

2017 GLOBAL COMMS REPORT: UK CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

From analytics to content, results from the recent Cision®/PRWeek global survey shed light on the steps necessary to elevate comms' standing in the C-suite.

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How can a better understanding of content's impact on consumer behaviour elevate the comms function?
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Exclusive survey data on tightening comms budgets and content.
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From targeting tactics to identifying the most effective, discover the global PR community's sentiment on influencers.



TIME FOR BETTER MEASUREMENT

A survey produced by PRWeek in partnership with Cision shows PR pros are struggling to connect the dots between content and business results and how the lack of metrics plays a role.

What if comms pros could provide metrics to the C-suite that unequivocally illustrate how a piece of content turned a customer target into a purchaser? Or how it delivered on another KPI vital to the company? Surely the comms department would get a bigger piece of the marketing budget, possibly even from the advertising side. Tom Noland, SVP, corporate communications at health insurance provider Humana in the US, says comms departments need to make their case.

"Every company has competition for resources, as it should. The CEO has lots of competing metrics to think about," he adds.

"And the resources are going to those areas where direct impact on the bottom line can be most precisely demonstrated."

Therein lies a terrific case for PR to demonstrate the bottom-line value of its work – to first protect and then gain more budget. However, a survey done in partnership between PRWeek and earned media software and analytics company Cision shows comms pros are struggling to connect the dots between content and actual business results. The survey polled CCOs, CMOs, SVPs and even presidents on the client side from around the world. And 63 percent cited the inability to measure impact effectively as one of the three most difficult challenges they face.

This is a troublesome barrier to growth in PR. Comms departments are under increasing

pressure to justify their existing spend, let alone get approval for budget increases. In fact, 65 percent of respondents said the tightening of budgets is one of their other top three challenges.

Content is critical

The growth of digital comms such as social media, video and podcasts has given PR pros more options for content creation. And 66 percent of pros ranked content creation as one of their three most important activities – with 32 percent ranking it most important.

On its news site, humananews.com, Humana features news stories, videos, and other multimedia content. Some of the content celebrates how its employees are giving back and helping the customers and communities it serves.

Noland says it is easy to see the strategic relationship between the content they are producing for the site and the company's overarching goals. "We can see the close linkage between our strategy and the messaging we use both internally and externally. But it is difficult to measure that relationship," he explains.

While solving the measurement puzzle has been an issue for decades, Noland notes, "there has been progress. We have gone way beyond measuring impressions and clicks on social media."

"The next generation of measurement needs to find a way to directly relate [earned media coverage] to bottom-line growth," Noland says.

TIME FOR BETTER MEASUREMENT

"I, and many others in PR, are pushing providers hard for measurement that's more sophisticated." Because more precise analytics would mean more budget and more content, pros including Noland could test and optimise. He is confident the industry will get there.

"I see a bright future ahead," he concludes. "There are a lot of smart people working on measurement and refining it."

Areas to improve

An overwhelming three out of four survey respondents feel the comms industry can do a better job of measuring and proving its impact on business objectives. It is worth noting that 22 percent feel comms doesn't do a good job at all.

Clear analytics that measure impact could help communicators figure out what content is delivering the biggest bang for their buck.

When it comes to content, over half of respondents (52 percent) said their biggest challenge is determining what content is most effective.

United Technologies invests in a lot of content creation to help position itself as a leader in providing industries such as aviation and construction with sustainable solutions and problem solving. This is a leadership stance it has been cultivating not only with clients and potential clients, but also employees and partners.

Earlier this year, United Technologies launched a podcast series, *Race to 9 Billion*, with the help of the crew behind NPR's *Living on Earth*. United Technologies' Chief Sustainability Officer John Mandyck hosts the series, and he sees the podcast as an effective way to share content in a deeper way.

But Mandyck is frustrated by the lack of met-

“ The next generation of measurement needs to relate coverage to bottom-line growth ”

Creating Content

66%

placed content creation among the three most important activities

32%

picked content creation as the most important activity

Impact on Business

75%
feel the comms industry can do better at measuring and proving its impact on business objectives

58%
of respondents do not have a good sense of what people do after they consume the brand's content

22%
of respondents feel comms does not do a good job of this at all

55%
do not have a good sense of whether or not there was any digital or real-world behaviour driven from the brand's content

TIME FOR BETTER MEASUREMENT

rics. For starters, the podcast is available on iTunes, “but Apple doesn’t provide data on podcasts,” he laments.

United Technologies also hosts the podcast on an owned site dedicated to sustainability. Even here, he says there is a lack of measurement technology that could find out how many people are listening to the entire podcast, when they’re jumping out, as well as what action they took after listening.

“We have seen a greater than 200 percent increase in traffic since we launched the podcast on our website. That is one way we can measure the success,” he explains.

