



Lives of Social Media Managers

The Life of a Social Media Manager

Discover their past, their present, and their future
and learn from their experiences.

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socialinsider

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01. Introduction

If it feels like everyone is on social media nowadays, it's just about true.

The second pandemic year had massive implications for digital marketing - the online behaviors changed and new trends immersed.

Now, more than ever, all businesses and industries have turned their attention to social media.

In an attempt to better understand the lives of social media managers, **we surveyed more than 300 marketers** to learn about their skills, social goals, daily activities, and usage of tools, among others.

We also **interviewed 11 social media managers** worldwide to find insights about their career path - from early childhood and education to the present of their careers and the future perspectives of the marketing industry.

Key Insights

The Past:

- Social media managers were creative kids with a vast imagination and an affinity for Arts and creative writing.
- 50% of the social media managers obtained a Bachelor's Degree.

The Present:

- The primary tasks and responsibilities of social media managers are creating content (50%) and social media strategies (45%).
- Social media managers' most significant challenges are generating engagement (65%) and publishing engaging and unique content (49%).
- The top resources they need to be successful at their job are time (69%) and resources for video and photo editing (61%).
- 50% of the respondents rated their job performance as good.
- 44% of the respondents are satisfied with their job.

The Future:

- The social media industry has a bright future and will offer a lot of amazing opportunities for marketers.

02. The Past

Social media managers are creative and analytical individuals who have an eye for aesthetics, details, and data.

Before getting to know more insights about what this job means, we need to take a step back and ask ourselves: where did it all begin?



1. Early childhood

Almost all the marketers interviewed talked about their childhood on a positive note, with an air of nostalgia.

One of the main insights gained from the interviews with social media managers is that there are no determining factors to becoming a marketing professional.

However, there are some personality traits that social media managers tend to have as kids.

Social media specialists are usually creative individuals with excellent analytical, organizational, and communicative skills at the same time.



Em:

As a kid, I guess I was super creative. I was always painting, drawing, playing with Lego. Reading a lot.

I had a big imagination. Very creative.

I really enjoyed Art and English at school.



K:

I was never the smartest, but I wasn't in the bottom ether. I've always been extremely creative.

So I took Performing Arts as a GCSE. I was part of Theater schools, dance schools. I was always in a dance show, my mom's shows. So I've always been extremely creative, but never overly artsy.

Nine out of the 11 marketing specialists said they were creative kids with a vast imagination and an affinity for studying and reading books.

This inclination towards creativity and arts resulted in various activities: painting and drawing, studying theater and dance, or appearing in commercials.

This continuous curiosity combined with technological advancement and internet access resulted in a generalized interest in social media which later became, accidentally or intentionally, a job.

... creative kids with a vast imagination and an affinity for studying and reading books.

2. Education

After childhood, the next natural step is education, be it traditional (University) or alternative (self-learning through online courses, webinars, or certifications).

Since social media jobs are relatively new and don't require formal training, we wanted to understand if marketers consider education important or if they think anyone can learn how to do this job with the internet's help.

Nine out of the 11 persons interviewed studied domains somehow related to marketing (such as journalism, communication, English and creative writing, or graphic design), but only two have degrees in marketing.

50%

of the social media managers
obtained a Bachelor's Degree

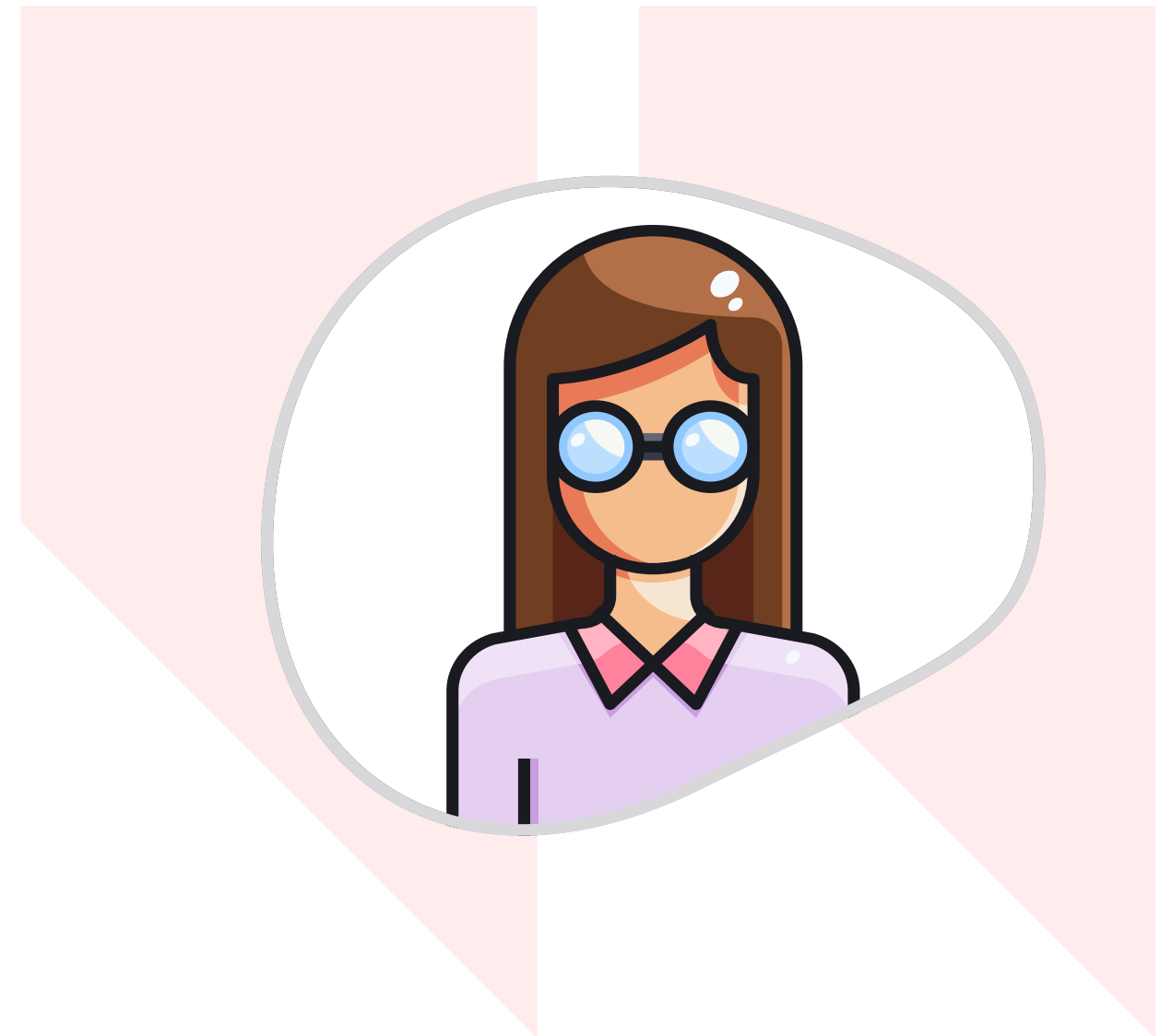
**They studied:
Marketing;
Journalism;
Communication;
Creative writing;
Graphic design.**

