



IHS GLOBALSPEC RESEARCH REPORT

2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
How to Use Social Media.....	4
Define Your Goals and Objectives.....	4
Understand What Platforms Your Audience Uses.....	4
Deliver a Variety of Useful Content through Social Media.....	5
Involve Your Own Team.....	5
Survey Results: Use of Social Media Platforms.....	6
Time Spent Using Social Media.....	6
Where Technical Professionals Have Social Media Accounts.....	7
LinkedIn Usage.....	9
Facebook Usage.....	13
Twitter Usage.....	15
Google+ Usage.....	17
Social Media Accounts.....	19
Video Usage.....	20
Frequency of Contributing to Social Media.....	22
Reasons for Using Social Media.....	23
Top Resources for Researching Work-Related Purchases.....	25
Challenges in Using Social Media for Work.....	27
Frequency of Posting Company Information.....	28
Social Media Recommendations.....	29
Conclusions.....	31
About IHS (www.ihs.com).....	32
About IHS GlobalSpec.....	32



Executive Summary

Social media continues to have a role in industrial marketing, and many companies now maintain a social media presence. However, you should approach social media within the context of your overall marketing efforts. Integrate social media into your marketing mix—but only at an appropriate level of investment and resources. For example: while the majority of technical professionals now use social media, most of them spend less than one hour per week on social media for work-related purposes, whereas they spend many more hours using other online resources for work.

This research report, based on a recent IHS GlobalSpec survey of technical professionals, will help you understand how your target audience uses social media. It will recommend ways you can best use social media as part of your marketing strategy to connect with customers and prospects and meet your marketing objectives. Of the 1,177 survey respondents, 77 percent are engineers or other technical professionals, 5 percent work in technical/support services, and 4 percent work in research and development. Eighty-nine percent are involved in the purchase of components and services.

Among this audience, the most popular social media platform continues to be LinkedIn, the professional networking site. Seventy-four percent of technical professionals have LinkedIn accounts. The social sharing site Google+ is exhibiting steady growth, with 41 percent now having accounts, mostly for the professional purpose of following groups and businesses related to their industries. Facebook and Twitter growth has stagnated over the past few years. Those platforms are more popular with technical professionals in the 18-34 age group, as are video sharing websites. No other social media platform is relevant to technical professionals at this time.

Almost half of technical professionals (48 percent overall, although 58 percent in the 18-34 age group) use a video sharing website for work-related purposes, primarily to view product demos and how-to videos. This is in keeping with the generally passive way technical professionals engage with social media—they prefer to read, watch and research, as opposed to publish, post and comment.

Older workers and younger workers use social media differently. Those over age 34 tend to use social media for traditional tasks such as finding product reviews and reading news. Compared to their older peers, younger technical professionals are more active on social media; they post, share and participate more often. But overall, 78 percent of technical professionals have never posted news or information about their company to their social networks.

Why isn't social media more valuable to technical professionals? First, in terms of researching work-related purchases, they prefer other online resources, such as general search engines, online catalogs, websites, and GlobalSpec.com. Second, 52 percent say there is "too much noise and not enough substance" around using social media for work-related purposes. Where technical professionals mostly use social media is for "top of sales funnel" activities such as accessing news, product reviews, and suppliers, which are early stage buy cycle functions that require a supplier to have high brand visibility in order to be found.



How to Use Social Media

Some suppliers and manufacturers start using social media simply because they think they should, or because their competitors use social media. They may continue to add more social platforms, deploy more resources and devote more time, yet still not have a clear purpose, goals or means of defining or measuring social media success. Even industrial companies that are successfully using social media might not be fully reaping the business benefits that social channels present. Here's how to make the best use of social media:

Define Your Goals and Objectives

Because social media is oriented towards interaction, dialog, education and networking—as opposed to lead generation, qualification and sales engagement—you may find that social media is not a direct driver of sales. On the other hand, social media presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate thought leadership, raise brand awareness and build a strong community with your customers, prospects and partners.

If you set reasonable and realistic goals around brand awareness and building community, and measure these goals in terms of increasing your number of followers and interactions on social media, you will likely have greater success. What's more, you'll be connecting with technical professionals during the early stages of their buy cycle, when they are conducting research, seeking information and looking for suppliers. Because many buyers today don't contact a supplier until they are close to a purchase decision, it's more important than ever to have a strong presence and be in front of your audience early in their buy cycle.

Understand What Platforms Your Audience Uses

While technical professionals still prefer online channels such as supplier websites, general search engines, online catalogs and GlobalSpec.com for researching a work-related purchase, they do use social media. Your strategy should be to focus your social media efforts on one or a few of the platforms that technical professionals use.

The most popular social media site is LinkedIn, with 74 percent of technical professionals having an account. You should set up a company page on LinkedIn, consider starting a group, join other groups and contribute to discussions, and consider paid advertising.

The next fastest growing social media platform is Google+, with 41 percent of technical professionals having an account. Again, you might consider establishing a presence here. Sixty-one percent have Facebook accounts, although its growth has flattened out over the past few years with technical professionals. The same goes for Twitter.



Deliver a Variety of Useful Content through Social Media

Technical professionals mainly use social media early in their buy cycle for top of the sales funnel activities. They are seeking specific types of content: news, problem-solving tips, the latest technologies and advances. Social media is a great place to post links to your articles, white papers, webinar invitations and more. Video is popular with this audience as well—48 percent use YouTube or other video-sharing sites. Consider creating and posting product demos, technical how-to videos, training videos and other informational/educational videos.

Involve Your Own Team

Social media often requires a group effort because it needs a constant supply of fresh content and posts to keep the engine running. This presents a perfect opportunity to recruit your internal technical experts to lead and participate in social media conversations. Your colleagues can write posts, respond to questions, or pose questions to the audience on their own social channels or on your company channels.

It's important to develop a social media policy that outlines your company's principles and policies for communicating in the social sphere. You will also need social media usage guidelines for employees to follow. Developing policies and usage guidelines—and training employees on them—will prevent the accidental (or deliberate) posting of erroneous, misleading or confidential company information on social channels, and help create a positive, unified social media front to your audience.

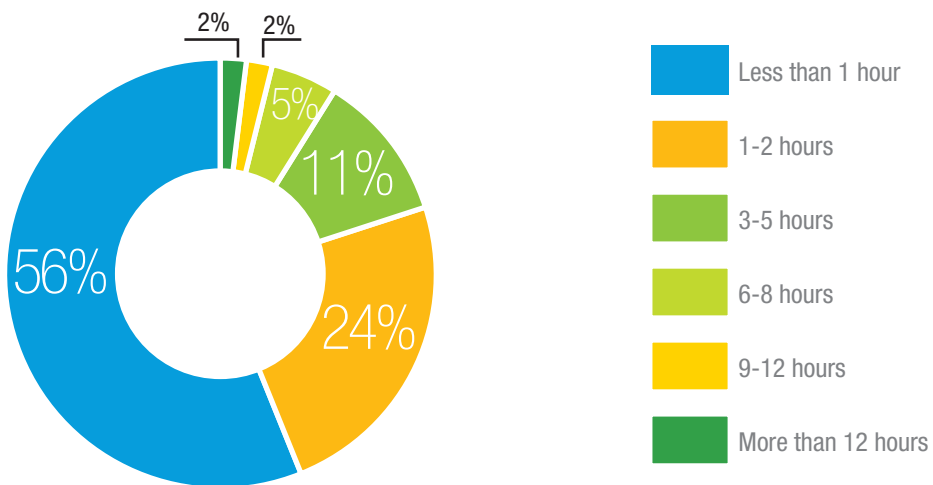


Survey Results: Use of Social Media Platforms

Time Spent Using Social Media

The majority of technical professionals—56 percent—spend less than one hour per week on social media for work-related purposes.

How much time during the week do you spend on social media (including community sites and forums) for work-related purposes?

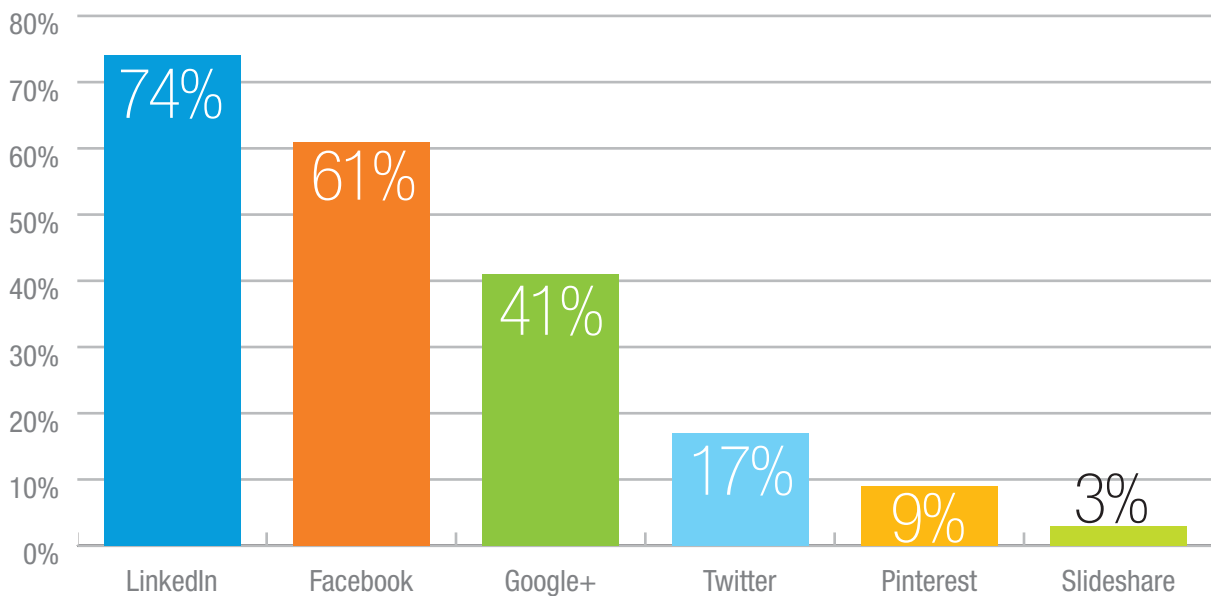


©2014 IHS 



Where Technical Professionals Have Social Media Accounts

On which of the following social media platforms do you maintain an account?