“But we hope they’re listening to the podcast and then also taking a look at the full breadth of the sustainability work we do.”

United Technologies is not alone in facing limitations to metrics. Survey respondents said they have a strong sense of how many people read brand content (62 percent replied in the affirmative), and how many people clicked on a link within the content (79 percent).

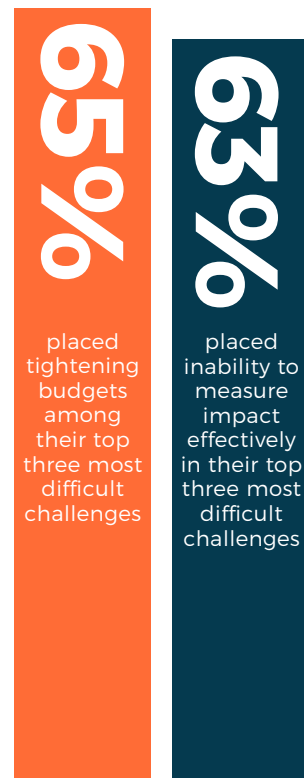
However, after that the data gets considerably thinner in linking specific consumer activity to content. Most (58 percent) don’t have a good sense of what people do after they consume the brand’s content. Nor do most (55 percent) know whether there was any digital or real-world behaviour driven from it.

Michael Marinello joined Turner Broadcasting as SVP, strategic comms a year ago. He has been tasked with developing a corporate narrative and helping connect all of Turner’s media properties.

He says the company has just started beefing up its corporate website and launched social media channels including Twitter and Instagram. He says his department is working closely with other divisions.

“Comms’ main goal is to create great content for sales and recruitment, so it needs to learn to be a great partner with other departments in the organisation,” Marinello explains. He says this collaboration should help the company as it starts to more intensely measure direct outcomes from the content it has been building. □

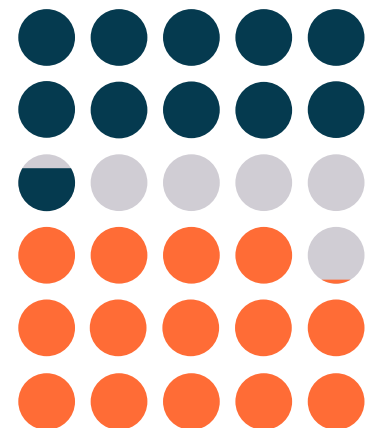
Biggest Challenges



Allocating Budget

36%

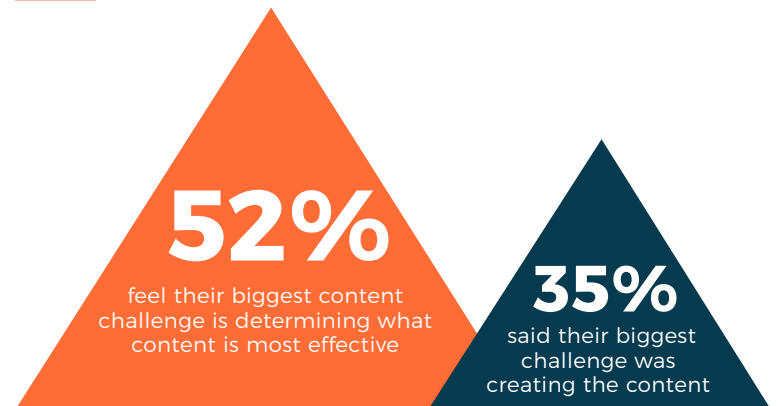
devote between 10% and 20% of their overall budget to collecting data to understand the impact of comms programs.



47%

spend between 1% and 10% of their budget on this.