Some social media managers argued that having traditional education is not mandatory but is still very important if someone wants to succeed in this job.

Formal education establishes a foundation through basic marketing concepts and case studies.

On the other hand, some respondents think that education is not necessary since all the information that can help you grow in a social media job is available online.

However, all respondents have dedicated time to cultivate specific skills, learn about different tools and platforms, or stay up-to-date with the latest social media trends and changes.



Ag:

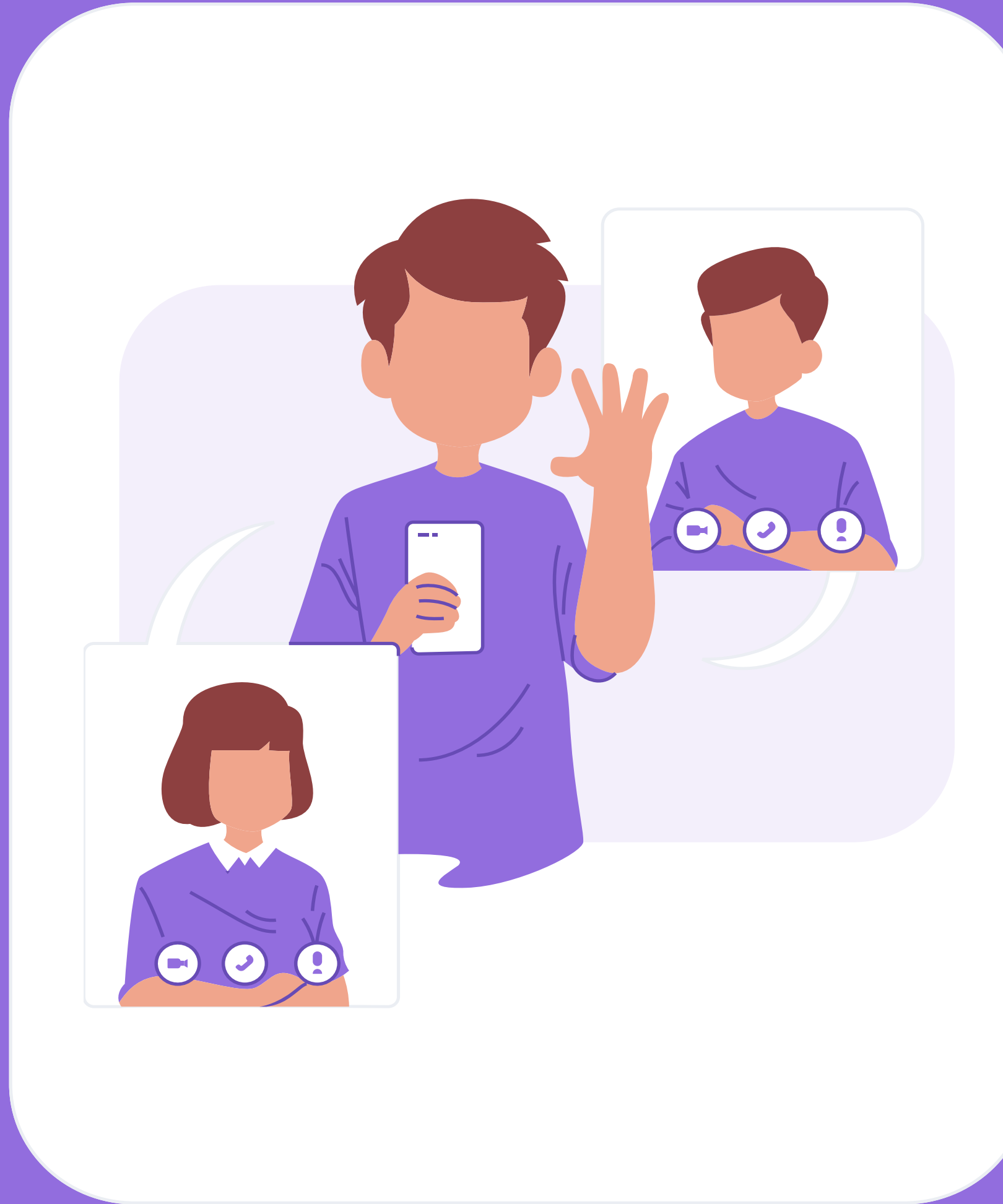
It is not necessary nowadays. We have access to information all day long. You can buy books about marketing, you can take courses.