©2014 IHS 

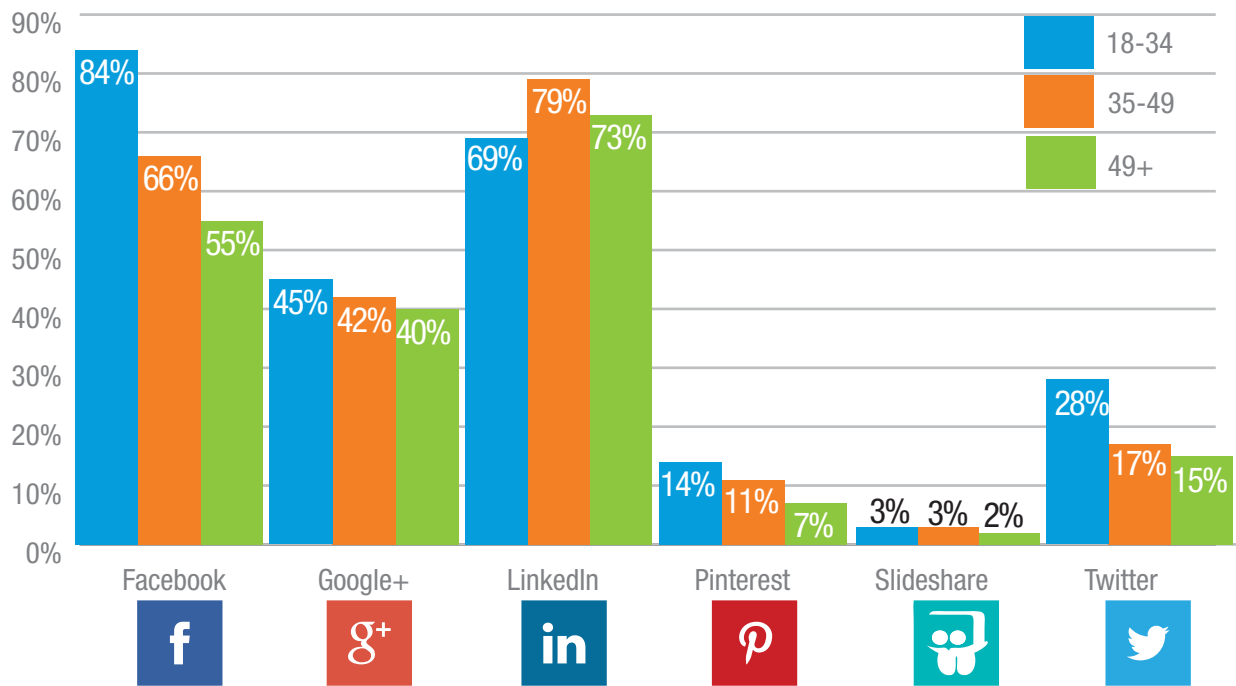
LinkedIn is the most popular social media platform among technical professionals, with 74 percent having an account. Sixty-one percent have a Facebook account, although its growth has stalled in the past few years for this audience. Google+ is growing—41 percent now have an account.



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Younger technical professionals, those under age 35, use all social media platforms more than older technical professionals do. The lone exception is LinkedIn, which has higher usage among the over 35 crowd.

On which of the following social media platforms do you maintain an account?



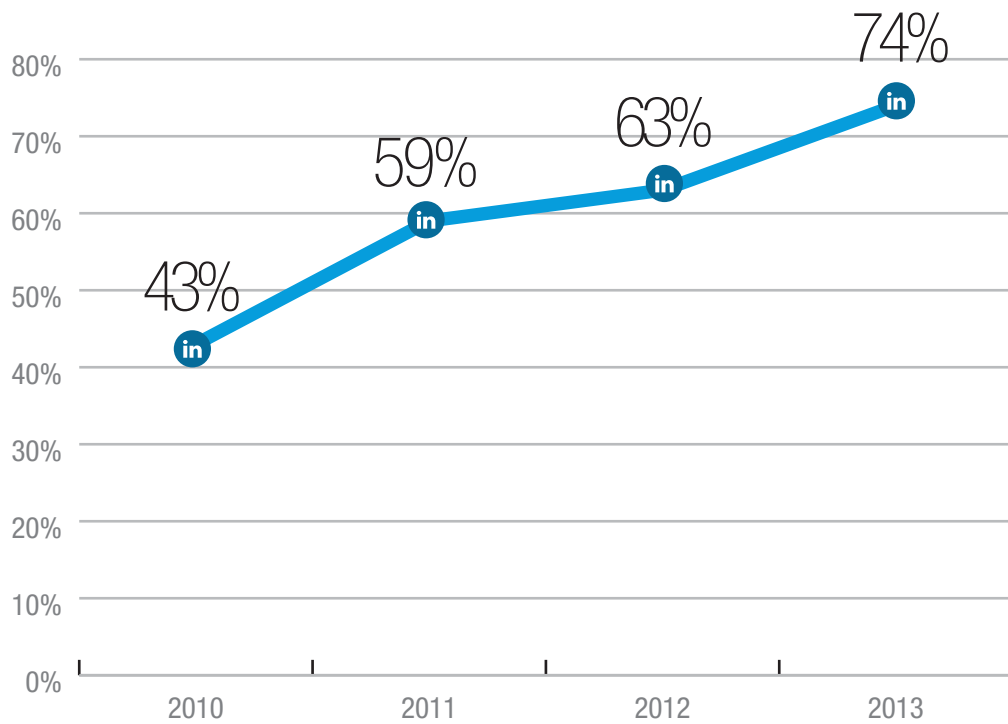
©2014 IHS



LinkedIn Usage

LinkedIn allows an individual to create a professional profile and network with other professionals. LinkedIn has shown steady growth over the past few years, with 74 percent of technical professionals now having an account, compared to only 43 percent in 2010.

Percentage of Technical Professionals with a LinkedIn Account



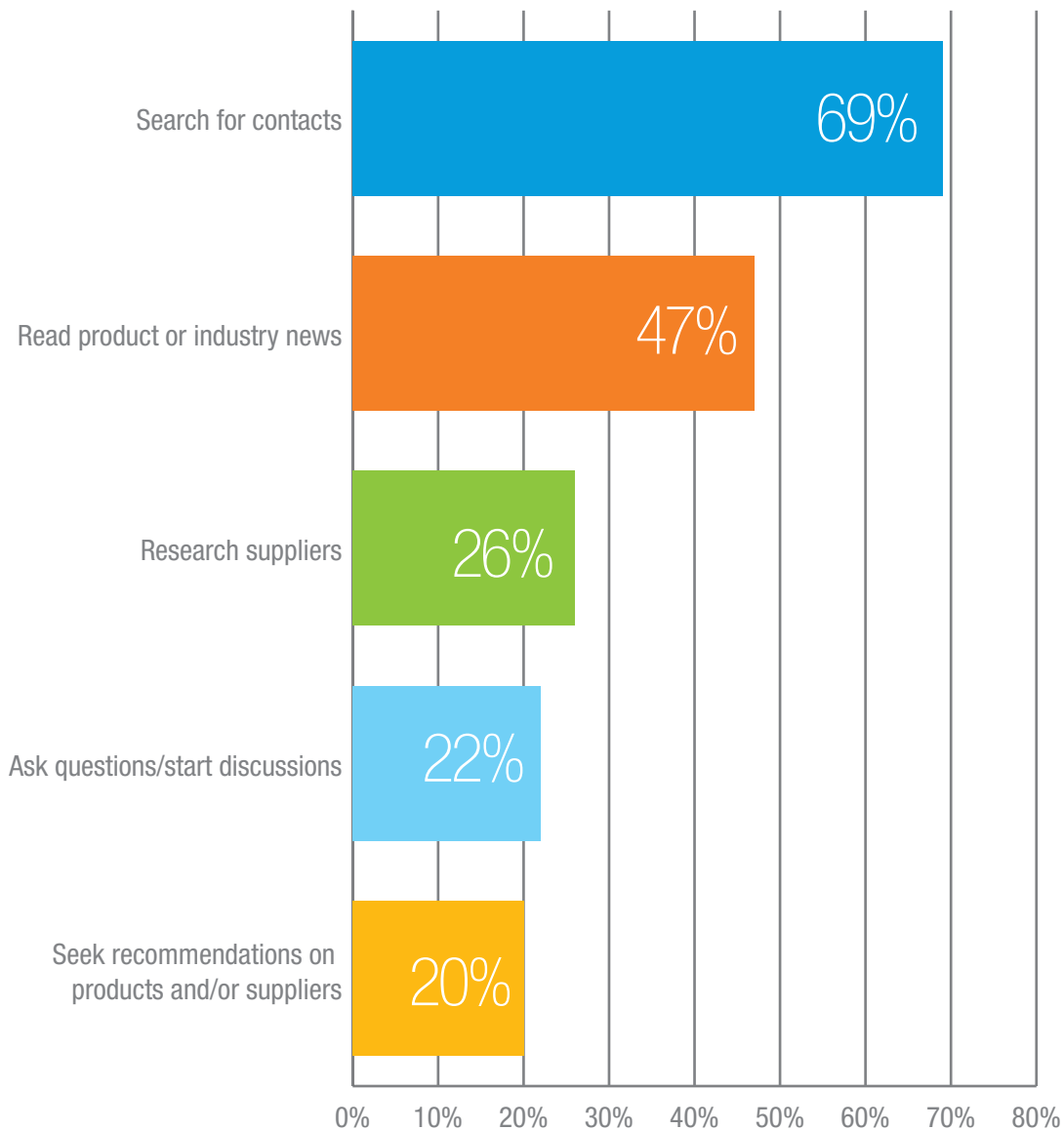
©2014 IHS 



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

The most popular activity for technical professionals on LinkedIn is to search for contacts, followed by reading product/industry news and searching for suppliers.

Which of the following work-related activities do you perform on LinkedIn?

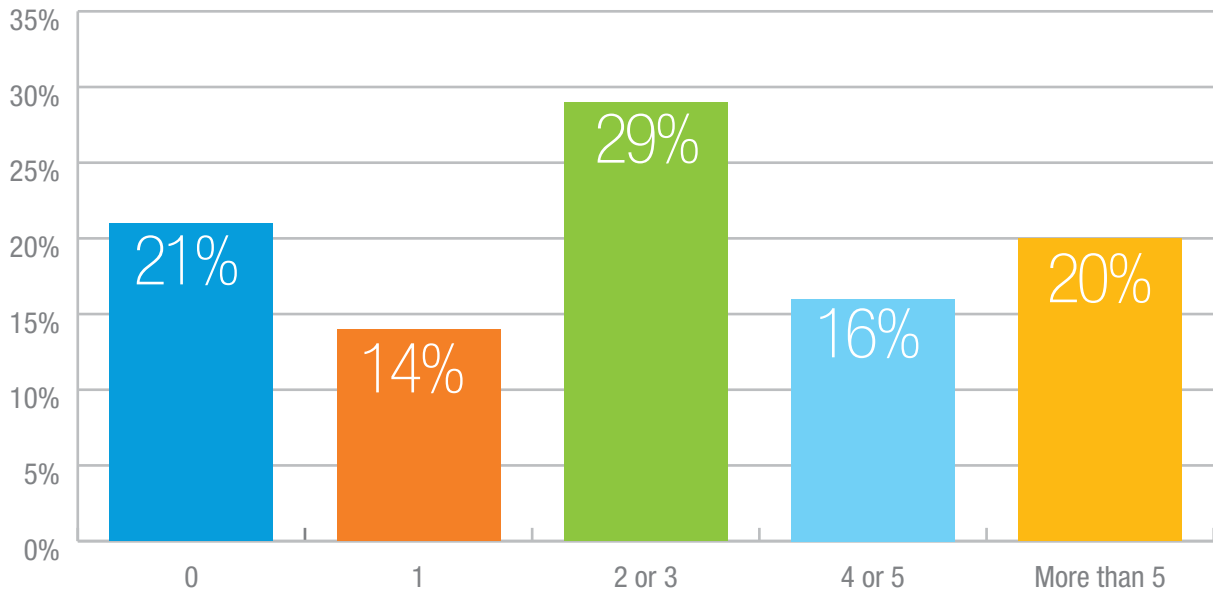


©2014 IHS 



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

How many groups do you belong to on LinkedIn?



