencies utilise "free" general social media channels that allows the agency to maximise a larger proportion of management fee for them and minimise the proportion of budget spent on "paid" channels. These "paid" channels more often than not fall into the realm of a media buying agency and increasingly a social media agency. It has to be said that these last few points are a generalisation but are our own opinion based on many years of managing hundreds of technology marketing programs from the agency side of the fence. What's important to note from what's been said here is that marketers need to be very careful that the advice they are being given from agencies regarding the use of social media is in fact correct for your strategy and not just a tick in the box or an added component because the agency derives revenue from its management.

Another important factor in the over reliance of social media usage can be attributed to the hype it's received over the past



few years since its mainstream adoption. Many organisations have simply followed others, both because it's been new, exciting and needs testing, as well as through fear of missing out on a potential goldmine.

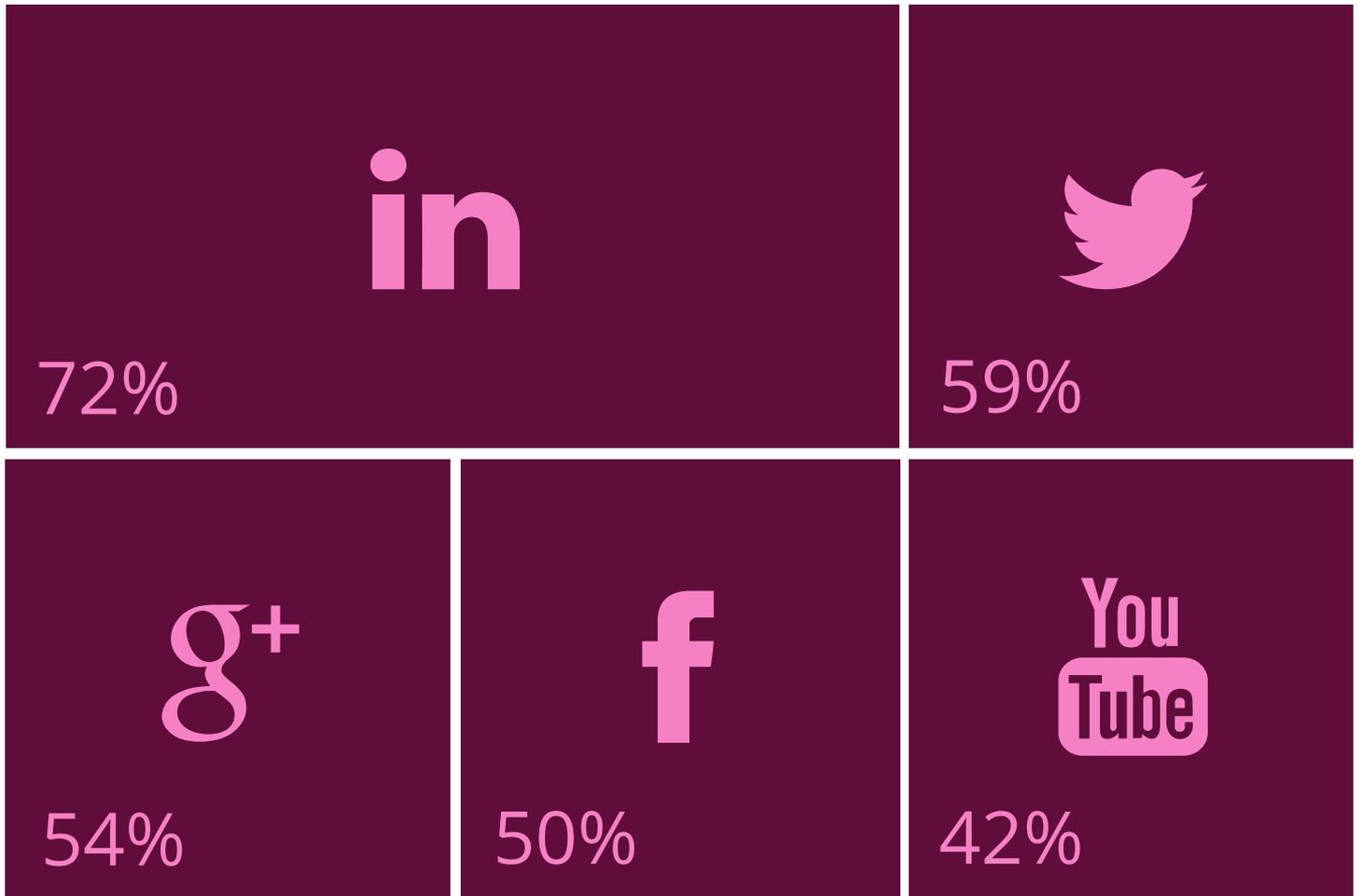
There has been a huge amount of media coverage, growth of dedicated events around