Finding what works



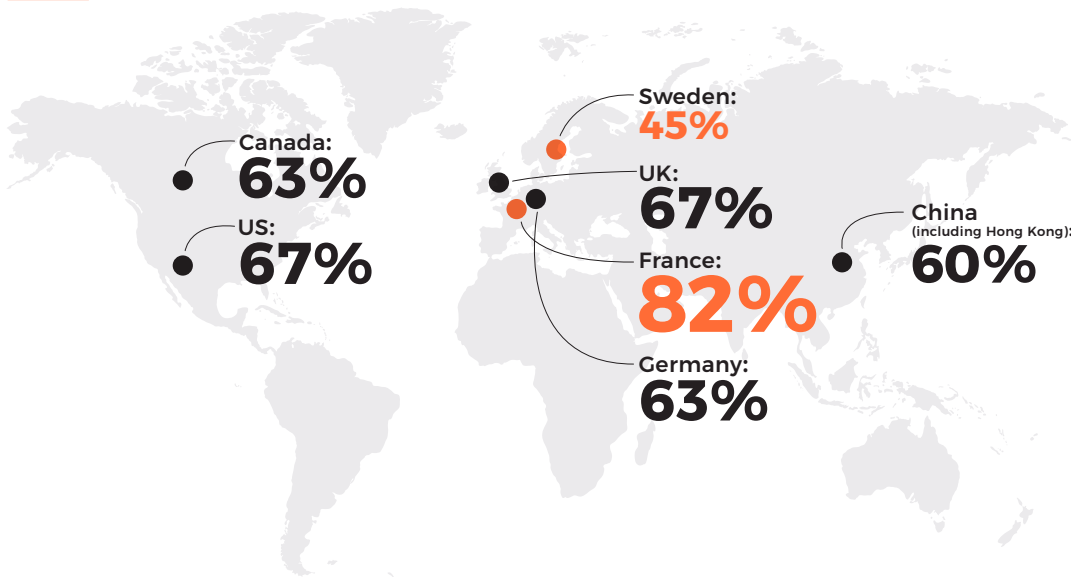
ALL ABOVE STATS ARE GLOBAL AVERAGES

RECOGNISING THE OBSTACLES

The preceding feature highlighted various global sentiments of the 425 respondents to the Cision/PRWeek survey. On the next two pages, we dig deeper into the numbers.

Globally, **65%** placed tightening budgets among their top three most difficult challenges

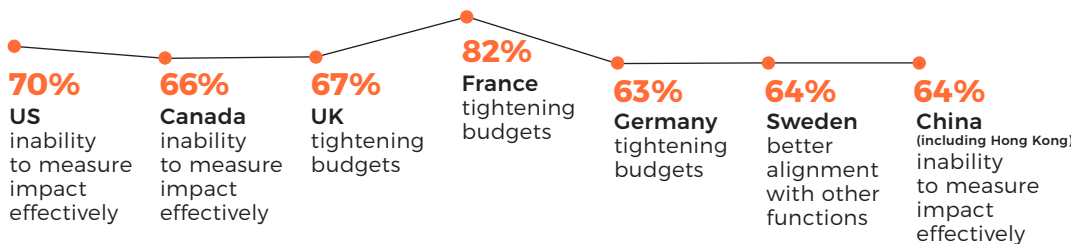
By country, this is how the above sentiment was expressed:



By organisation type and discipline



Respondents had six options from which to choose their most difficult comms challenges. Below indicates the ones chosen among the top three most difficult:



Talent recruitment and retention

Some of the more notable differences among respondent groups were seen here:

- Notably more respondents in China (**58%**) and Sweden (**55%**) placed this among their top three challenges than any other region.
- **67%** of PR agency respondents placed this among their top three challenges, as opposed to only **44%** of in-house leaders.
- **52%** of communications respondents placed this among their top three challenges, as opposed to only **42%** of marketers.

Conclusions

While tightening budgets are clearly a challenge globally – 26 percent of respondents chose it as their top challenge – communicators the world over realise the need to more effectively measure their impact. Meanwhile, in certain key markets, an inability to recruit and retain talent is a continuing issue that demands the industry’s attention.

RECOGNISING THE OBSTACLES

BUSINESS IMPACT

Globally, **75%** feel the comms industry can do a better job at measuring and proving its impact on business objectives.