It all depends how you learn as well.

I'm sure that there would be some information in marketing University that you could find useful, but I don't think it's absolutely necessary to be a successful social media manager.

03. The Present

The social media manager role often involves managing social channels on a daily basis, but also other areas of expertise, such as community management, reporting and performance analysis, copywriting, and even graphic design.

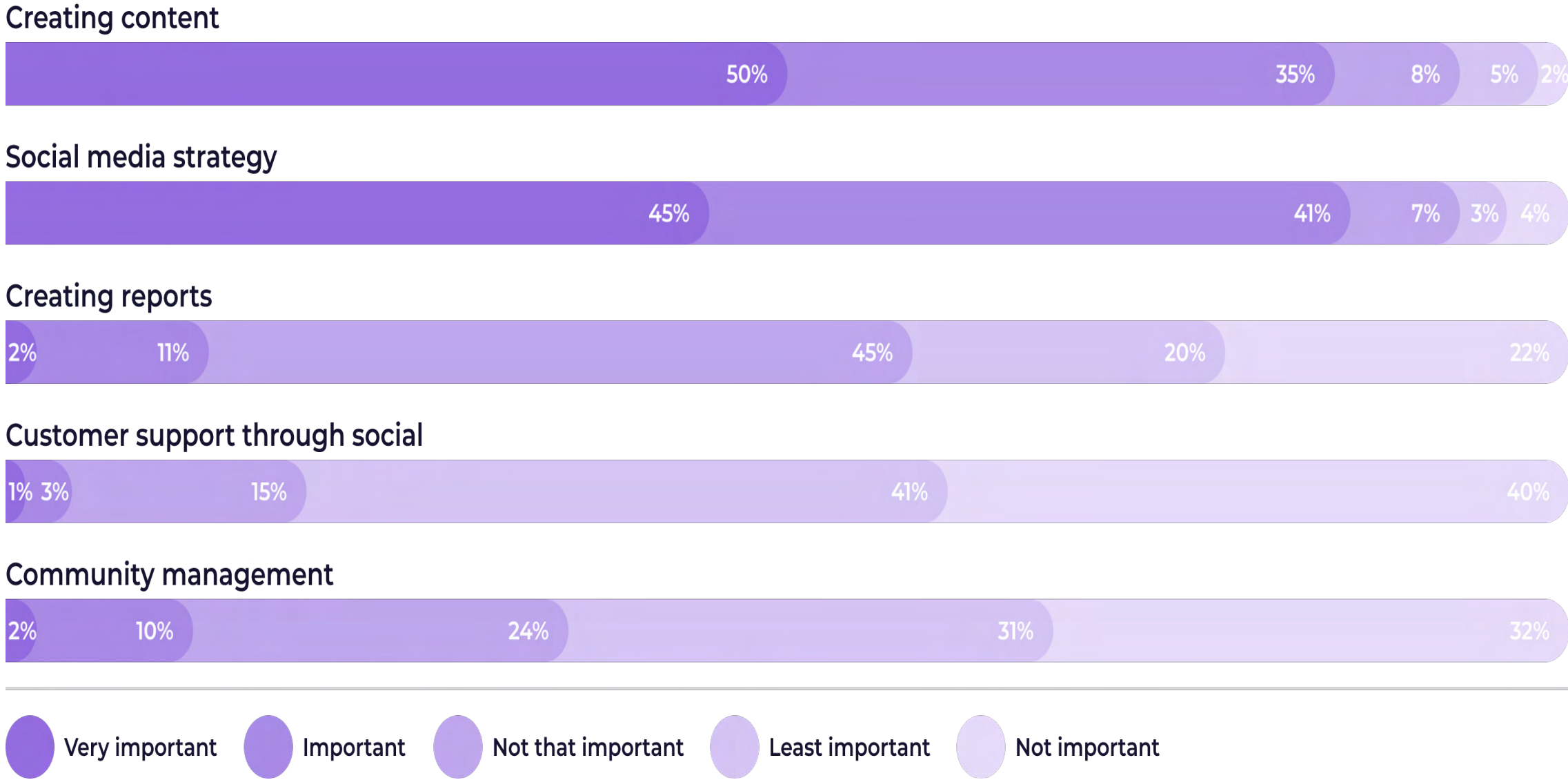


1. Social media managers' daily activities

Social media managers start their day by scrolling on social media and reading the news.

After that, their daily activities are a mix of content planning, reporting, community management, social listening, and customer care, plus organizational activities, such as responding to emails or participating in meetings.

Social media managers' primary tasks



Interestingly, no workday is like another for social media managers, and most of the time, it means juggling between different tasks.

They may be needed for an urgent client meeting, or they might be asked to pause what they were doing to brainstorm for Christmas campaign ideas.