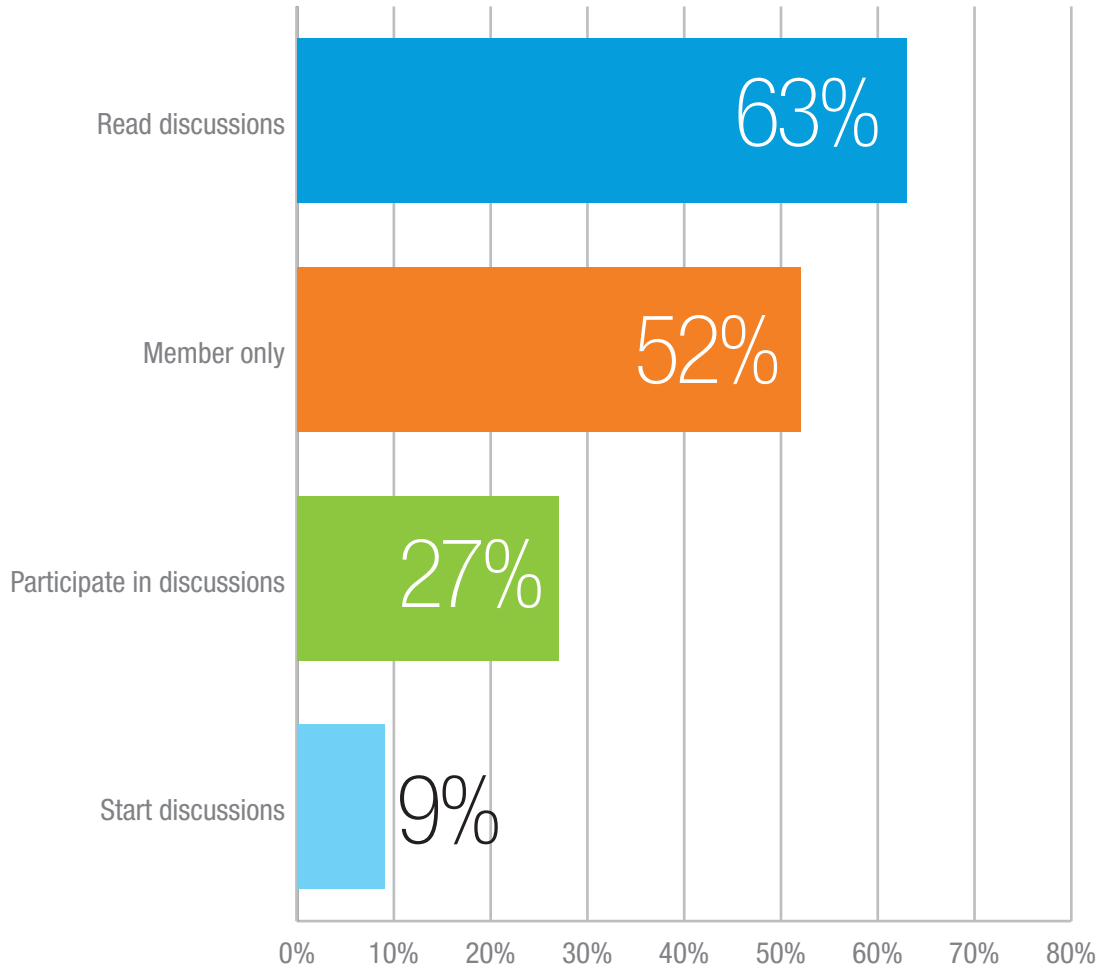
©2014 IHS 

Organizations also can develop company profiles on LinkedIn to educate prospects and customers about their products and services. Individuals or organizations can create and join LinkedIn groups, which are comprised of members who share common interests, such as industrial design, or automation control and engineering. Groups provide a forum for discussion, networking, content distribution and promotion. Sixty-five percent of industrial professionals belong to two or more groups on LinkedIn and 36 percent belong to at least four groups; 63 percent read their group's discussions, although only 27 percent actually participate in those discussions, reinforcing the fact that this audience is primarily passive in its social media usage.



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

How active are you within LinkedIn groups?



©2014 IHS 

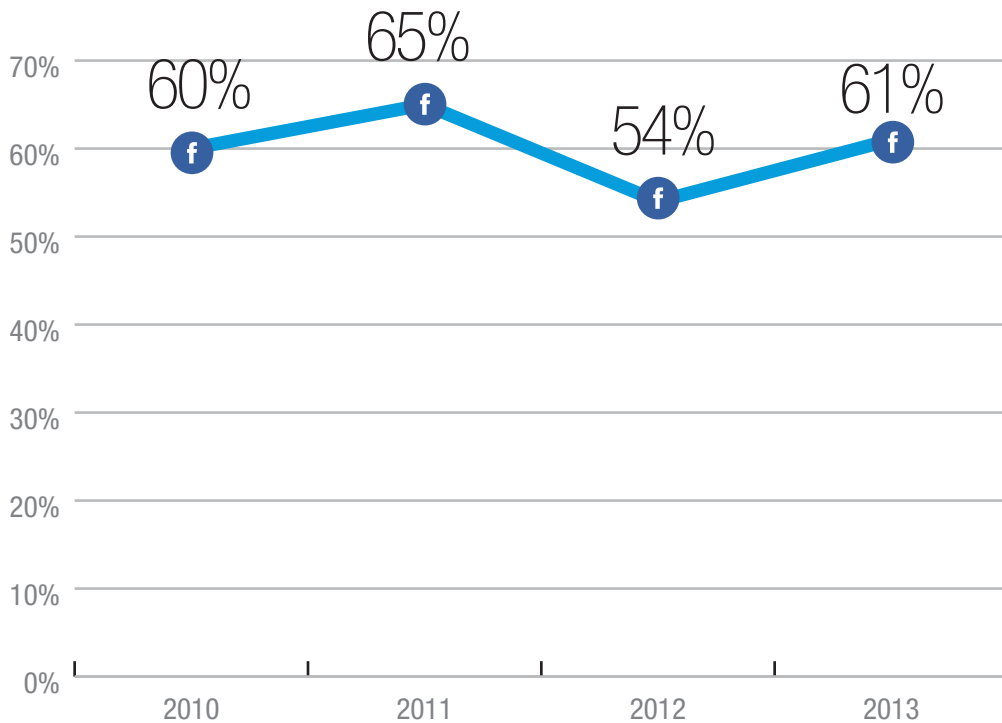


Facebook Usage

In addition to providing a social platform for individuals to connect with “friends,” Facebook also offers Pages that are associated with companies or brands. Users can “like” company Pages, giving them the ability to receive updates, add comments and share an organization’s Facebook updates.

Although the majority of technical professionals have a Facebook account, growth among this audience has stagnated. Sixty-one percent of technical professionals have a Facebook account, virtually the same percentage as in 2010. Part of the reason may have to do with the “too much noise and not enough substance” complaint about social media from technical professionals. It may also be that, in terms of growth with this audience, Facebook has matured as a platform. Those who want to use it have already signed up for its service and those who haven’t may ignore this channel altogether.

Percentage of Technical Professionals with a Facebook Account

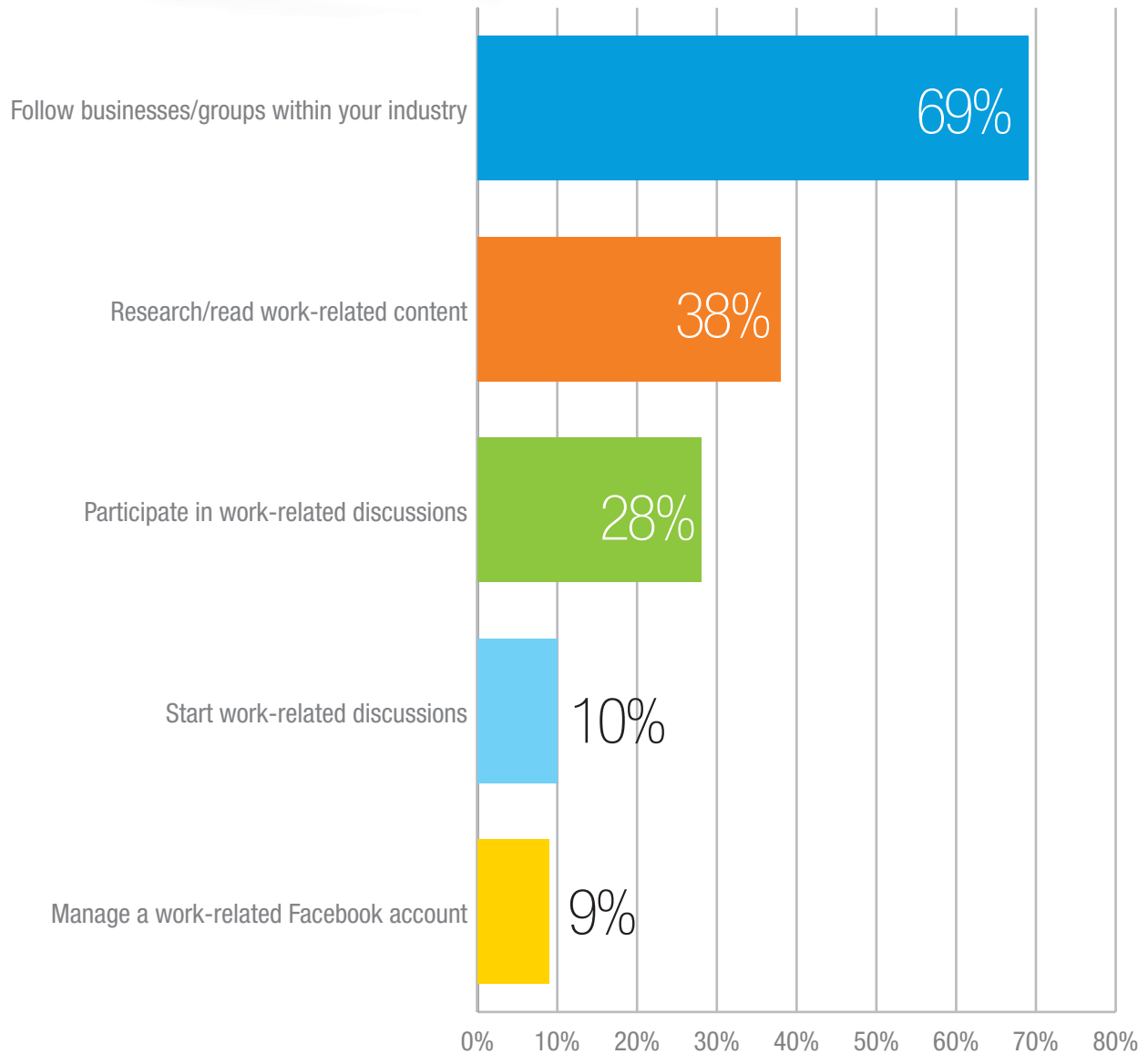


©2014 IHS 



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

What work-related activities do you perform on Facebook?



