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2012 CEO, SOCIAL MEDIA & LEADERSHIP SURVEY

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2012 CEO, SOCIAL MEDIA & LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Foreword by Ann Charles, CEO BRANDfog

In today's digital world, social media has become an increasingly important communications channel for building a connection between brands and their most vocal advocates. While many companies understand the important role that social media plays in brand building, most have not yet realized its potential to raise the profile of corporate executives to establish industry thought leadership and strengthen the credibility of the brand.

The ubiquity of social media has changed customer expectations about brand engagement. Customers now expect to have direct access to brands and brand leaders. There is also a direct connection between social media participation, purchase intent and increased loyalty to a brand. According to a recent report, 50% of consumers stated they were more likely to purchase from a company and recommend a brand to others after following the company's tweets. This shift in customer expectations and consumer behavior coincides with another emerging trend: The rise of the Social Enterprise, in which profit-oriented businesses aim to solve social and environmental problems as part of their mission. Conscientious consumers are now seeking out brands that serve a larger societal purpose, and this is incentivizing brands to showcase their commitment to various causes through social media.

The most effective leaders throughout history have been great communicators, yet the vast majority of modern day CEOs and C-Suite executives are conspicuously absent from social media channels. As of January 2012, 61% of Fortune 500 brands were engaging with customers via Twitter, but less than 2.5% of Fortune 500 CEOs were actively participating on Twitter.



This raises an important question:
If social media
engagement is a
critical component
of digital marketing
strategies for brands,
why is it ignored
by the C-Suite and
executive leaders?

Survey Objectives

The **BRANDfog 2012 CEO, Social Media and Leadership Survey** set out to better understand the connection between C-Suite engagement on social media channels and attitudes of customer and employees toward that brand. The aim of the survey was to determine the effect this has on brand image, customer loyalty, purchase intent and overall leadership.

Survey Results

The survey results demonstrate that executive engagement in social media raises the brand profile and instills confidence in a company's leadership team. It builds greater trust, brand loyalty and purchase intent. Respondents overwhelmingly confirmed their belief that C-Suite executives who engage in social media are better equipped to lead a company, communicate values and shape a company's reputation in today's changing world.

Survey Methodology

BRANDfog's CEO, Social Media Leadership Survey surveyed several hundred employees of diverse companies, spanning in size from startups to Fortune 500 companies, and working at all levels of their respective organizations. Respondents representing a wide selection of industries, professions and regions were asked to answer questions pertaining to social media participation by their organization and executive leadership team. Respondents were also asked about their perception of other companies and brands, based on executive participation in social media channels.

“Transparency, vision and open communication are key to great leadership and corporate social responsibility strategy today. It’s not surprising to see that the results of **BRANDfog’s** survey reaffirm that social media plays such an influential role in shaping a company’s brand image. What’s more, customers expect to hear from the executive leadership team on social media channels, as a direct way to connect and engage with the brands they love and causes they support.”

Aman Singh; Editorial Director, CSRwire; Forbes.com contributor; CSR Journalist; and contributor to the BRANDfog 2012 CEO, Social Media & Leadership Survey

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SURVEY RESULTS

81% of respondents believe that CEOs who engage in social media are better equipped than their peers to lead companies in a web 2.0 world.

Q1

Do you believe that CEOs who engage in social media are better equipped to successfully lead a company in a web 2.0 world?

YES



NO



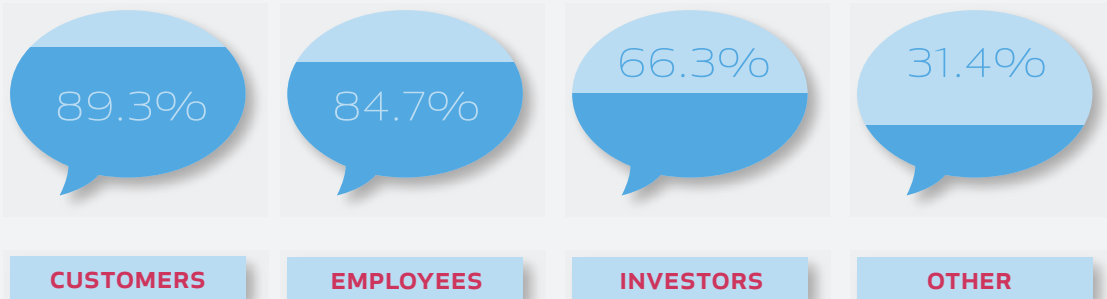
NOT SURE



A large majority of the respondents believe that CEOs can use social media channels to improve engagement with multiple stakeholders across their organizations. Building better connections with customers topped the list at 89.3%, but engagement with employees (84.7%) and investors (66.3%) also came in very strong.