the subject, expert seminars promising to give all the answers and of course a deluge of continuous social media user generated content on the subject. It's no surprise then, that it's been a subject in the front of every marketers mind and one with a huge amount of time dedicated to it.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly as far as B2B technology marketing is concerned, there is a big difference between knowing that a company's potential audience are using certain social networks and then presuming they use these channels for information gathering and the research process for aiding their decision making to purchase tech products and services.

Only by understanding how audiences interact with social media and what they use it for can we properly compare the effectiveness of it performing a certain function in our overall communications mix against all other media channels available.



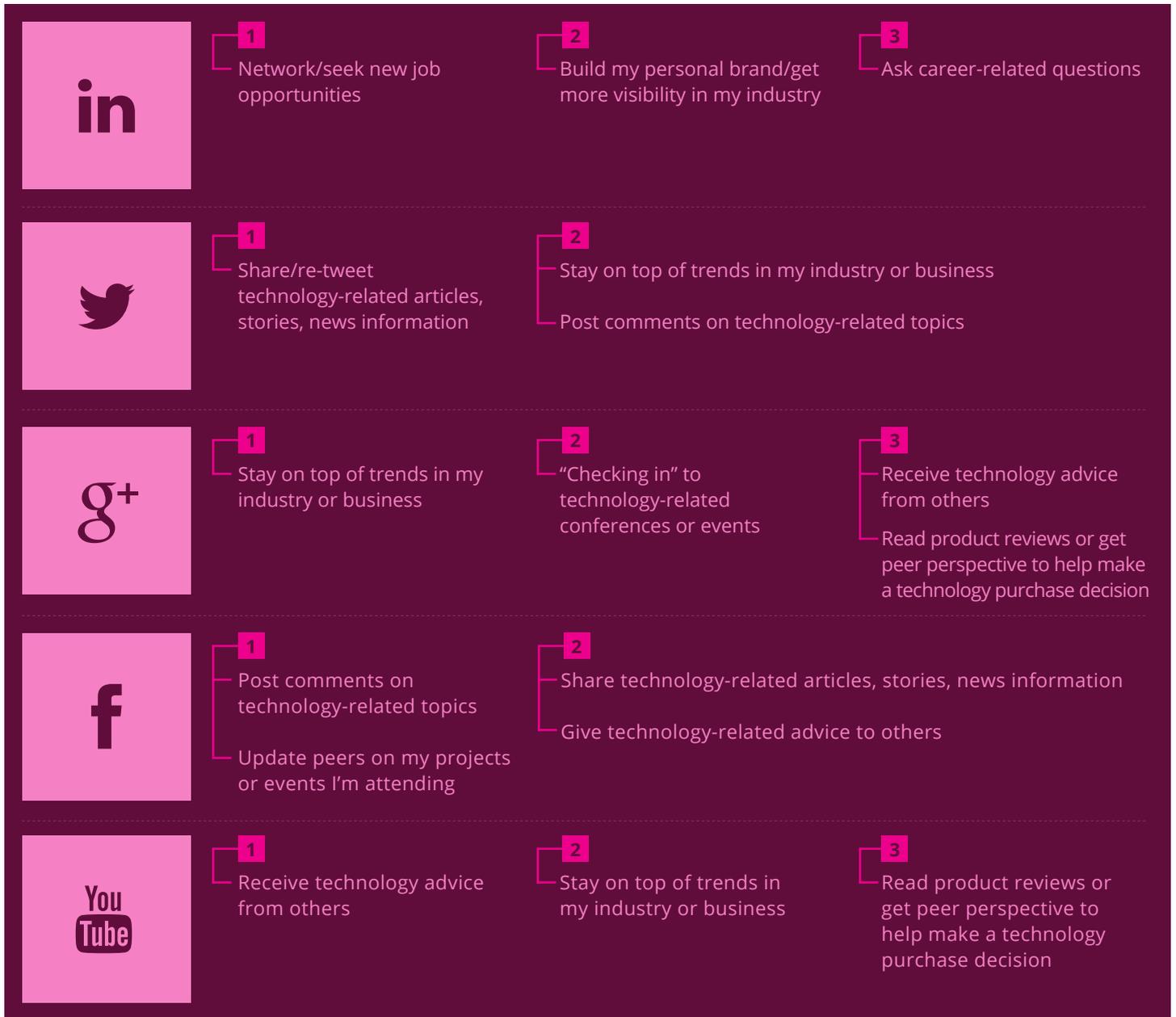
WHO IS USING SOCIAL MEDIA? (% of IT decision makers using it for business)