©2014 IHS 

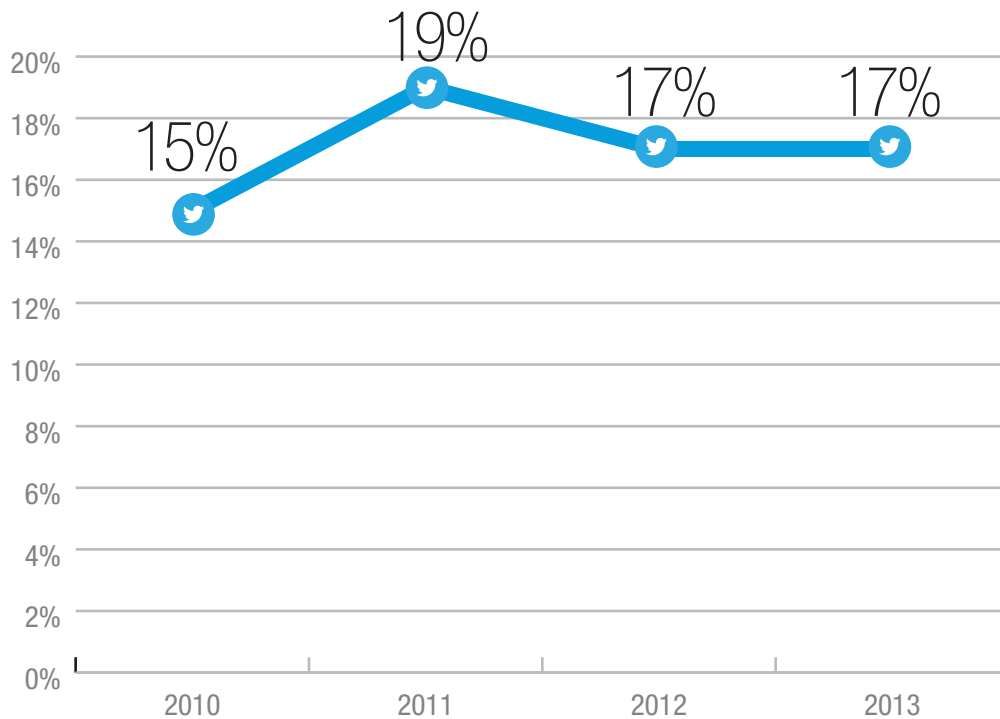
The majority (69 percent) of technical professionals who use Facebook for work-related purposes follow the news and updates of other companies that they “like.” Only 10 percent start their own work-related discussions.



Twitter Usage

The micro-blogging service Twitter is another social media platform whose growth has flattened out among technical professionals, with 17 percent having a Twitter account in 2013, the same as last year, and only two percentage points higher than 2010. Users may have discovered that Twitter, with its 140-character limit to posts, seems irrelevant or insignificant to their needs. Twitter is likely most effective when used in tandem with other social media, as another channel on which to deliver content and interact. However, nearly twice as many technical professionals in the 18-34 age group have Twitter accounts than those over 49. Those that do use Twitter for work-related purposes use it passively, with 73 percent stating that they follow other businesses or groups within their industry.

Percentage of Technical Professionals with a Twitter Account

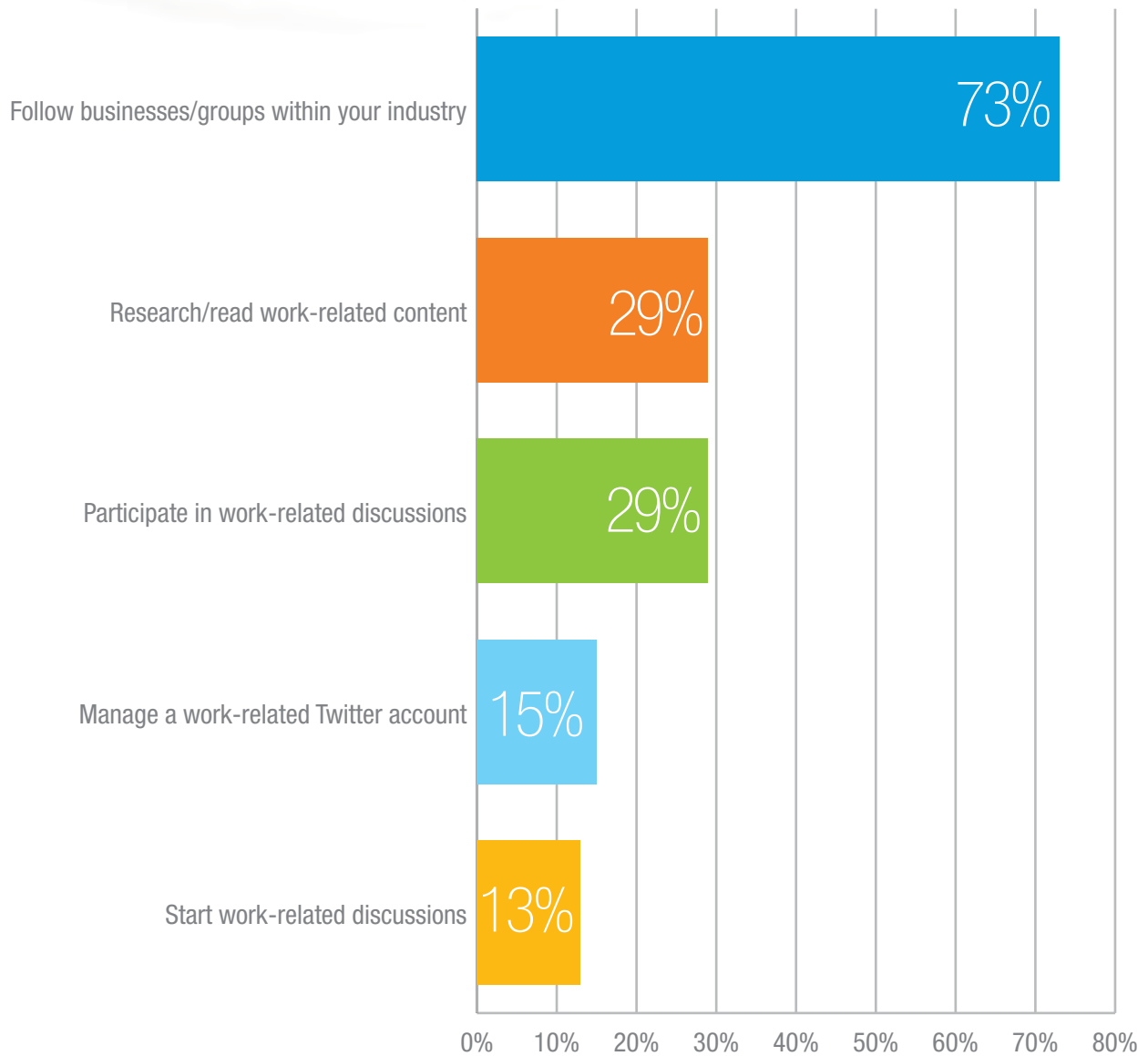


©2014 IHS 



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

What work-related activities do you perform on Twitter?



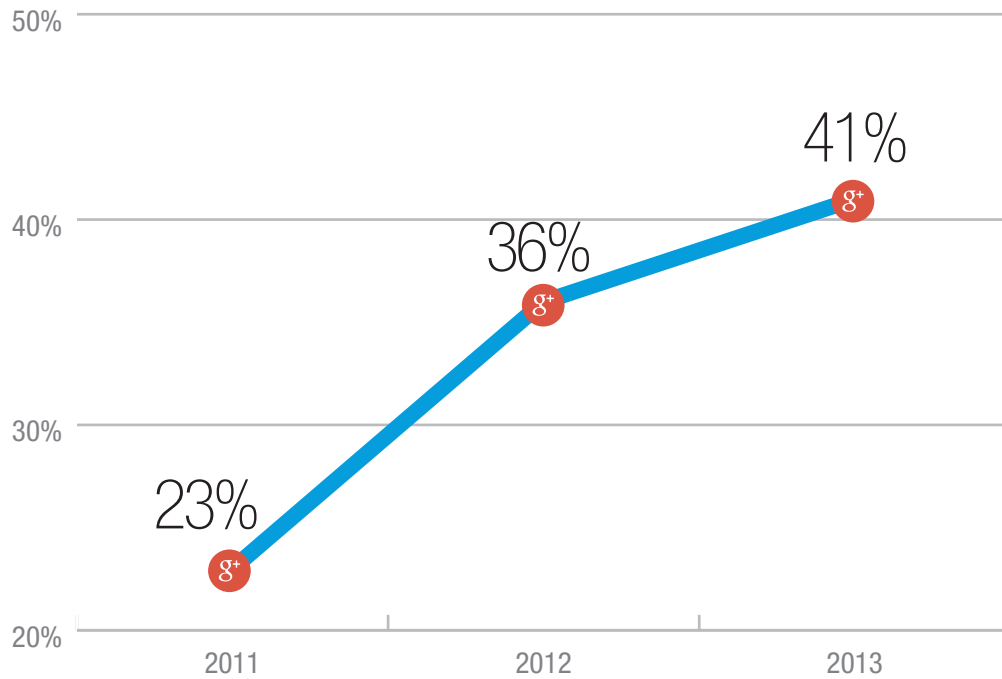
©2014 IHS 



Google+ Usage

One platform that has shown growth is the social sharing site Google+, which combines aspects of Facebook and Twitter and is integrated with other Google offerings. Google+ includes “Circles” for sharing content only with certain people, and “Hangouts” for video meetings and conferences. Google+ allows your organization to get recommendations from customers, among other social benefits. Forty-one percent of industrial professionals have a Google+ account, up from 23 percent in 2011, which represents 78 percent growth over the past few years. As with Facebook and Twitter, the most common activity for technical professionals on Google+ is to follow other businesses/ groups within their industry (80 percent).