Q2

Do you think that CEOs who participate in social media can build better connections with (select all that apply):



When asked what benefits C-Suite engagement in social media can lead to, **78% cited Better Communication and 71% stated Improved Brand Image** as the biggest positive benefits.

Q3

CEOs' participation in social media leads to (select all that apply):

78%

BETTER COMMUNICATION

71%

IMPROVED BRAND IMAGE

64%

MORE TRANSPARENCY

45%

IMPROVED COMPANY MORALE

45%

BETTER LEADERSHIP

5%

NONE OF THE ABOVE

The survey asked respondents to rate how important it is for CEOs to engage in social media and the response was overwhelmingly in favor of social engagement by business leaders. This is indicative of the rise of consumer expectations that CEOs become visible and accountable across social media channels.

86% of respondents rated CEO social media engagement as either somewhat important, very important or mission critical.

Q4

How important is it for CEOs to actively engage on social media?

VERY IMPORTANT



SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT



MISSION CRITICAL



NOT IMPORTANT



Trust and transparency are more important than ever in today's tumultuous business and economic environment. When asked about the connection between executives on social media and **trust in a brand**:

82% of respondents were more likely or much more likely to trust a company whose CEO and leadership team engage with social media.

Q5

Are you more likely to trust a company whose CEO and leadership team openly communicates via social media about their core mission and values and purpose?

MUCH MORE LIKELY



MORE LIKELY



LESS LIKELY



DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Our survey revealed that social media participation has a profound effect on a consumer's willingness to buy from companies whose values and mission is articulated through social channels. This is a critical insight for brands looking to build brand loyalty with customers demonstrating values-based purchasing behavior.

77% of respondents were more likely or much more likely to buy from a company whose values and mission are defined through CEO and executive leadership participation on social media.

Q6

Are you more likely to buy from a company whose values and leadership are clearly defined through CEO and executive leadership participation on social media?

MUCH MORE LIKELY



MORE LIKELY



LESS LIKELY



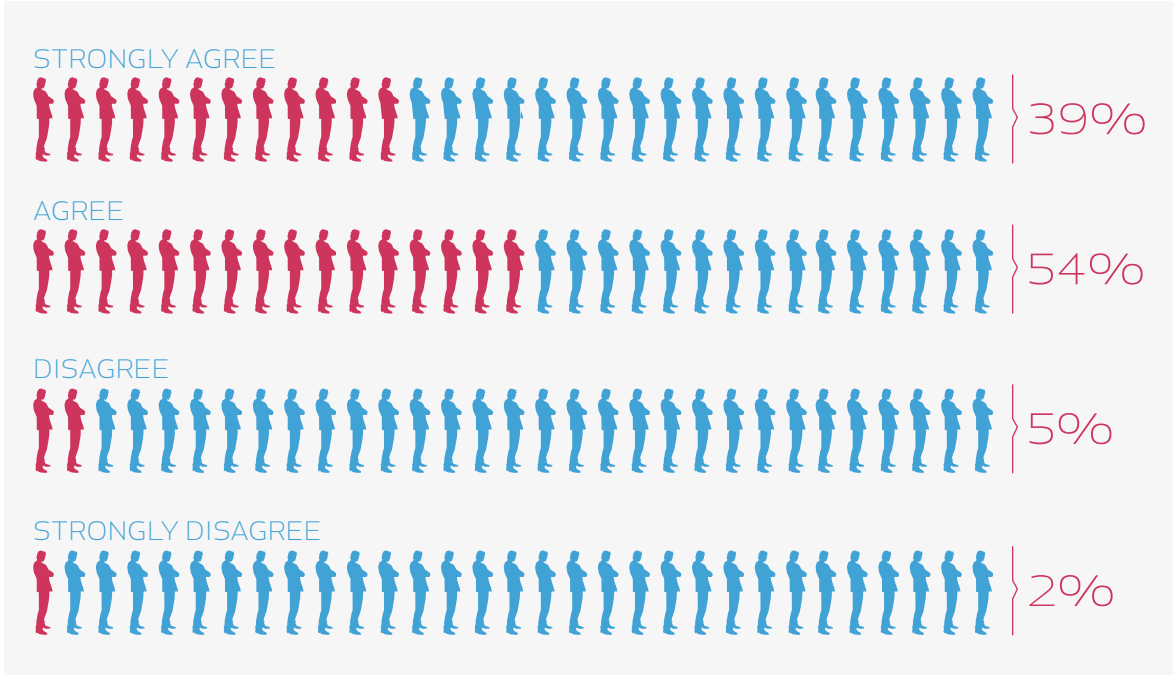
DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE



93% of respondents believe that CEO engagement in social media helps communicate company values, shape a company's reputation, and grow and evolve corporate leadership in times of crisis.