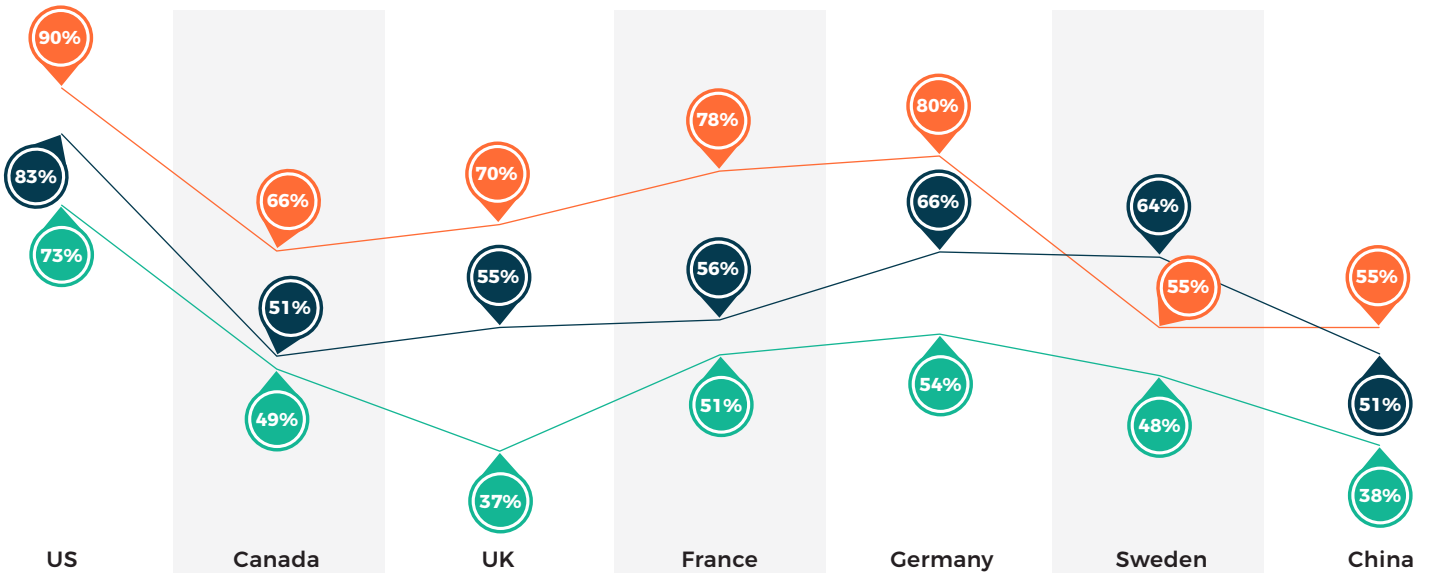
CONTENT CREATION

Globally, **66%** placed content creation among the three most important activities for their brands.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Globally, **55%** are unsure whether or not there was any digital or real-world behaviour driven from the brand's content.

By country, this is how the above sentiments were expressed:



Interesting takeaways

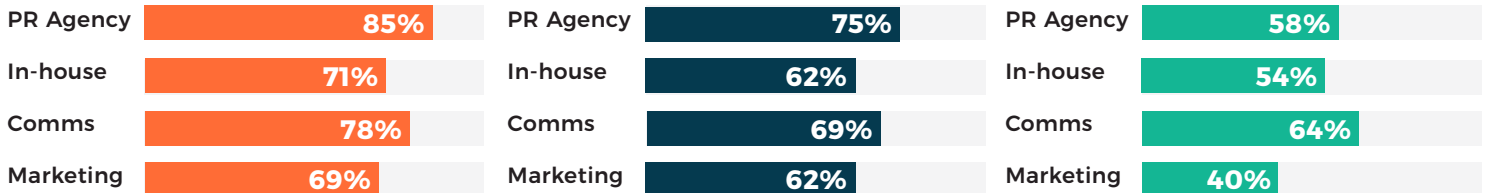
In four countries, a brand activity other than content creation placed in the top three most important:

Canada: social listening and engagement (**54%**); analytics and reporting (**54%**)

UK: analytics and reporting (**57%**); media outreach (**58%**)

China: media database and influencer management (**62%**)