Es:

I have different kinds of activities.

Every day is different because one of the things that is key for us is trying to understand what people are saying on our social media channels to give the feedback to the teams that need to be involved to improve our customer service.



K:

To be honest with you, every single day varies. It can start with having calls with clients to go through their social media scheduling for the week before. I do a lot of influencer campaigns, so it could be a matter of chasing influencers for captions and for the content themselves, making sure everything's scheduled and gone out.

Marketers' primary social media goals

Social media managers' most important goals are to increase brand awareness(85%), grow the brand's audience (75%), and connect with the audience (61%).

Increase brand awareness

85.4%

Grow the brand's audience

74.6%

Connect with the audience

61.0%

Increase community engagement

59.5%

Promote content

55.6%

Increase web traffic

53.7%

Drive sales

47.3%

Resources social media managers need to make a greater business impact

Time

68.8%

Resources for video and photo editing

60.5%

Budgets for promotions

57.1%

Social media software

54.1%

Market research tools

53.7%

Support from other departments

47.3%

Financial resources for analytics tools

45.9%

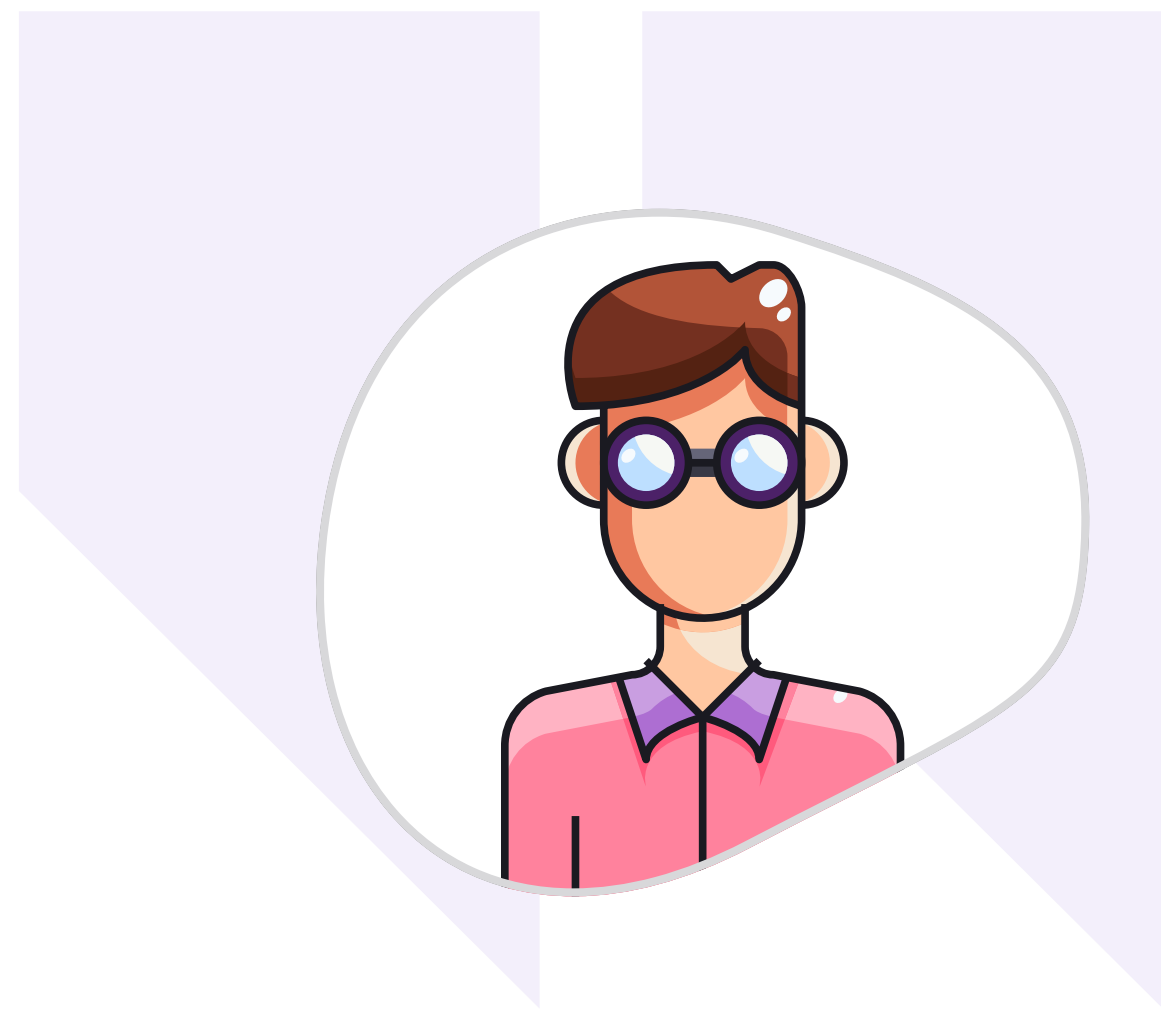
2. Social media managers' skills

Successful social media managers need to love social media and have a genuine interest in the latest trends.

They also need to be open to changes and testing because social media is a trial-and-error situation.

Being a good communicator, being open to feedback, and understanding consumers' behaviors are also very important skills.

Copywriting skills, speaking skills, and even just the basics of graphic design are also skills that will come in handy for every social media manager out there.



Em:

You kind of need to be creative and analytical at the same time. It's very much like a left and right brain kind of way of thinking, because you have to be able to come up with these engaging, entertaining, educational pieces of content that work for your audience that stand out on the feed.