Percentage of Technical Professionals with a Google + Account

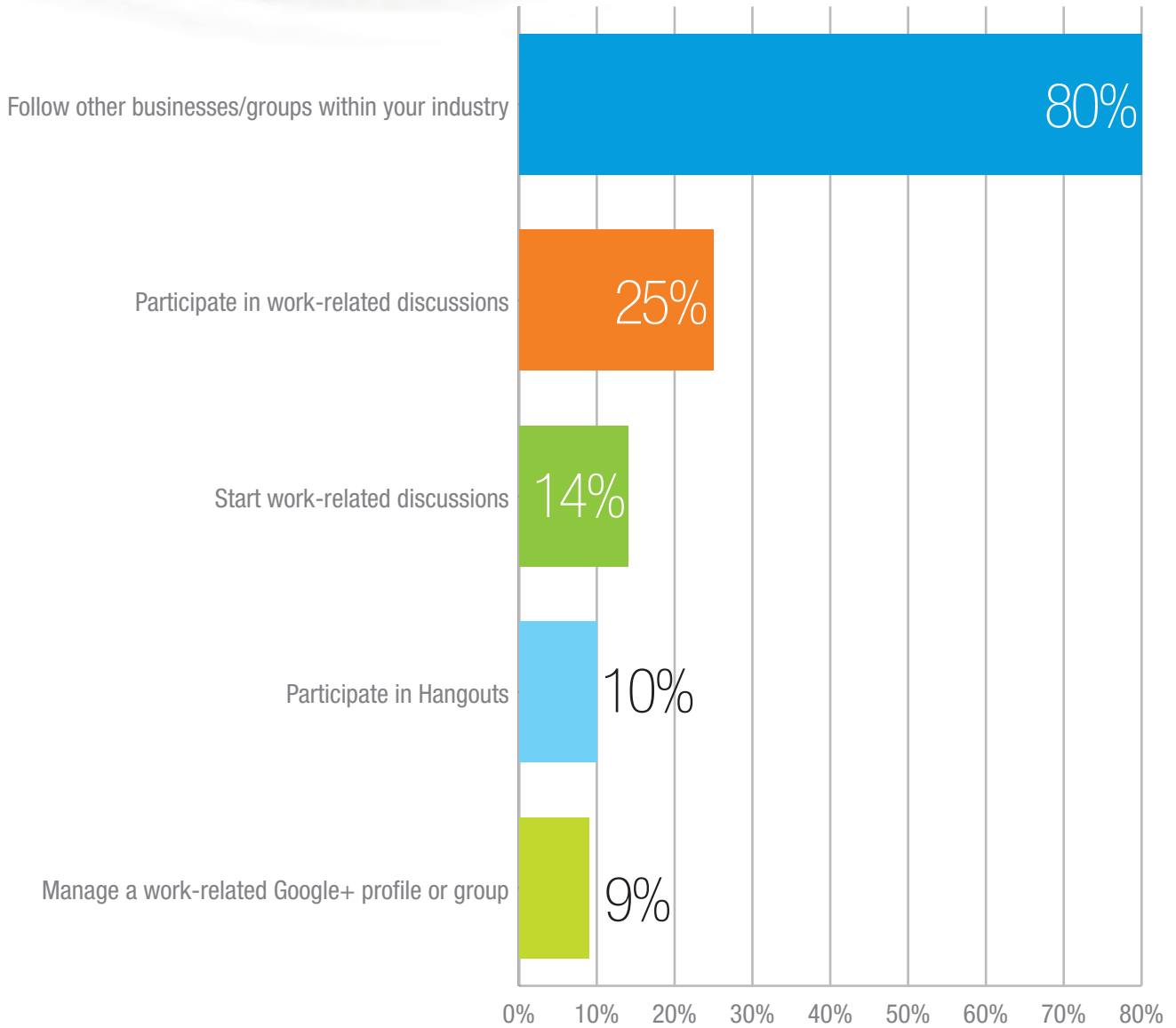


©2014 IHS 



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

What work-related activities do you perform on Google+?



©2014 IHS 

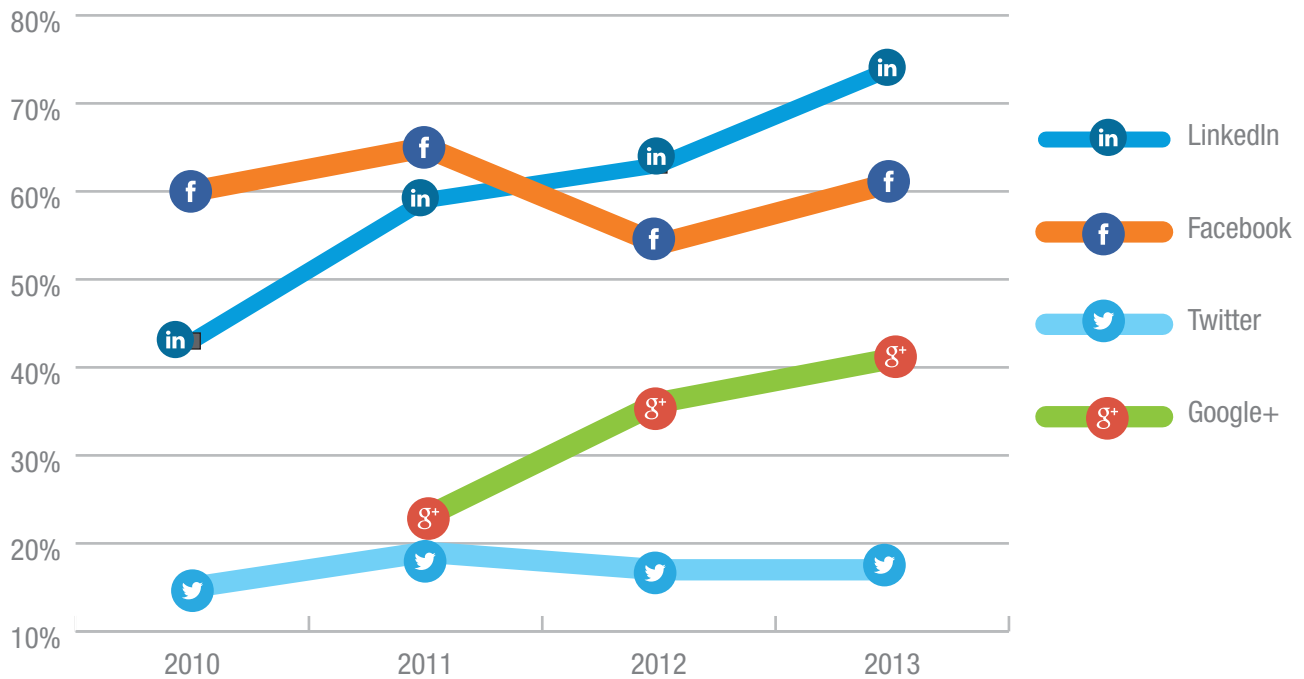


2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Social Media Accounts

Over the past four years, LinkedIn and Google+ have shown the most growth among technical professionals.

Percentage of Technical Professionals with Social Media Accounts



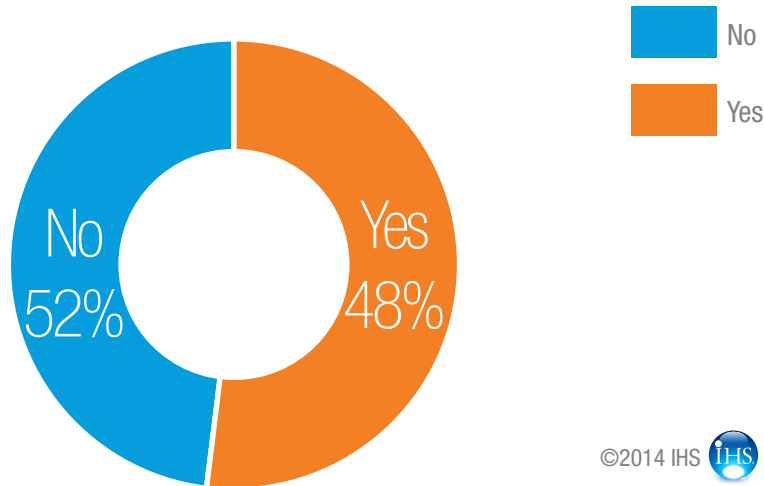
©2014 IHS 



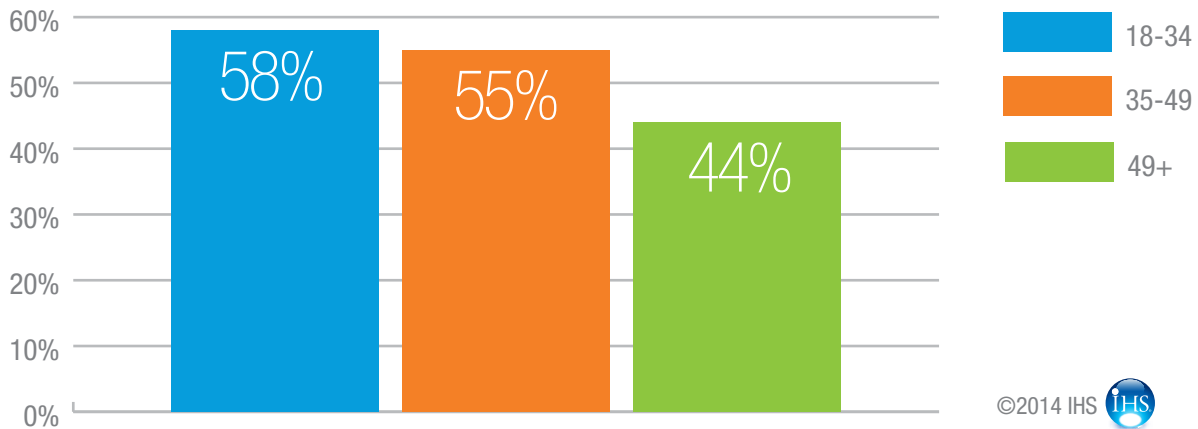
Video Usage

In keeping with the passive nature of their social media participation, technical professionals like to watch video. Forty-eight percent use YouTube or other video sharing websites for work-related purposes, and watching a video is the top use of social media among this audience. When results are segmented by age, significantly fewer technical professionals in the over 49 age group use video-sharing websites—44 percent do, 56 percent don't—compared with younger workers, where the majority use video.

Do you use YouTube or other video sharing websites for work-related purposes?

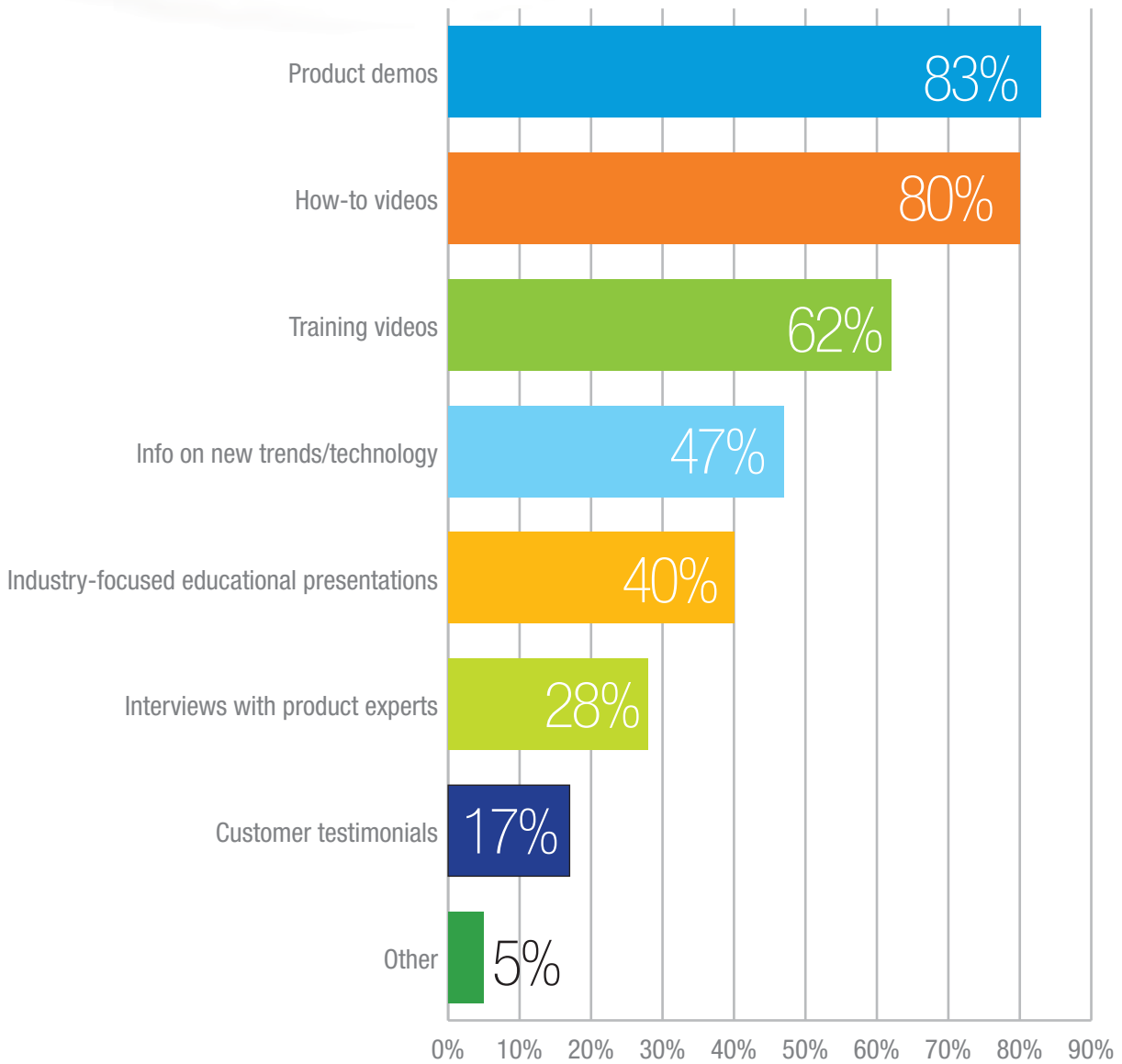


Do you use YouTube or other video sharing websites for work-related purposes?