By organisation type and discipline

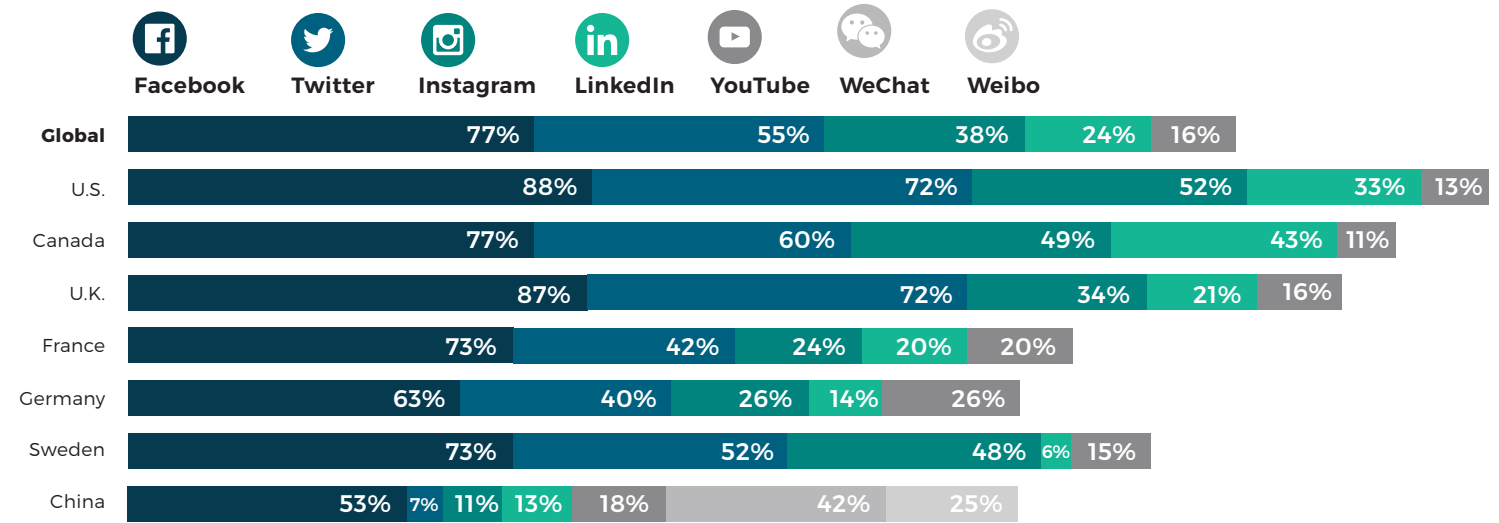


Conclusions

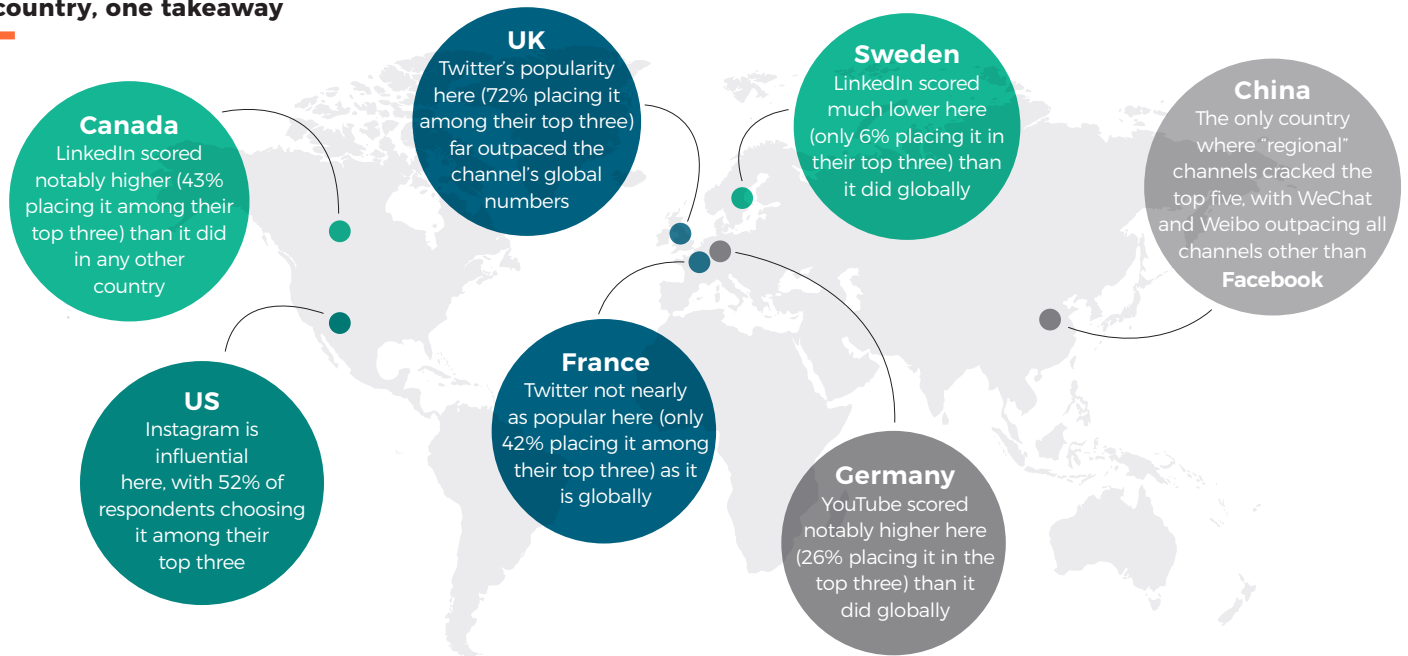
This data further underscores communications' ongoing challenge to link its efforts to impactful business results. A key contributor to those struggles is the discipline's general inability to prove that the content it produces actually facilitates consumer activity beyond clicks.

CHANNELING YOUR SOCIAL EFFORTS

The following data indicates the social media channels that were placed among the top three most relevant and important to respondents' broader brand content strategy.



One country, one takeaway



Conclusions

Facebook, **which was the top choice for 44 percent of global respondents**, remains the overwhelmingly preferred channel for broader brand content strategy. As such, it demands brands' attention most. Twitter and Instagram also scored very well globally.

EXERCISES IN INFLUENCE

The following pages reveal key findings about influencers, ranging from tactics on targeting them to identifying those with the most impact on consumer behavior.