Having charisma or genuine empathy will also enhance every social media manager's job.

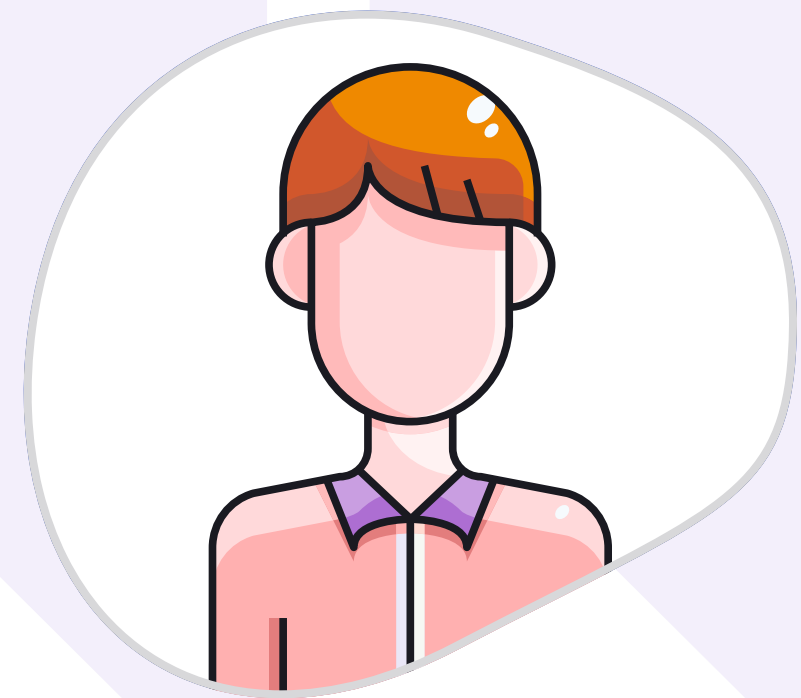
And last but not least, because social media never sleeps, social media managers need to be organized and structured.



D:

You need organizational skills, people skills, good writing. Copywriting skills are very important. Speaking is good. Learning graphic design, even just the basics.

Being able to present yourself well in meetings. Having confidence and understanding business.



K:

I think the biggest skill you need is being charismatic and being a people's person, because one thing that my first manager taught me is that what people ask for isn't what people want. It's also being empathetic and very self aware. But a lot of it, I think, is down to you needing to have a passion for it.

3. Social media managers' challenges

The social media manager role is not easy, and it definitely can't be done well by everybody.

This job requires a set of skills that need to be put into practice correctly.

However, with all the skills in the world, social media managers have their struggles.



M:

For me it's writing a lot of copy. It doesn't need to be inspiring, it's just kind of like a cadence. It gets to the point of like, well, I've tried to sell this Iphone case a million times. I've already used a million variations of copy. How can I sell it anymore?



I:

The hate that you receive, no matter what you do. People are not educated to be on social media. The hardest thing for me is to manage all the hate people are throwing on social media towards the brand.

One big struggle is understanding the algorithms and keeping the pace with all the digital changes.

You may have the structure put in place today and tomorrow, one social media platform may be working entirely differently, so you need to adapt fast.

It seems quite hard for freelancers or business owners to talk about budgets with clients and learn how not to lower their standards.

Another challenge of marketers is the heavy usage of social media which can make them develop unhealthy habits.



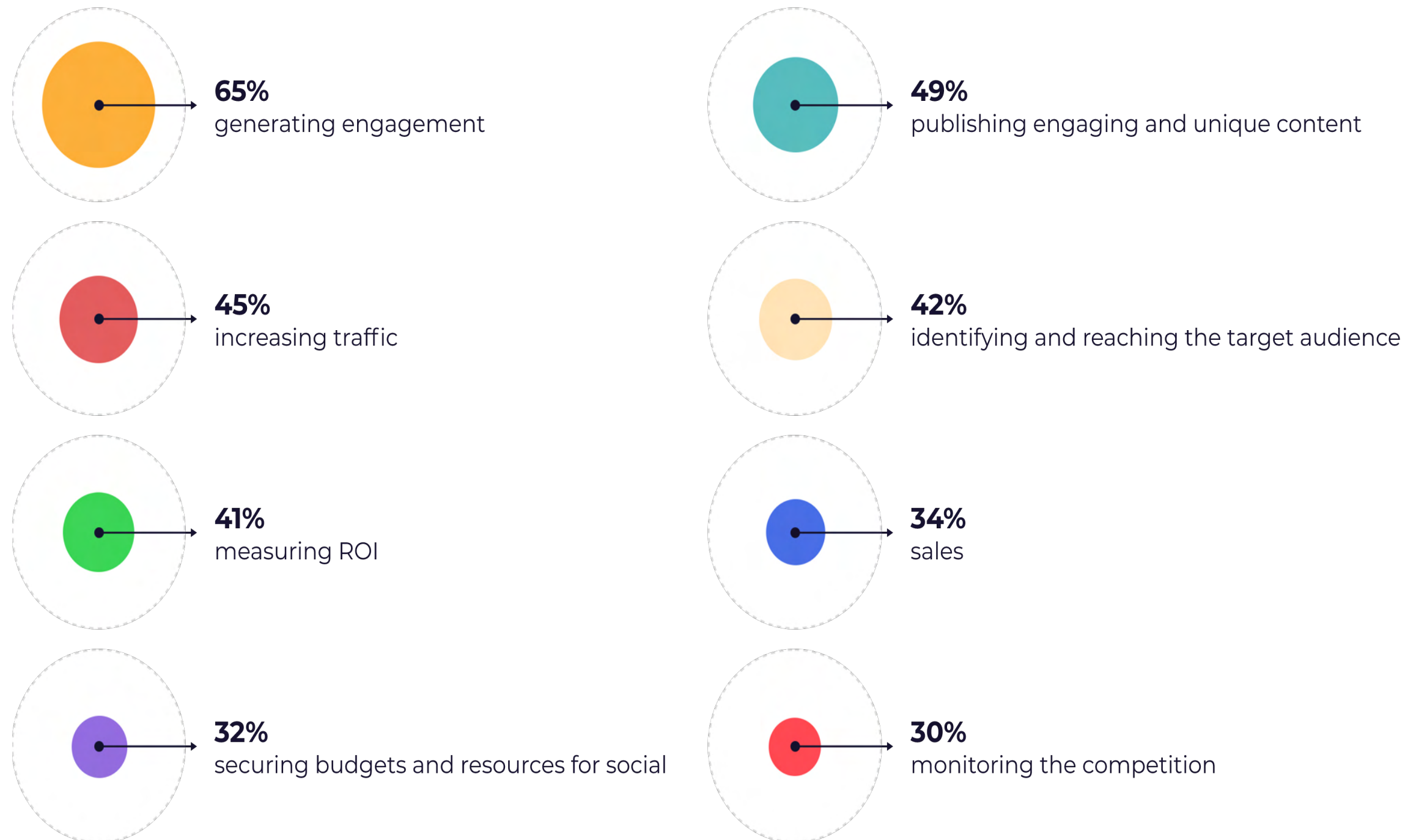
B:

You can't really understand social media if you're not a heavy user, so I developed some bad habits. I feel addicted to social media, more addictive than other people. It's hard for me to consume social media content in a responsible way. So I started to curate the content I follow.

Our survey revealed that social media managers' greatest challenges are:

- generating engagement (65%);
- publishing engaging and unique content (49%);
- increasing traffic (45%);
- identifying and reaching the target audience (42%).

Social media managers' greatest challenges



4. Social media managers' job satisfactions

One of the most common satisfactions social media managers have with their job is coming up with a great content idea, putting it out there, and watching it grow and succeed.

They also take their satisfaction from seeing their clients genuinely content about their work.

And the third most common response is the one that revolves around the idea of community - growing a network, meeting with industry experts, sharing experiences.

Personal goals for social marketers

Improving an existing skill

63.9%

Understanding the social media landscape

62%

Learning a new skill

61%

Outperforming previous achievements

55.6%

Increasing personal contributions within the company

39.5%

Securing a promotion

18.5%



K:

I would say the biggest thing probably is when a client is genuinely grateful. So we sometimes get a voice (“thank you so much”). That always makes me happy.



B:

What really brings me joy is connecting with smaller communities and really getting to know them.

How are social media managers' jobs evaluated

Engagement

27.3%

Progress towards goals

23.4%

My social media performance is not evaluated

12.2%

Revenue

12.2%

Satisfaction scores

7.3%

Traffic

6.3%

Follower counts

5.4%

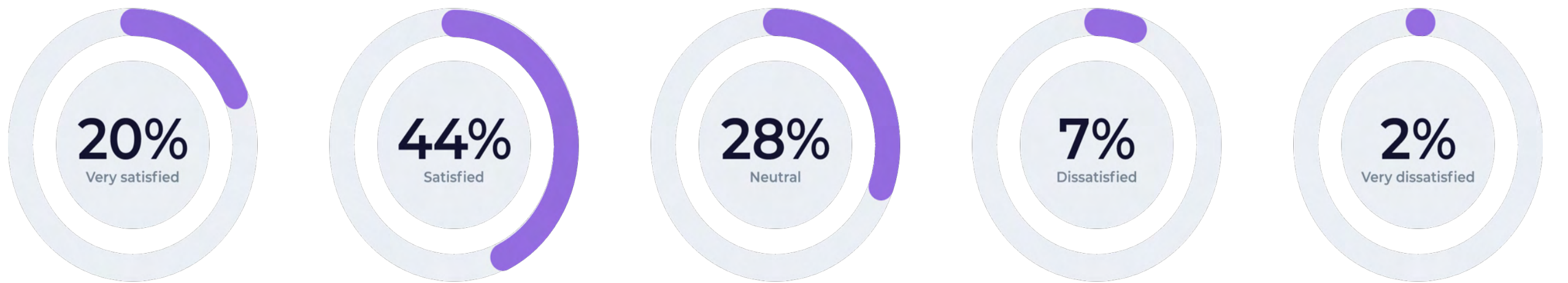
Response time

2.9%

How social media managers rate their job performance



Social media managers' satisfaction with their job



Social media managers' career ambitions

To be promoted to a more senior-level role

23.9%

To be the best in my department/function

22%

I would like to start my own agency/fly solo

19.5%

I am content in my current role

17.1%

I would like to change careers

9.8%

5. Social media managers' relationships with clients

There are many aspects to building a successful agency.

Beyond delivering excellent work, it's also vital to establish and maintain strong, valuable, and positive client relationships.

1 Agency-client relationships are long processes that always start with a discovery stage, also known as the social media audit.