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

What types of content do you watch on video sharing websites?



©2014 IHS 

Product demos (83 percent) and how-to videos (80 percent) are the two most popular types of video content. Technical professionals also watch training videos (62 percent) and videos on new trends and technologies (47 percent).

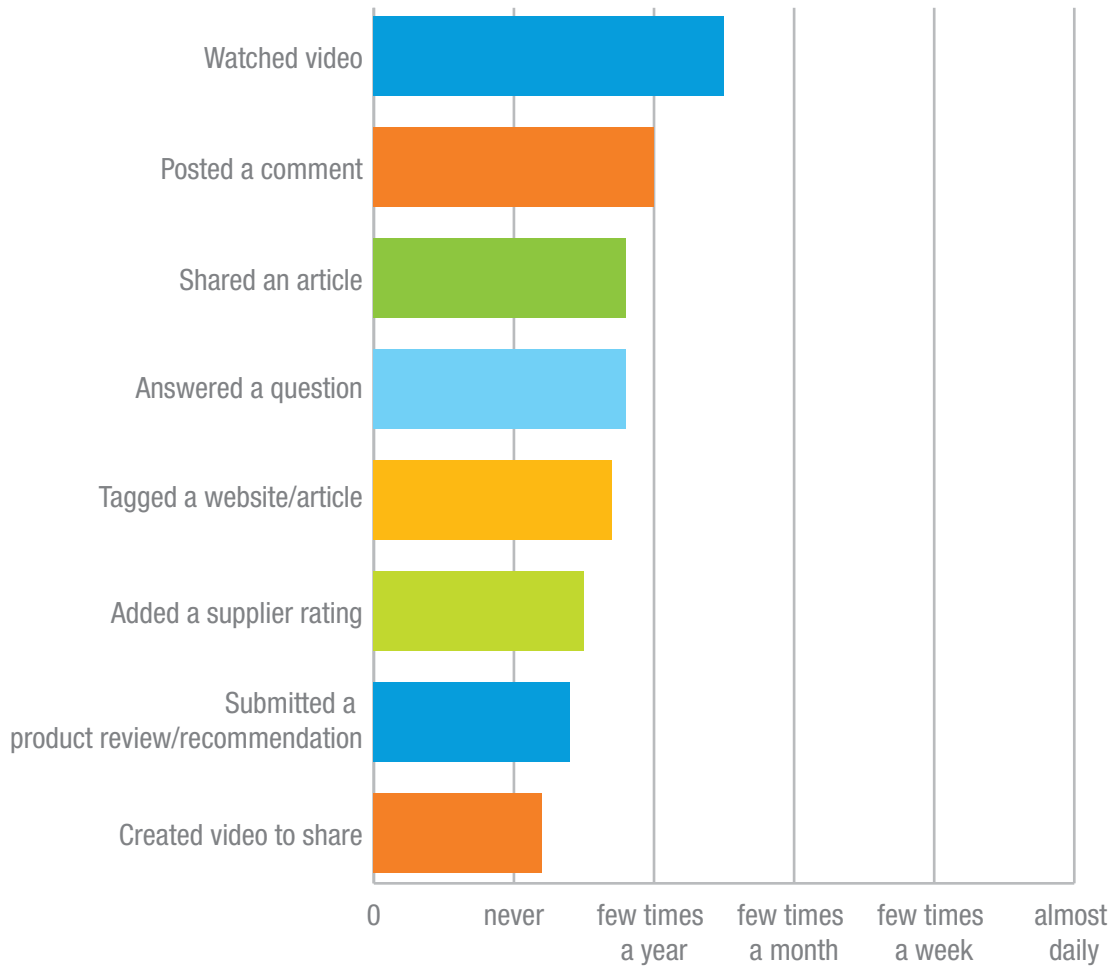


Frequency of Contributing to Social Media

The survey asked technical professionals how often they contributed to specific types of social media. For each social media type, respondents were asked to choose from a scale offering the following frequency options: Never, Few times a year, Few times a month, Few times a week, or Almost daily.

Respondents stated that they contribute to social media a few times a year. Results are consistent with other findings that this audience participates passively: the most common use was to watch a video, while the least common was to create a video. The next most frequent uses were posting comments and answering a question, which are more active uses of social media.

How often have you contributed to social media?



©2014 IHS 



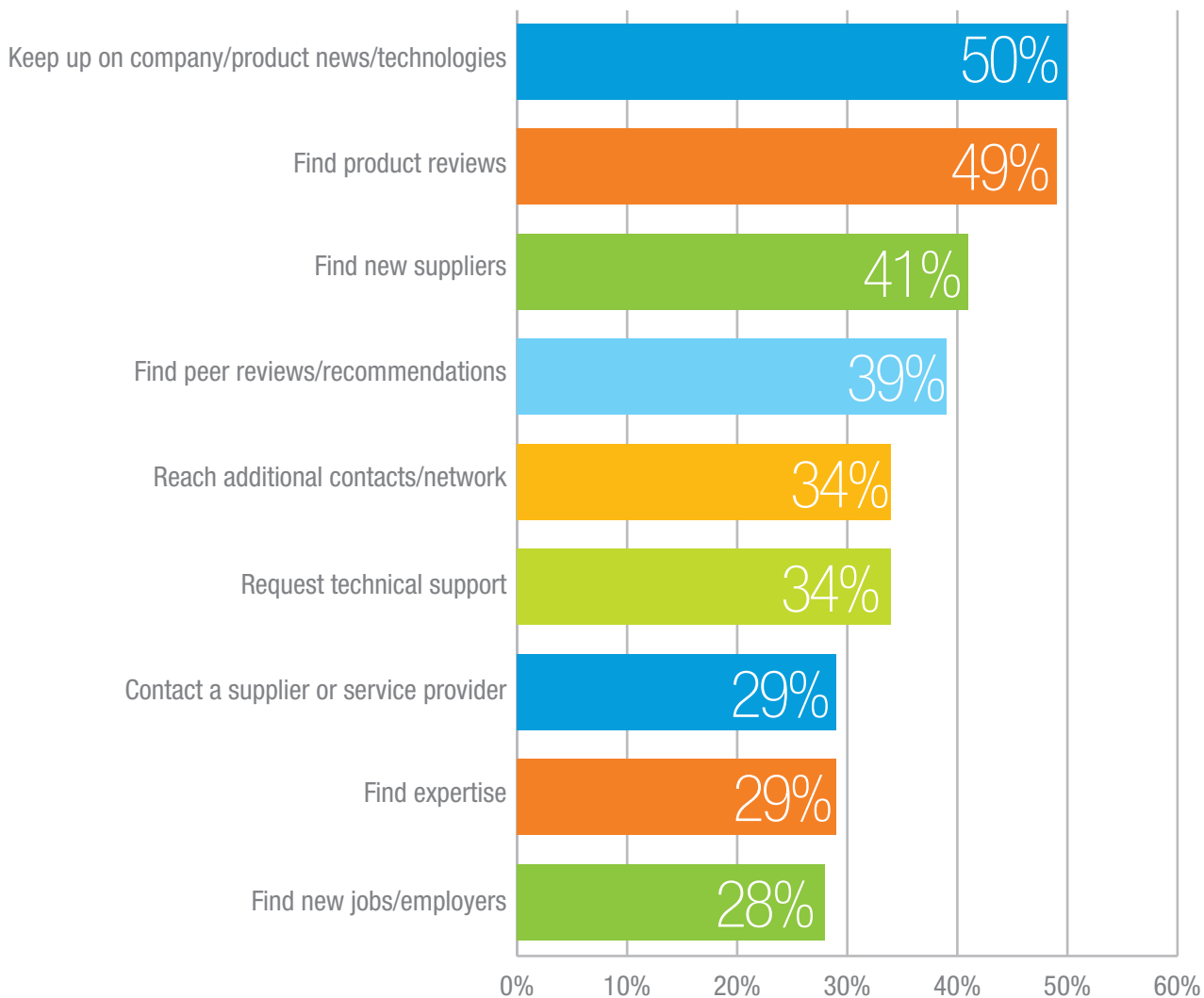
2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Reasons for Using Social Media

The biggest reason to use social media is to stay up-to-date on the latest company, product and technology news (50 percent). Forty-nine percent use social media to find and read product reviews, and 41 percent to find new suppliers.

Among younger technical professionals (18-34), 47 percent use social media to search for new jobs/employers, the most popular use of social media for this age group. Older technical professionals seem more concerned with doing the job they currently have, and are more likely to use social media to keep abreast of the latest company, product and technology news; find product reviews; and find new suppliers.

For which of the following have you used social media sites?