Source: IDG B2B Social Media Usage

This chart averages specific social media channels utilised for business purposes across a large sample of B2B technology decision makers in North America and Western Europe. The numbers for each channel are relatively high in each case but you have to ask yourself two things.

- 1). what are those people using it for?
- 2). what are the marketers who are not using it actually using instead?

TOP 3 USES (For IT decision makers using social media for business)



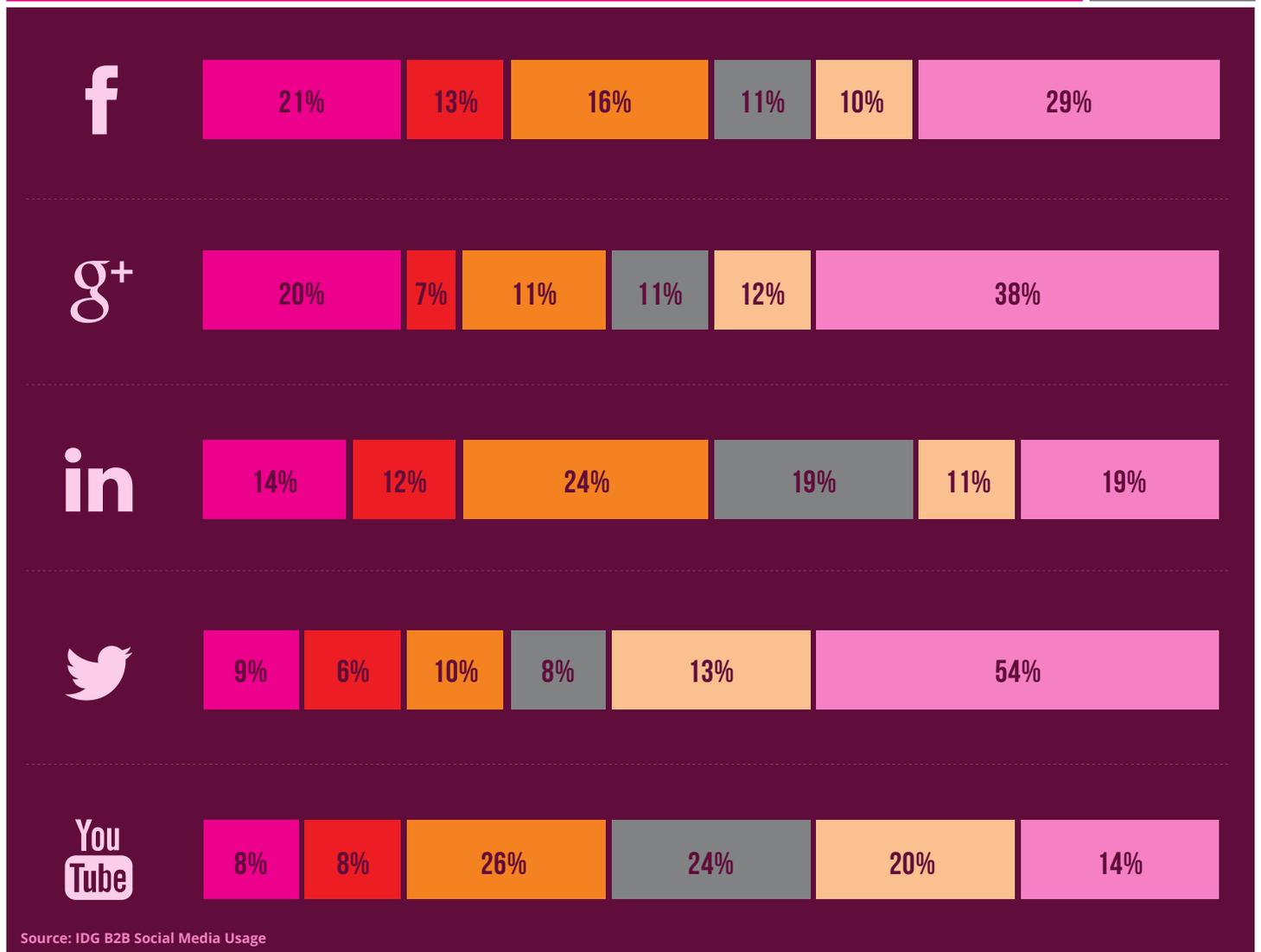
Source: IDG B2B Social Media Usage

We can see that each channel has a distinct prominent set of uses that can be summarised and ranked collectively as:

- 1 Networking and personal profile building
- 2 Sharing articles, stories or news
- 3 Staying on top of trends within the industry
- 4 Posting, giving and receiving technology advice
- 5 Reading/watching product reviews to help make a technology purchase decision

They each very much have their place in creating brand awareness, driving lead generation and establishing thought leadership but are limited in certain areas. They also all have a very different frequency of usage as this chart below shows.

HOW OFTEN DO B2B IT DECISION MAKERS USE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL OR BUSINESS NETWORKING SITES/SERVICES?



Source: IDG B2B Social Media Usage

■ More than once a day
 ■ Once a day
 ■ A few times a week
 ■ A few times a month
 ■ Once a month or less often
 ■ Never

So how does this compare with other information channels?