2 After the agency has understood the company's landscape, the next step is to build a strategy.

3 After the strategy has been put in place, constant monitoring needs to happen to build a relationship with the algorithms for each social media platform.



B:

I think it's really important to set clear expectations from the beginning. I feel we sometimes lack the clarity of the expectations a client has from us. We're not behind social platforms, those are the tech guys, they understand for real what's happening. We only understand social better than our clients.

Below are some key elements every social media manager needs to adopt in order to develop success-driven relationships with their clients:

1 Educate the client.

Most of the time, the clients don't have a vast knowledge of how social really works, so it's the agency's job to educate them on user behaviors, trends, and each social platform's particularities.

2 Set clear expectations from the beginning.

One of the key steps to a long-lasting and successful relationship with the client is setting clear and realistic expectations.

3 Gain their trust.

Agency-client relationships work best when the client trusts the social media manager and understands that the results of a great social media strategy can't be seen overnight.

4 Maintain open communication.

Clients want to see explanations for every result that the social media manager presents, especially for the negative ones, so having open conversations will help clients trust the social media manager's work.

6. Social media performance data

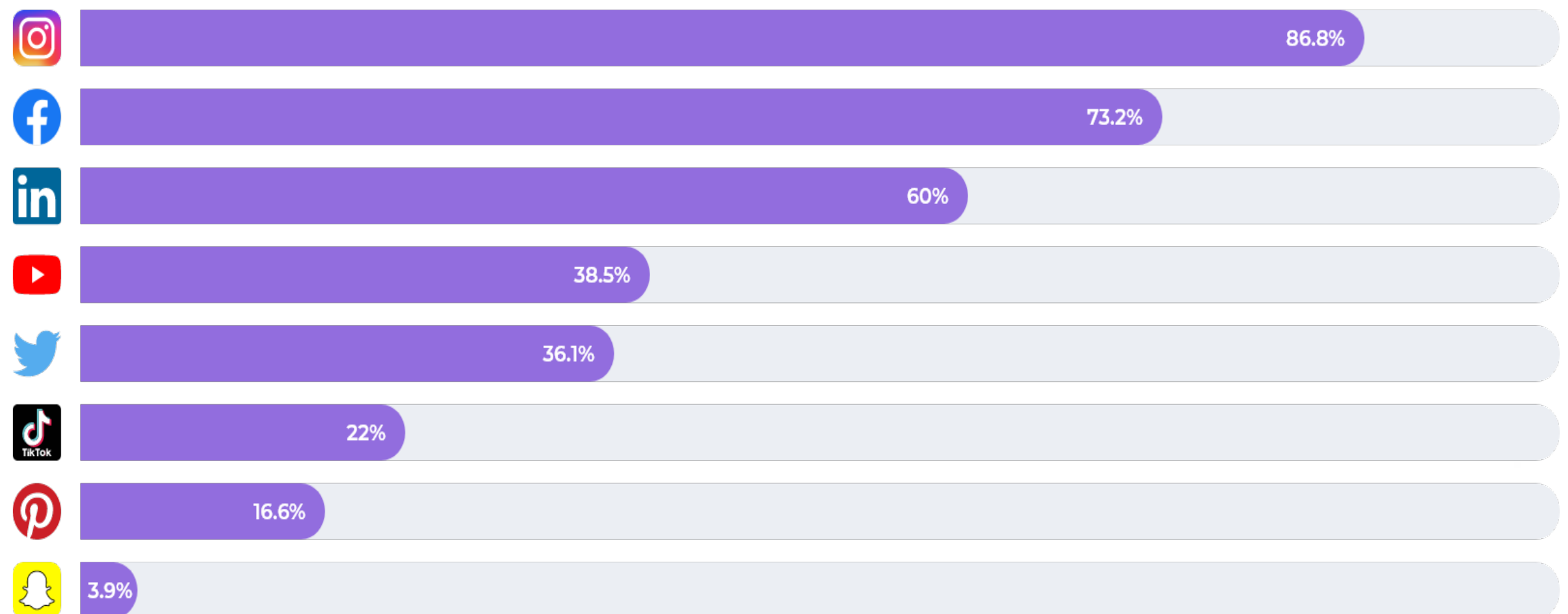
The digital space is constantly changing and evolving.

From trends that appear overnight to changes in algorithms and new platforms emerging, social media managers need to be quick, always test, and constantly observe and adapt their strategy.

This is where social media analytics tools step in. With these tools, marketers can make the best out of their social media efforts and improve their tactics with the help of data.

The platforms on which social media managers are most active

Instagram is the most used social platform (87%), followed by Facebook (73%) and LinkedIn (61%).



There are a lot of social media analytics tools on the market, and each of them provides a lot of functionalities to fit the client's needs best.

According to our survey, the ideal social media analytics tool needs to include all social media platforms (78%), be easy-to-use (75%), and provide real-time data (74%).

Reasons for using social media analytics tools

Most social media managers use analytics tools for measuring the content performance (85%), understanding their audience (75%), and reporting (69%).

Measuring the content performance



Understanding my audience



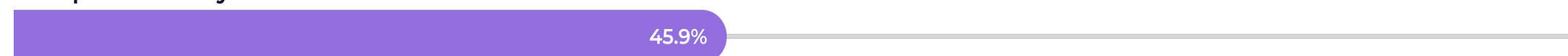
Reporting



Tracking social media campaigns



Competitor analysis



Tracking brand evolution



Creating pitches



Influencer research



04. The Future

Today, social media platforms occupy an undeniable part in people's lives.