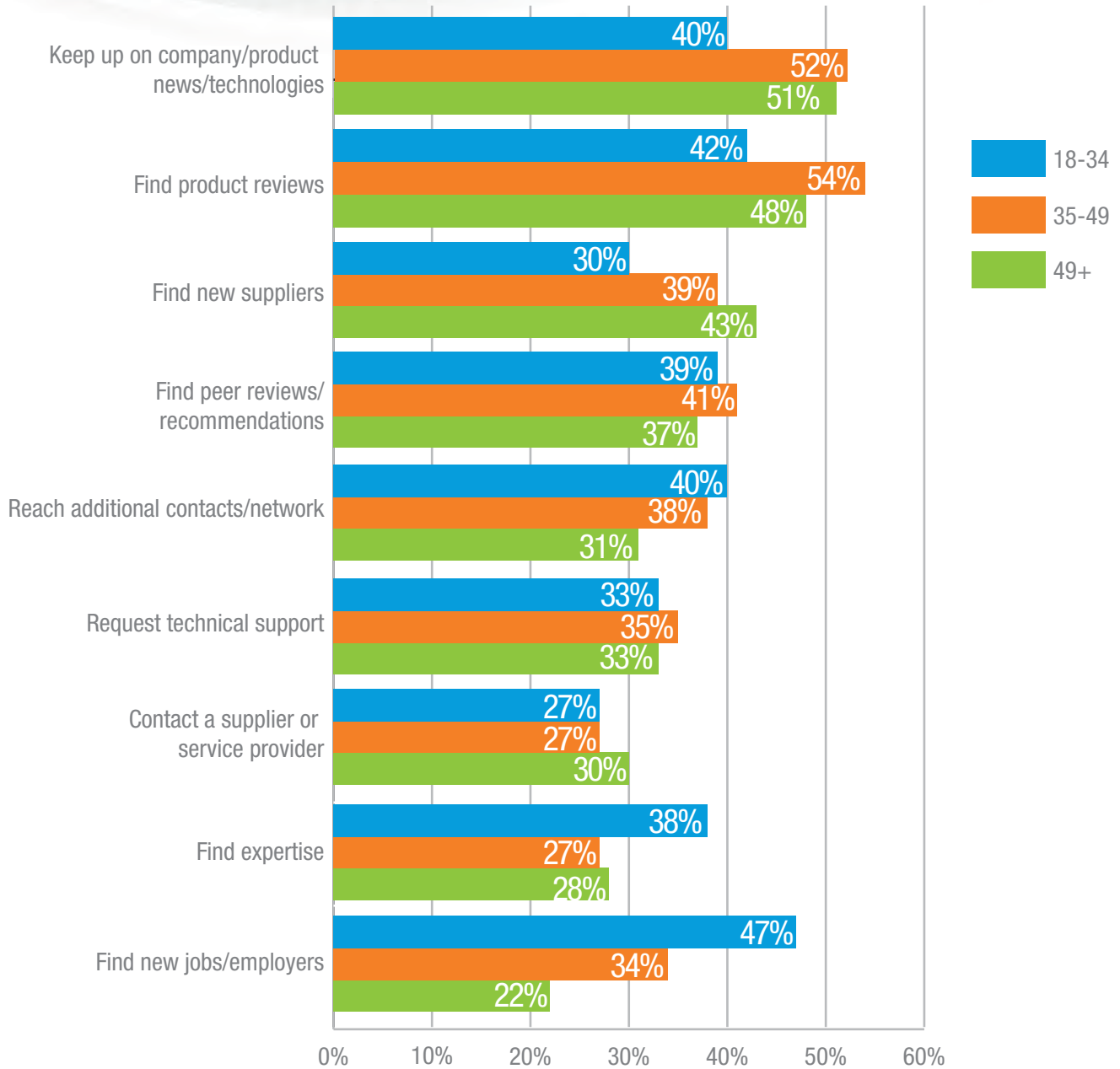


©2014 IHS



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

For which of the following have you used social media sites?



©2014 IHS 

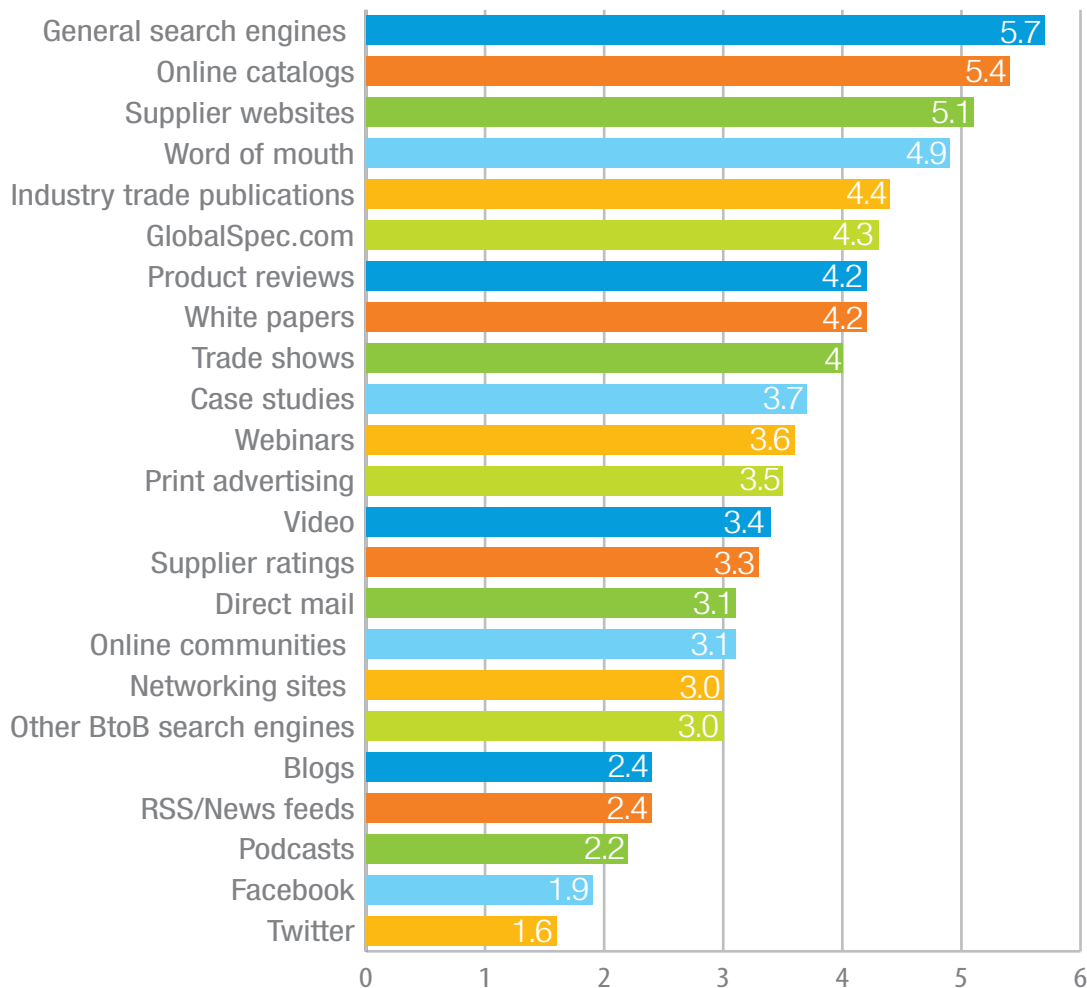


Top Resources for Researching Work-Related Purchases

The survey asked the following question: When researching work-related purchases, how valuable do you find each of the following resources?

The results show that social media is not perceived as valuable as other online resources, such as general search engines, supplier websites, online catalogs and GlobalSpec.com. The social media sites Facebook and Twitter are at the bottom of the list in terms of value. These findings generally hold true across all age groups of technical professionals.

When researching a potential work-related purchase, how valuable do you find each of the following resources? (on a scale from 1= Not at all to 7=Very valuable)

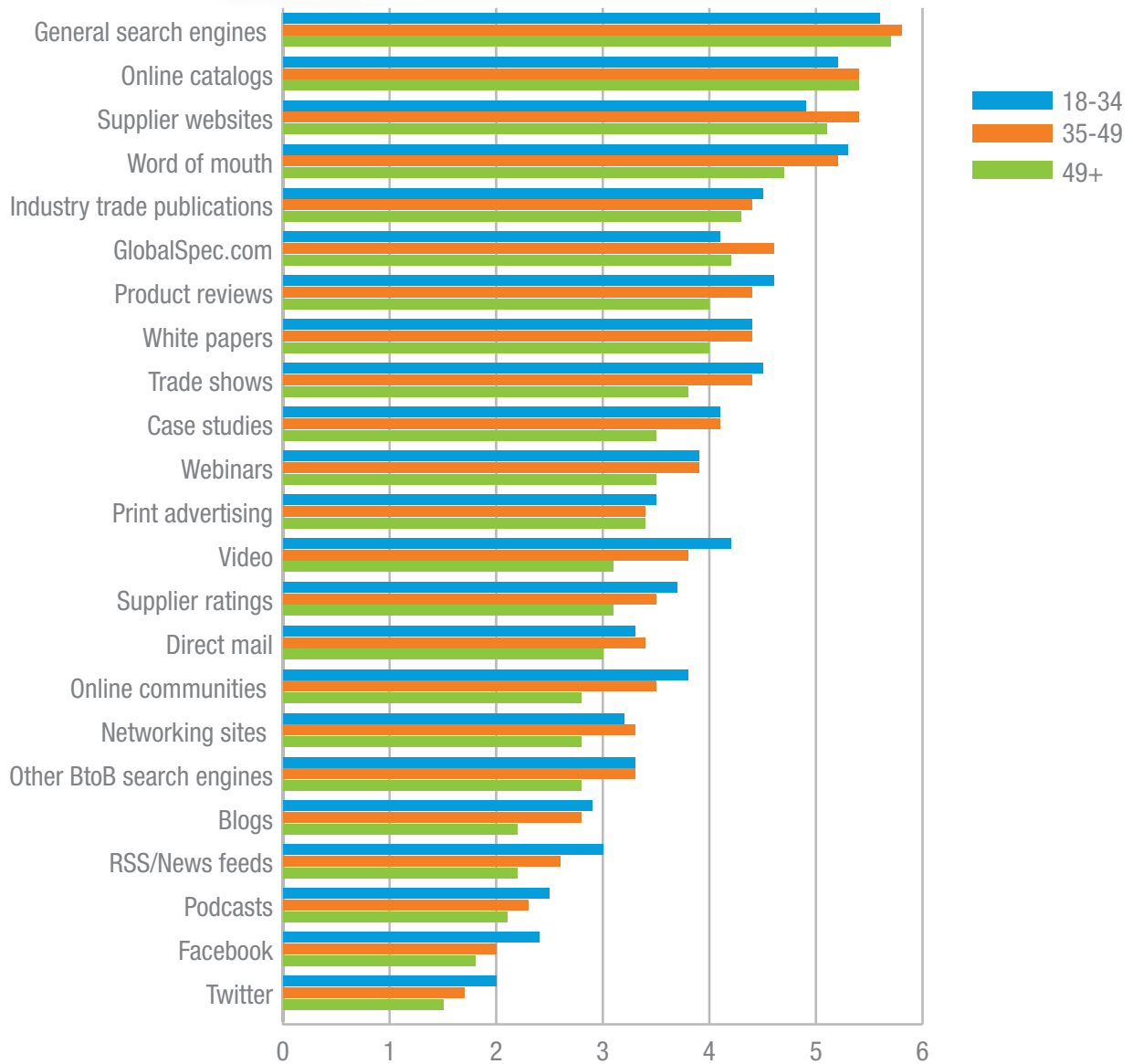


©2014 IHS 



2014 SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

When researching a potential work-related purchase, how valuable do you find each of the following resources? (by age) (on a scale from 1= Not at all to 7=Very valuable)