Q7

Do you think CEO engagement on social media helps communicate company values, shape a company's reputation, and grow and evolve corporate leadership in times of crisis?



What role can CEO participation in social media play in enhancing brand image? Our respondents were unequivocal in their response, with 94% stating that CEOs and other members of an organization's executive leadership team do, in fact, enhance the brand image by participating on social media.

94% said that CEOs and an organization's executive leadership team enhance the brand image by participating on social media

Q8

Does CEO and executive participation on social media channels help enhance brand image?

STRONGLY AGREE



AGREE



DISAGREE



STRONGLY DISAGREE





92% of respondents stated that social media is a valuable venue for sharing and pursuing CSR initiatives.

Q9

Do you think it's important for CEOs to communicate their commitment to corporate social responsibility on social media? CSR communications can cover the environment, employee volunteerism, community development, sustainable practices, and good corporate citizenship.

STRONGLY AGREE



AGREE



DISAGREE



STRONGLY DISAGREE



Attracting and retaining top talent in today's competitive marketplace is a key priority of companies large and small. Our survey results indicated that social media participation can be a potential talent magnet.

78% of respondents would prefer to work for a company whose leadership is active on social media

Q10

Are you more likely to want to work for a company whose leadership is active on social media?

STRONGLY AGREE



AGREE



DISAGREE



STRONGLY DISAGREE



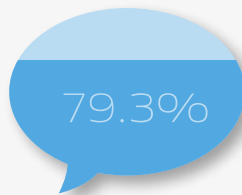
When asked to identify social media channels actively used by their companies, employees identified Facebook as the most popular (81%), followed by Twitter (79.3%), LinkedIn (72%), and Corporate blogs (56%).

Q11

Is your company brand represented on social media channels? Select all that apply:



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



LINKEDIN



CORPORATE BLOG



GOOGLE +



OTHER



QUORA



NONE OF THESE

Despite high levels of brand participation across various social channels, CEOs are still slow to adopt social media as a key communications vehicle. Only 50% of survey respondents stated that their CEO was engaged on Twitter, 47% listed LinkedIn, 45% listed Facebook, and 38% listed a corporate blog. Notably, 25% of respondents reported that there was no social media engagement at all from their CEO.

50% of survey respondents stated that their CEO was engaged on Twitter, 47% listed LinkedIn, 45% listed Facebook, and 38% listed a corporate blog.

*Note: Only 2.5% of Fortune 500 company CEOs are on Twitter

Q12

Does your CEO engage on the following social media channels? Select all that apply:



TWITTER



LINKEDIN



FACEBOOK



CORPORATE BLOG



NONE OF THESE



GOOGLE +



OTHER



QUORA

Of all the C-Suite executives, CEOs were the best represented on social media. Just under half of survey respondents reported CEO participation in social media, while only 28% of CMOs, 20% of COOs, 17% of CTOs and 10% of CFOs engaged through social media channels.

Q13

Are any of the C-Suite executives in your company on social media?
If so, please identify by title (select all that apply):



CONCLUSION

While many of the top global brands have embraced social media as a customer relationship and talent recruitment tool, executive leadership adoption of social media has been slow to pick up its pace. Social media engagement presents a strategic challenge for today's business leaders, however, as executives begin to migrate to social media channels, this shift is likely to have far-reaching and strategic implications for brand loyalty, brand image and brand awareness. More importantly for ROI-driven brands, C-Suite engagement on social media will have a long-lasting influence on customer purchase intent and purchase decisions.

The next generation of business leaders will require new talents and a different set of skills to successfully grow their companies. While an excellent venue to champion company values and enhance the reputations of senior executives, social media demands transparency and ongoing, high level interaction. These demands are precisely the reasons that social media may be viewed as too time consuming and risky for the C-Suite. Yet in order to effectively lead a company, management competencies will have to be reinvented around a new set of principles including transparency, integrity, collaboration, and consistent communication with stakeholders about company vision, mission, and values through social media channels.

This survey concludes that customers will increasingly value a CEO's commitment to having true conversations with customers, and will reward that engagement with trust and loyalty. These new interactions will build lasting relationships between brands and customers that will lead to a corporate culture with a foundation in transparency and openness, enabling improved customer advocacy, employee engagement and sustainability.

For more information on this survey, please contact BRANDfog at contact@brandfog.com



THE ROI OF SOCIAL MEDIA IS THAT
YOU NOW EXIST