From communicating and connecting with each other to exchanging ideas and sharing knowledge, many people have built their careers through social media.

With all the social media trends, emerging platforms, and unlimited access to all people regardless of their age, how will the social media landscape look in the future?



1. The social media industry has a bright future

According to the respondents, the social media industry has a promising future. Online conversation is an area that will grow exponentially in the future.

From virtual reality and avatars to the rise of NFTs and more engaging social platforms like Twitch, social media will constantly change and develop exciting tools and platforms.

1 Video is going to be the go-to type of content.

2 Short video formats will prevail because our attention span is getting shorter.

3 Influencer marketing will be more trustworthy.

4 Authentic and relatable content that speaks to consumers directly is on the rise.



Em:

Well, I hope that social media teams will get bigger because I think too many people expect a social media manager to do absolutely everything. I think a lot of people expect a social media manager to be an art director, a videographer, an insights analyst, and a copywriter. People expect too much.

Below are some actionable items that businesses and individuals will have to take to in the future to grow along with social media:

1

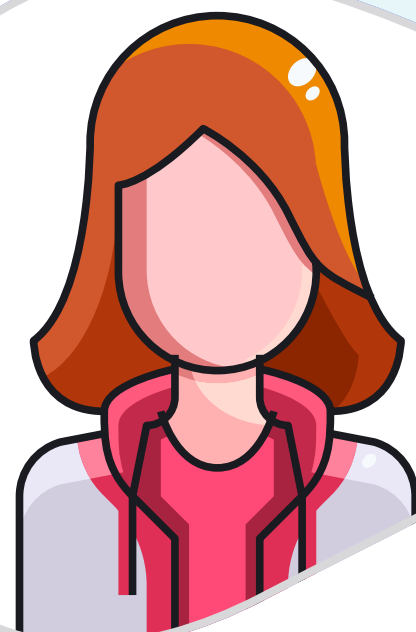
The social media teams will need to be taken more seriously, and businesses will need to invest more in marketing.

As demonstrated earlier, social media managers are often expected to fill in several roles at once. So one thing that our respondents hope will happen more in the future is more specs and job roles tailored to the company's needs.

2

We will have to work collaboratively to understand how social works.

Considering that this industry is very tech-driven and will continue to surprise and challenge us, our duty will be to unite our forces to better understand how it works and learn how to use it responsibly.



Ag:

I definitely think that our attention spans are getting shorter, which you can see in real YouTube shorts, all of these kinds of short video versions. I think video is going to keep on for at least another few years. It's going to be the most important part of the media. And people like relatable stuff. I think we're also going towards this and this has been a bad word since 2020.

Authenticity.

2. Future perspectives for social media managers

One thing is certain. Social media is not going anywhere.

In fact, our predictions tell us that it's here to stay for a long time and develop in ways we can't even comprehend now.

With all these rapid changes in the social media landscape, the social media managers' jobs will become more secure, tailored to specific needs, and taken more seriously overall.

1 Soft skills will be more important than hard skills.

In a digitalized world, hard skills can be easily learned, while soft skills will become more desirable and hard to master.

2 Curiosity and openness to new things will be mandatory.

To be successful in the social media landscape, you need to be curious, always try and test new things, and be open to changes.

3 Social media managers will need to learn to be comfortable on camera.

We already mentioned that video formats already are and will continue to be the most wanted type of content, so marketers will need to learn how to use this to their advantage.



M:

To be successful in this space now I think the most valid thing is you do need to ask questions and be curious at the same time, just not being complacent.

Don't be old fashioned, don't be so confined to your own kind of box. Explore more than anything. If it doesn't work, don't worry. That's what social is. You throw in stuff at a wall and see what sticks. Just explore.

05. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to debunk some myths about the social media manager job and to make some light regarding what it really means - with the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Today's social media managers are just scratching the surface of what they can do with social media.

As they continue to improve and take on new skills, overcome their limits, and embrace social data, social marketers will unlock the full potential of social media.

It's an exciting and challenging journey, and we are here to see how this job will develop in the future and what impact it will have on brands' successes.



06. Methodology

This study is based on a mixed methodology: quantitative and qualitative.

Data is based on 300 marketer respondents from around the world. The survey was conducted online between July 2021 and September 2021.

The data was then cross-referenced with 11 in-depth one-on-one interviews with social media managers to obtain a holistic view.

The top 0.5% of data was winsorised to limit the impact of extreme outliers. Graphics are rounded to the nearest whole percentage and may not add up to exactly 100%.



The brain behind this study

Theodora Stanciu is a content marketer at Socialinsider, co-host of the Insider Insights podcast, and coordinator of this study.

She has a B.A. in Sociology and an M.A. in Anthropology and a background in research and editing, especially in due diligence and market research.

She switched careers to pursue her dream, which is to work in marketing.

At Socialinsider, she writes articles and case studies for the blog, but sometimes she does studies through which she can put her sociological skills to good use.



What is Socialinsider?

Socialinsider is a social media analytics, reporting, and benchmarking tool that aims to deliver quality insights to data-driven agencies.

Most of the social media managers or social media strategists need to see, compare, and benchmark their social media results against top competitors.

They do this manually, searching through social media profiles, social media postings, switching tabs, doing screenshots, and creating reports.

With Socialinsider, they get premium social media analytics, create presentation-ready reports, visualize content performance and campaigns on social media, and much more.

Analyze your social media performance with a [14-day free trial!](#)

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