

PRSA Survey: Communicators Are Slow to Embrace New Technologies

Internal and external communication has never been so convenient for PR professionals.

Looking to quickly share a file with a co-worker? You can message them on Slack. Trying to give your followers insight into the conference you're attending? You can live-tweet it. Technology helps to simplify and facilitate connections — all communications professionals have to do is implement these new innovations in their workflow.

However, a new survey conducted by PRSA and theEMPLOYEEapp by APPrise mobile — an internal communications and employee engagement mobile technology — shows that while companies have embraced social media as an effective way to connect with external audiences, they are still relying on older, more established technologies such as email to communicate internally with employees.

In total, 628 communications professionals of varying tenure, industry, age demographic and agency/in-house designation participated in the study, which was compiled via a SurveyMonkey poll largely composed of PRSA members. Here are four major takeaways from the survey data:

1. Email — though not always effective — is still king.

The survey found that email is still the main method of interaction for communicators. Ninety-one percent of respondents use email to reach external audiences, and 95 percent use it for internal communications.

However, this reliance on email doesn't necessarily reflect industry beliefs about its efficiency with clients. While 63 percent of respondents predict that people will always use email, especially with internal audiences, only 27 percent think

that it is the best way to communicate externally. More specifically, communicators found social media to be 11 percent more effective than email for communicating with outside audiences.

2. Slack isn't an institution yet.

According to survey results, messaging and social collaboration platforms like Slack are gaining traction in PR offices, though not always at an institutionwide level. Only 46 percent of survey respondents said their entire company uses the same platform, and 31 percent said they use a variety of messaging technologies.

Among groups of employees, respondents said that they used Slack most frequently (41 percent), with Workplace by Facebook ranking second (21 percent).

3. Communicators know the possibilities (and dangers) of social media.

Communicators have grown increasingly familiar with using platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter for external communications, as 77 percent of survey respondents said their company has a policy in place around social media.

Agencies, though, also seem to be recognizing that Facebook or Twitter errors can be reputation destroyers — 55 percent of respondents said their company has a formal policy for social media communication, and 44 percent said their organization's policy was more informal, relying on employee judgment.

4. Mobile devices haven't replaced computers.

Survey results show that companies recognize the importance of mobile as a workplace tool and a necessary counterpart to desktop computers — 48 percent of

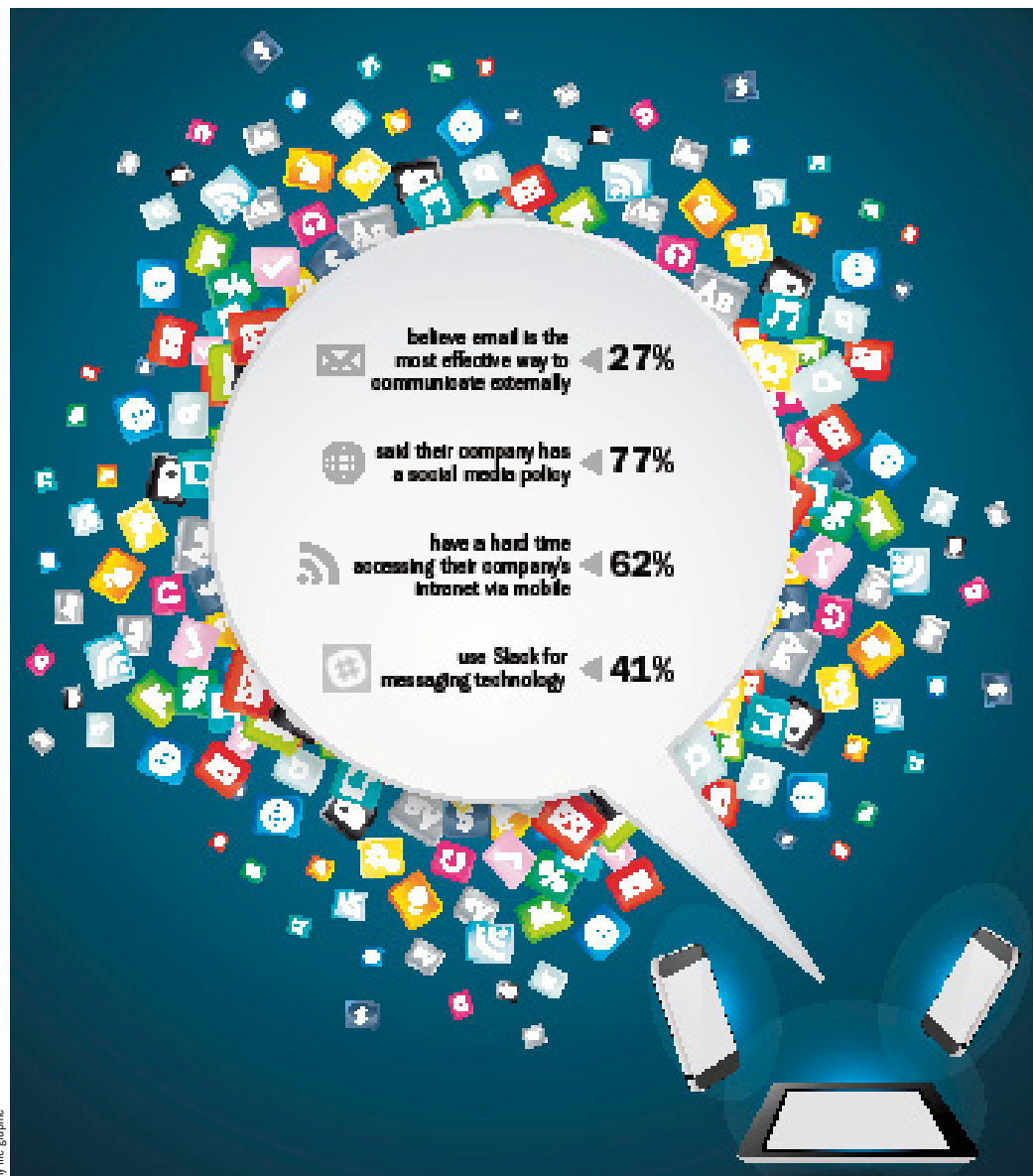
respondents said their organization had a bring-your-own-device policy. However, 62 percent also have a difficult time accessing their company's intranet via mobile.

This data point serves as a microcosm for the survey's findings on the whole: While most companies are interested in embracing communications innovations, there is also a strong "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality among PR professionals.

Slack may be faster than email and mobile devices may offer some advantages that desktops can't, but that doesn't necessarily mean that communications professionals are going to uproot their business practices — at least not immediately.

"Communicators understand the importance of finding technology that suits our 'always on' culture and emphasizing the role that digital storytelling has in today's mobile-first world," said PRSA 2017 National Chair Jane Dvorak, APR, Fellow PRSA, in a prepared statement on the survey. "Yet, based on organizations' seemingly limited investment in newer technologies and reticence to move away from email and intranets, old-school communication tactics remain the dominant method of distributing information." **T**

— Compiled by Dean Essner



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