I am always able to effectively identify the right influencers to target with all my initiatives and, in turn, impact customer behaviour

GLOBAL: 57%

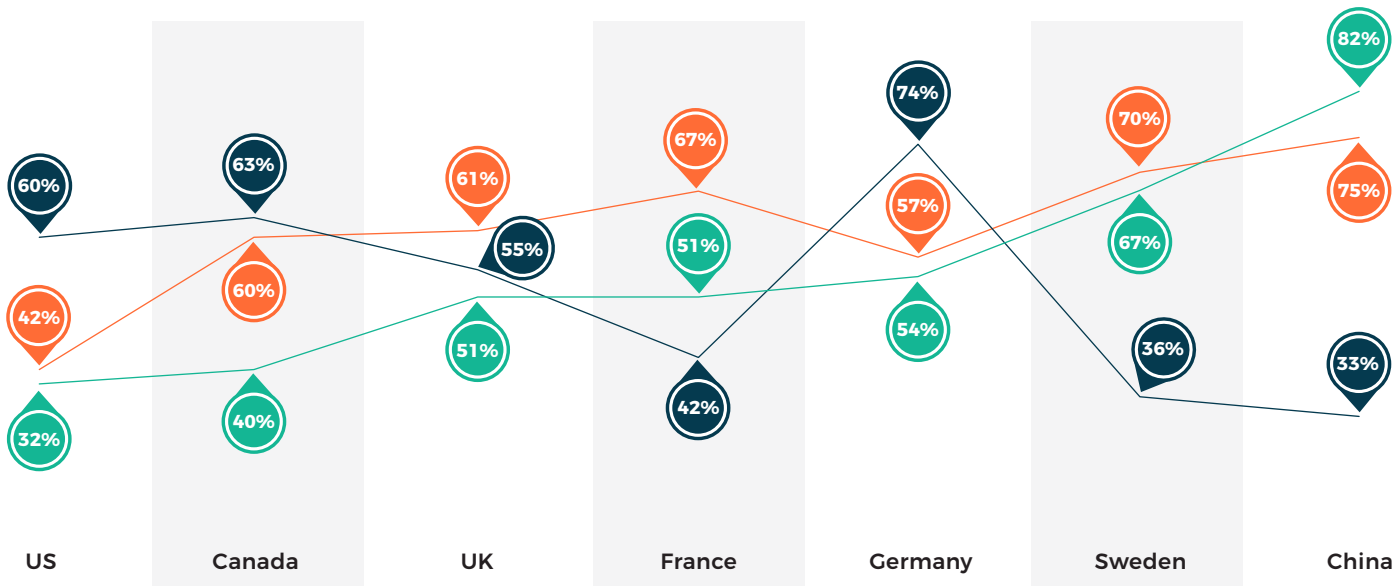
End-consumer data either plays a small role or no role at all in helping me determine what influencers to choose for my programmes

GLOBAL: 53%

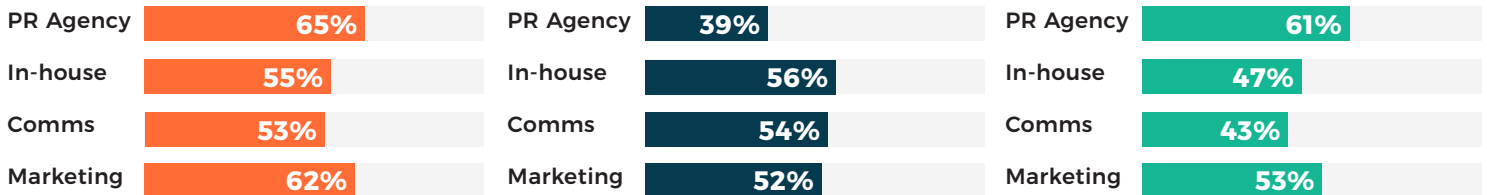
Paying influencers is an important part of our influencer strategy

GLOBAL: 48%

By country, this is how the above sentiments were expressed:



By organisation type and discipline

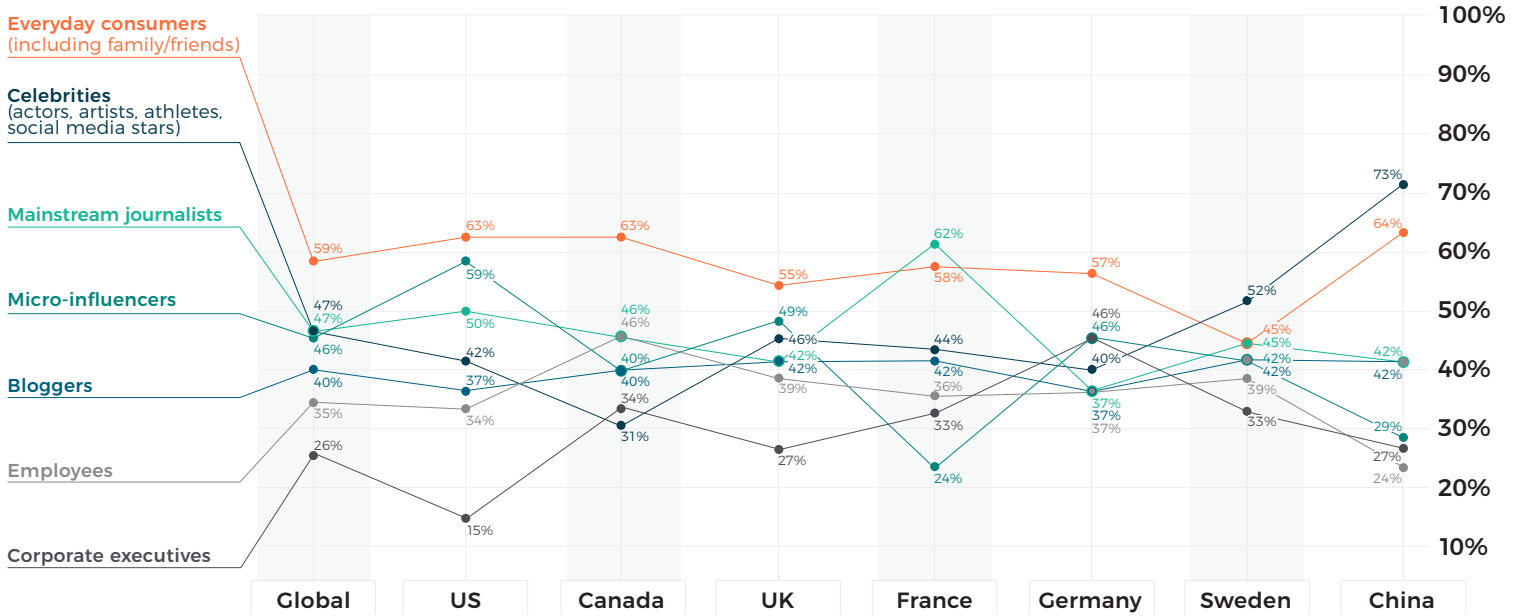


Conclusions

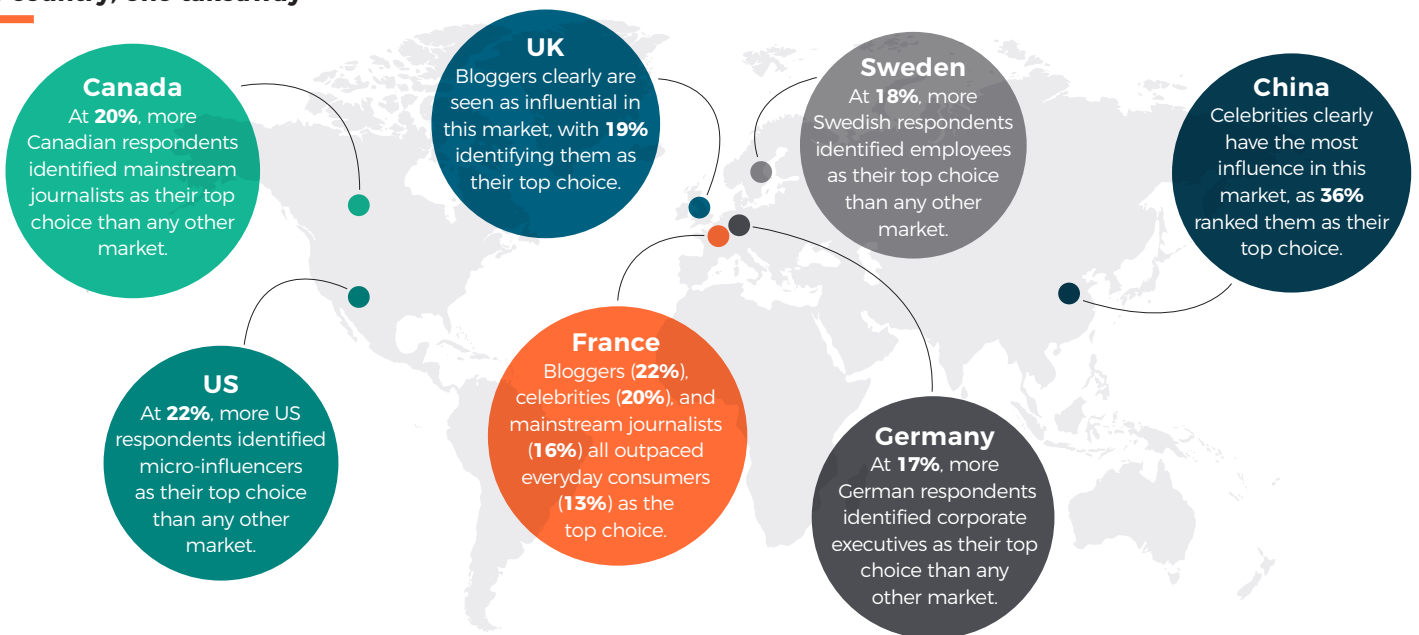
US communicators clearly struggle more than their global counterparts to identify the right influencers, which can be partly attributed to the small role end-consumer data plays when such strategies are pondered. Similarly, the tactic of paying influencers is far less popular in the US than any other market. It should also be noted that paying influencers is an incredibly popular tactic in China.