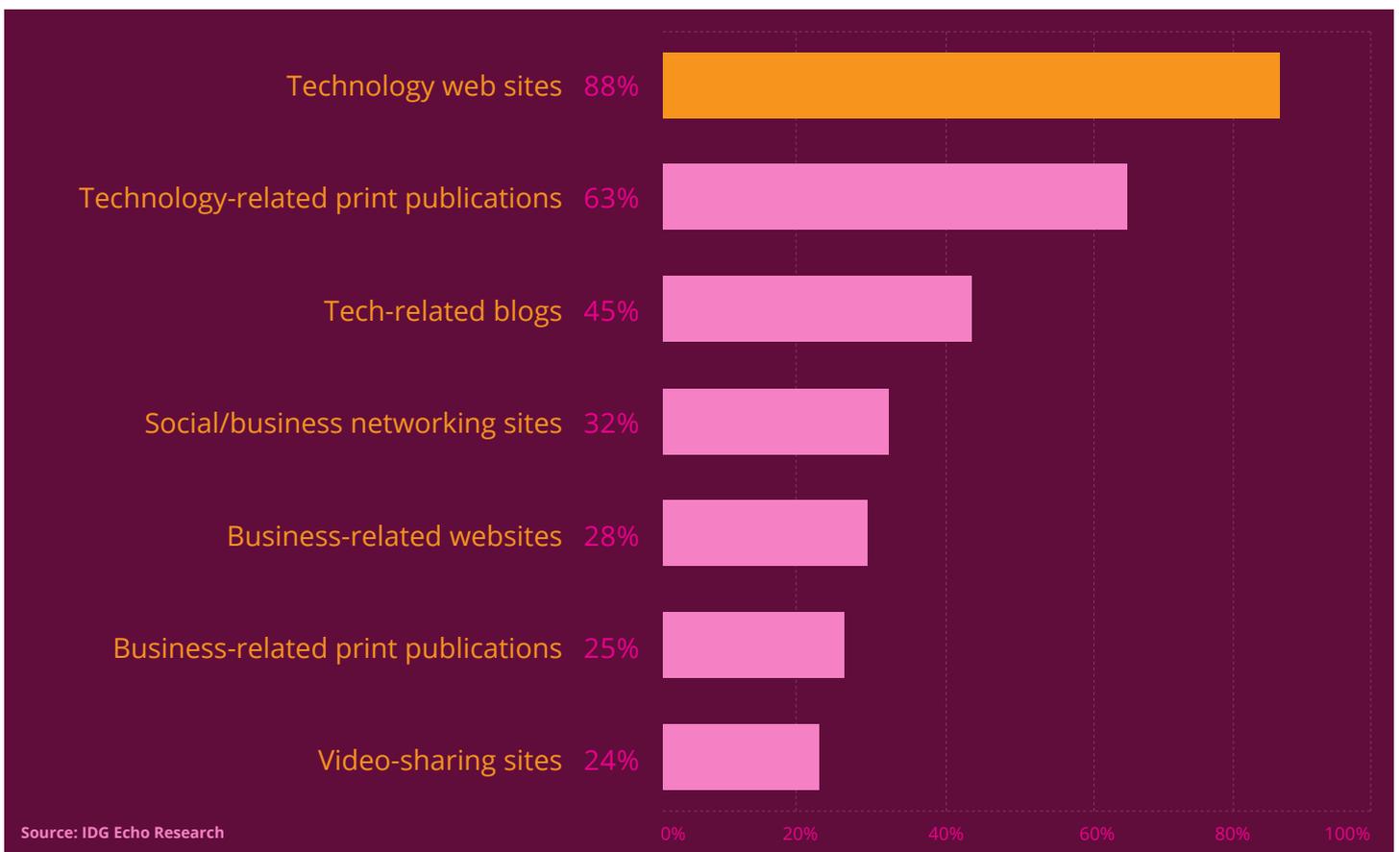


The B2B IT influencer and decision maker relies on a variety of different channels and sources of information to help inform and guide their research process.



It's only when we analyse each channel utilised against one another that we can view the prominence of one vs. another.

ON WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCES DO YOU RELY FOR TECH-RELATED INFORMATION, TRENDS, NEWS, REVIEWS AND OPINIONS? AMONG B2B RESPONDENTS