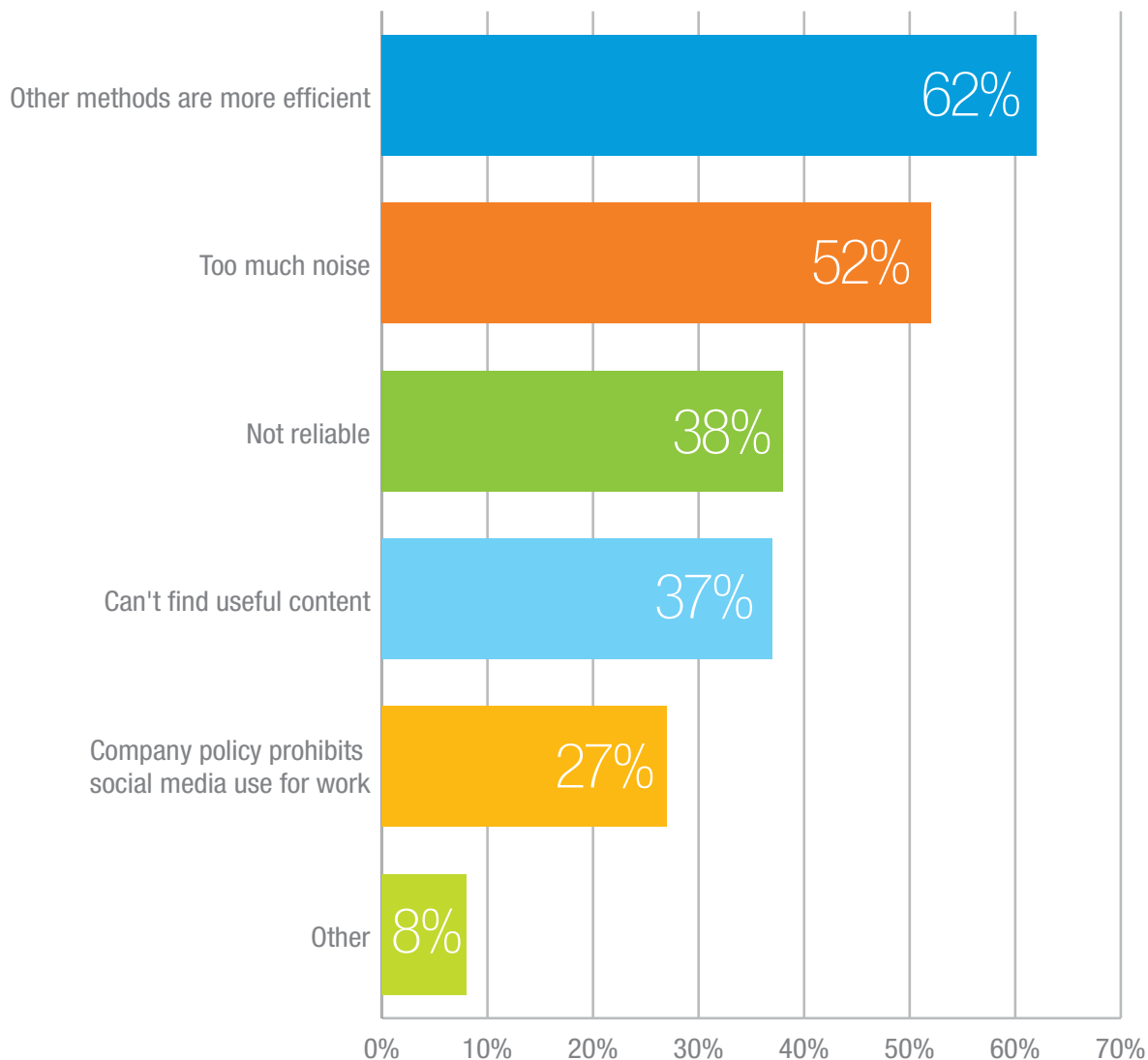
©2014 IHS 



Challenges in Using Social Media for Work

The main reason why social media is not used more for work-related purposes is that technical professionals find other resources more valuable. They also state there is “too much noise and not enough substance” in social media. Other reasons are that social media is not reliable and users can’t find valuable content. The lack of valuable content likely contributes to the “too much noise, not enough substance.” The takeaway for suppliers is that you will likely achieve greater success with social media if you can deliver useful information to your audience of technical professionals.

What are the challenges in using social media for work-related purposes?



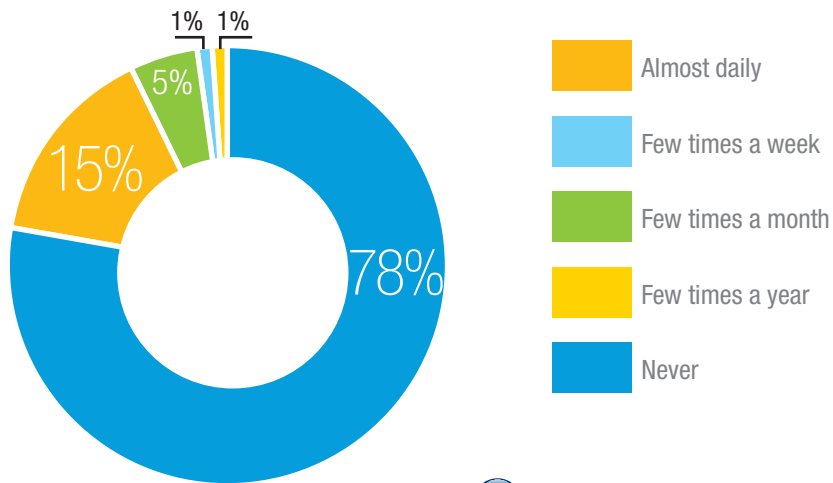
©2014 IHS 



Frequency of Posting Company Information

The vast majority of technical professionals (78 percent) never post news or information about their company to their individual social networks. The results are somewhat different by age group, with younger workers posting slightly more often. Getting your technical professionals more involved in using social media in this fashion could be one of your social media goals, which would help spread the word and increase the visibility of your brand, products and services.

How often do you share or post news or information about your company to your social networks?



©2014 IHS 



Social Media Recommendations

1. Integrate Social Media into Your Overall Marketing Strategy

Think of social media as both a marketing channel and a marketing program. As a program, your social media efforts should be integrated with your overall marketing strategy.

Perhaps the best way to integrate social media into your strategy is in support of content marketing. Social channels are an effective way to promote and distribute content such as white papers, videos, webinars, articles, case studies and more. This is in keeping with how your audience of technical professionals engages with social media: as a way to seek out information and with a preference for watching and reading on social media as opposed to creating and posting their own social media content.

You should also integrate social media with your overall marketing efforts by including social media links (such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) on your website and in newsletters, and promoting your social media presence within your established marketing programs. For example, IHS GlobalSpec offers suppliers the ability to include their social media links within their company profile pages, helping to build awareness and relevancy for their social media efforts. Suppliers can also add video content to their IHS GlobalSpec product announcements and within their company profile.

2. Map Social Media to Marketing and Business Objectives

Social media is no different than other marketing initiatives and, as such, you should approach social media with a clear purpose and defined goals that map to your other marketing and business objectives. First understand your purpose and goals for social media—why you are using social media and what do you want to achieve. Is it increased brand awareness? Recognized thought leadership? Community expansion?

Once social media is mapped to other initiatives, it will be easier to make intelligent decisions about what social platforms to use, what level of resources you should devote to social media and what metrics you should track to determine your success.

3. Understand Analytics and Measurement

If you have been using social media but not measuring results, it's time to take the next step. And if you're just in the planning stage of using social media, include analytics and measurement as part of the planning process.

While social media may not have a direct impact on sales, it can definitely increase brand awareness, visibility and thought leadership, which will help prospects become more familiar with your company and help you connect with potential customers early in their buy cycle when they are conducting research and seeking information.

As for measurement, social media marketing tends to produce a wealth of data that can provide valuable intelligence. For instance: comments on LinkedIn discussions or number of times your company profile is viewed. Likes, comments, or shares on your Facebook posts. Number and length of video views. All this data can be captured and analyzed to measure the growth and success of your social media efforts.



4. Revisit Your Social Media Vision, Strategy and Goals

As your target audience of technical professionals becomes more social media savvy and as your organization matures in its use of social media, you will need to revisit your vision, strategy and goals. This research report helps you make social media decisions within the context of how your target audience engages with social media today. But social media is constantly changing and evolving, and your customers and prospects are changing with it as they become more comfortable with social media. Use customer behavior and your own social media analytics to optimize your use of social media.

5. Expand Social Media Efforts Beyond Marketing

Industrial marketers have an opportunity to encourage the technical professionals within their own companies to use their individual social media accounts to help get the company message out and build brand awareness. It's like having extra hands on your team, which is extremely helpful because social media requires constant feeding and nurturing. Before engaging internal technical professionals, develop a social media policy that outlines your company's principles and policies for communicating in the social sphere. Make sure you have clear social media usage guidelines for employees to follow.



Conclusions

1. Social media has an established presence in the industrial sector and the use of social media by technical professionals has stabilized and is holding steady.
2. Social media belongs in your marketing mix and integrated into your overall strategy, but not at the expense of other forms of online marketing that your customers and prospects still prefer.
3. Before planning any changes to your social media strategy, you should understand how and why technical professionals use social media and what their expectations are from suppliers who have a social media presence.
4. Not surprisingly, younger workers in the 18-34 age group are more receptive to using social media for work-related purposes, while older workers find established digital media channels such as online catalogs and supplier websites more valuable.
5. Some technical professionals may not know that their company has a social media presence. According to the most recent [Trends in Industrial Marketing](#) research report, 57 percent of industrial marketers say they post to a company Facebook page, but only 36 percent of technical professionals say their company participates in Facebook. A similar disparity exists with Twitter (43 percent vs. 20 percent) and Google+ (30 percent vs. 19 percent). Marketers should educate internal colleagues about their company's social media efforts and encourage their participation.

If you're seeking an easy way to become familiar with social media in action, IHS GlobalSpec invites you to follow and join our own social media activities. You can find IHS GlobalSpec in these social media outlets:

[IHS GlobalSpec Industrial Marketing Mavens Group on LinkedIn](#)

[IHS GlobalSpec on Twitter @GlobalSpecInc](#)

[Industrial Marketing Mavens on Twitter @MktgMavens](#)

[IHS GlobalSpec on Facebook](#)

[Industrial Marketing Mavens on Facebook](#)



About IHS (www.ihs.com)

IHS (NYSE: IHS) is the leading source of information, insight and analytics in critical areas that shape today's business landscape. Businesses and governments in more than 165 countries around the globe rely on the comprehensive content, expert independent analysis and flexible delivery methods of IHS to make high-impact decisions and develop strategies with speed and confidence. IHS has been in business since 1959 and became a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange in 2005. Headquartered in Englewood, Colorado, USA, IHS is committed to sustainable, profitable growth and employs 8,000 people in 31 countries around the world.

About IHS GlobalSpec

IHS GlobalSpec is the leading provider of digital media solutions designed to connect industrial marketers with their target audience of engineering, technical, industrial, scientific and manufacturing sector professionals. IHS GlobalSpec provides these professionals with a range of online resources, including GlobalSpec.com, which allows registered users to search more than 50,000 supplier catalogs by specification; Electronics360.com, an online publication delivering news, insight and analysis for the entire electronics value chain; and Datasheets360, a comprehensive source for manufacturer datasheets and distributor pricing and availability information. In addition, IHS GlobalSpec offers this audience industry-focused online events and more than 80 e-newsletters – helping them search for and locate products and services, learn about suppliers and access comprehensive technical and educational content. For suppliers, IHS GlobalSpec helps generate awareness, demand and engagement opportunities among the professionals they are looking to reach – from inbox to desktop, through networks and via real-time engagement.





For more information about IHS GlobalSpec:

Email sales@globalspec.com

Visit www.globalspecmedia.com

Call 800.261.2052 | 518.880.0200

Fax 518.880.0250

30 Tech Valley Drive | Suite 102 | East Greenbush, NY 12061

IHS GlobalSpec Digital Media

©2014 IHS. IHS, the IHS globe design, GlobalSpec, SpecSearch and The Engineering Web are registered trademarks of IHS.