EXERCISES IN INFLUENCE

The following data indicates the specific type of influencers respondents placed among the top three for being most effective at impacting consumer or customer behaviour.



One country, one takeaway



Conclusions

Everyday consumers are clearly the influencers to target to impact customer behaviour. Celebrities, mainstream journalists and micro-influencers all have clout with consumers, while corporate executives are broadly viewed as having the least such influence.



Methodology

PRWeek partnered with Cision on this survey, which was sent via email to communications and marketing pros in seven countries around the world: the US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Sweden, and China (including Hong Kong). A total of 425 senior-level professionals, from both agencies and in-house, completed the online survey, conducted by Bovitz, between July 31 and August 23, 2017.



About Cision

Cision Ltd. (NYSE: CISON) is a leading global provider of earned media software and services to public relations and marketing communications professionals. Cision's software allows users to identify and engage with key influencers, craft and distribute meaningful stories, and measure the financial impact.

Cision has over 3,000 employees with offices in 15 countries throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC. Learn how to communicate like never before with the Cision Communications Cloud®. Follow Cision on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and on Cision's blog.



About PRWeek

PRWeek epitomises the modern business publishing brand, spanning online, print, events, and social media, incorporating a paid-for content strategy and gated website.

PRWeek reflects an industry playing a more pivotal role than ever before, not only in the marketing strategies of companies, brands, and organisations, but also within boardrooms and amongst the C-suite.

In the transparent world epitomized by social media, corporate reputation is crucial. Executives need timely, authoritative, insightful content to navigate this landscape – that's where PRWeek comes in.

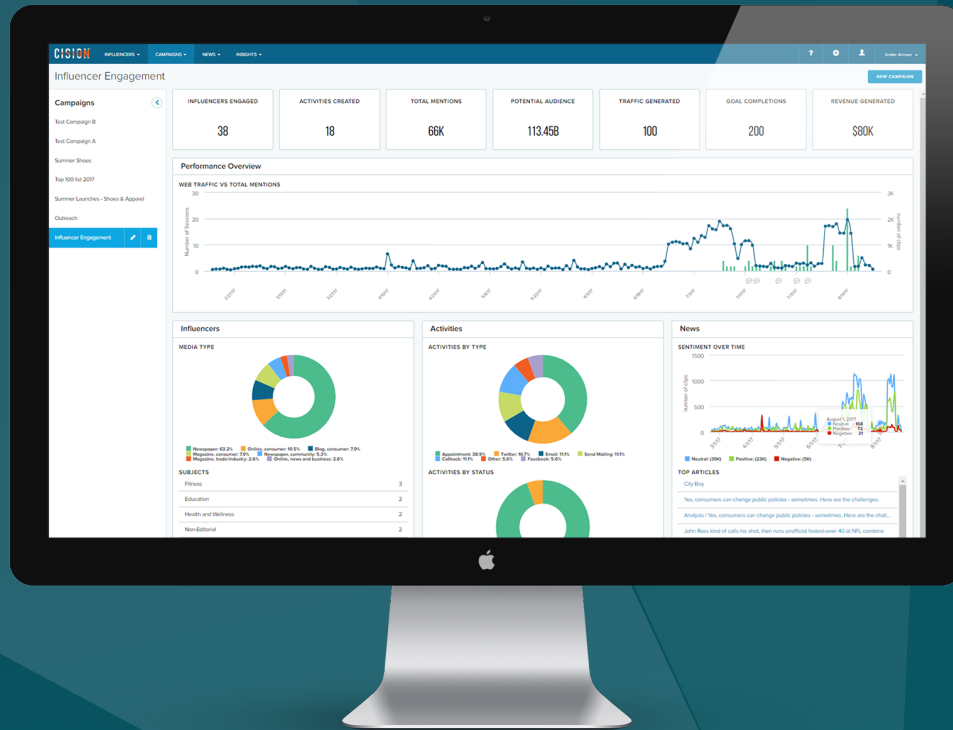
Breaking news, analysis, and opinion fuels PRWeek's content. And the brand extends into the iconic PRWeek Awards, annual conferences, roundtables, webcasts, and virtual forums. For more, visit prweek.com.

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Isn't it time you connect your earned media to business outcomes?

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The Cision Communications Cloud® delivers a sophisticated, easy-to-use platform for communicators to reach key media influencers and craft compelling campaigns that impact customer behaviour. With rich monitoring analytics, Cision arms brands with the insights they need to tie their communications programmes to strategic business objectives. And communicate like never before.

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