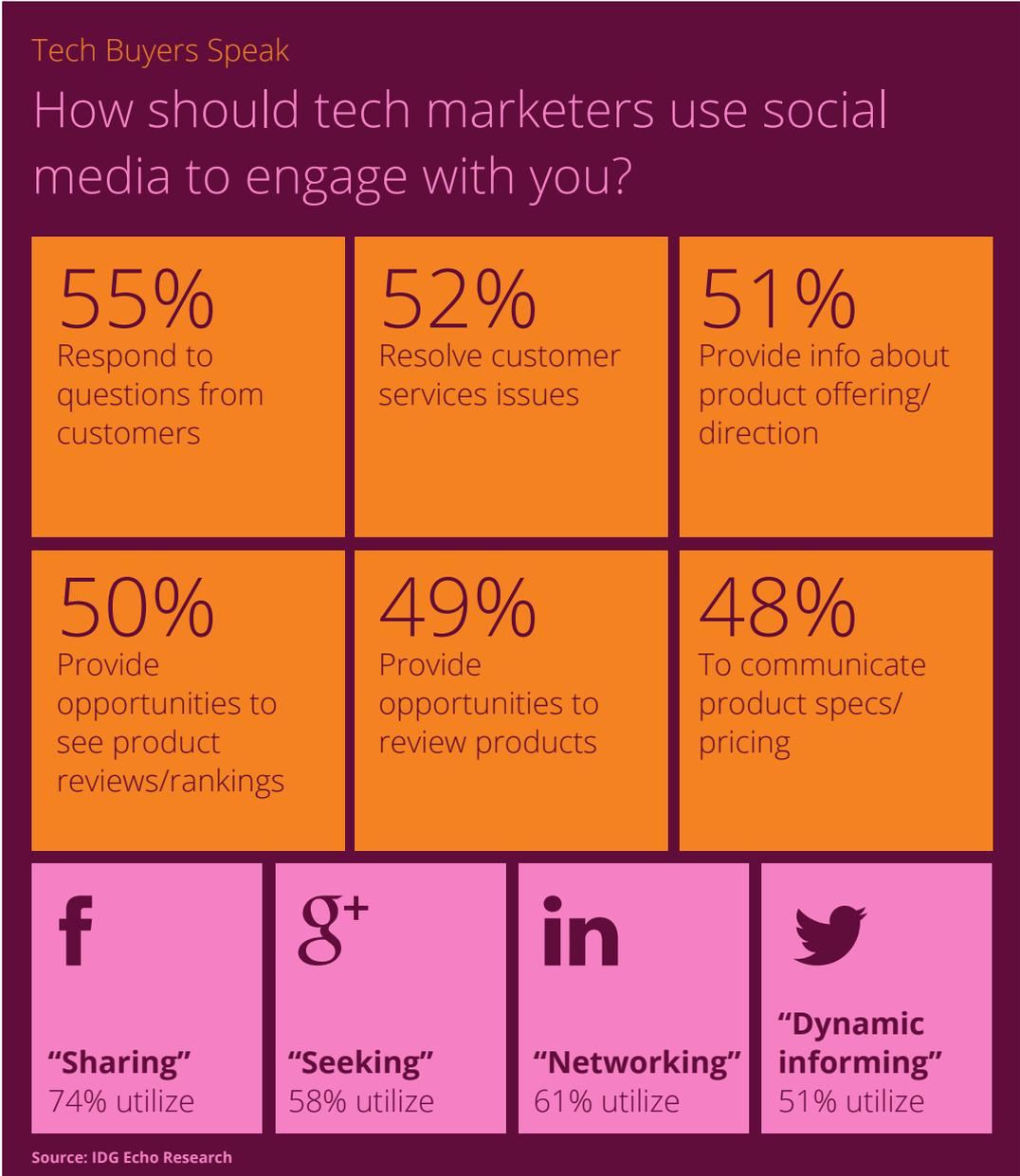
One person will have a set of preferences of channel and format that differs from the next but as marketers we need to cover the bases and make sure we are spending the correct allocation of time, budget and resource on reaching our audiences proportionately.

So what should we use general social media for?

A study recently asked a large cross section of IT workers what they thought technology marketers should actually use social media for to engage with them.

The results were quite interesting and whilst provided evidence to suggest clearly that IT workers wanted vendor product oriented content, the most prominent wishes were for the ability to respond to questions posed from customers and to resolve customer service issues. So we can see that a one way company/product information push in isolation is not in line with the wishes of the audience.

ON WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCES DO YOU RELY FOR TECH-RELATED INFORMATION, TRENDS, NEWS, REVIEWS AND OPINIONS? AMONG B2B RESPONDENTS



This research provides further evidence to support the fact that the tech audience wish

to use social media channels for immediate communication needs and sharing.

Conclusions

- A well balanced mix of paid, earned and owned channel usage for content distribution that's appropriate to the size of audience on each will maximise your exposure and returns.
- “Free” does not always mean “good”. You get what you pay for.
- Social media channels need to be used appropriately based on how the audience expect to be communicated with on that channel.

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