

# Social Media and Engineers 2011

A Study by Napier Partnership Limited

## DO ENGINEERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

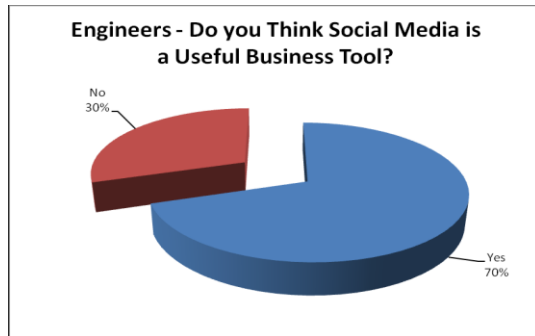
In 2009, Napier undertook a comprehensive survey of Electronics Design Engineers, working with the University of Chichester to study whether engineers made use of social media, and if so, whether it provides an effective marketing channel for reaching engineers in Europe. The results in 2009 revealed that there appeared to be significant resistance to social media amongst a large section of the engineering community.

In April 2011, Napier initiated a follow-up survey (see Appendix 1 for the details on how both surveys were carried out) to examine whether attitudes had changed, and to analyse in more detail the contrast between the views of engineers and communications professionals in the engineering sector. Although engineers are generally more positive about social media, we are a long way from social media being an effective tool to reach all engineers as a third of the respondents still didn't believe that social media was an effective business tool. It is not all bad news for marketers, however - the survey did highlight some positive trends which suggest that marketers have an opportunity to develop an effective communications strategy across particular social media channels which deliver value to engineers.

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS CONSIDERED A “USEFUL TOOL” BY ENGINEERS - IF THEY CAN ACCESS IT.

The number of engineers who considered social media a valuable professional communications tool increased from 61% in 2009 to 70% in 2011. The relatively slow growth suggests that there is still a group of engineers reluctant to make use of social media in their work.

It is no surprise that the survey also found that marketing departments within the sector are starting



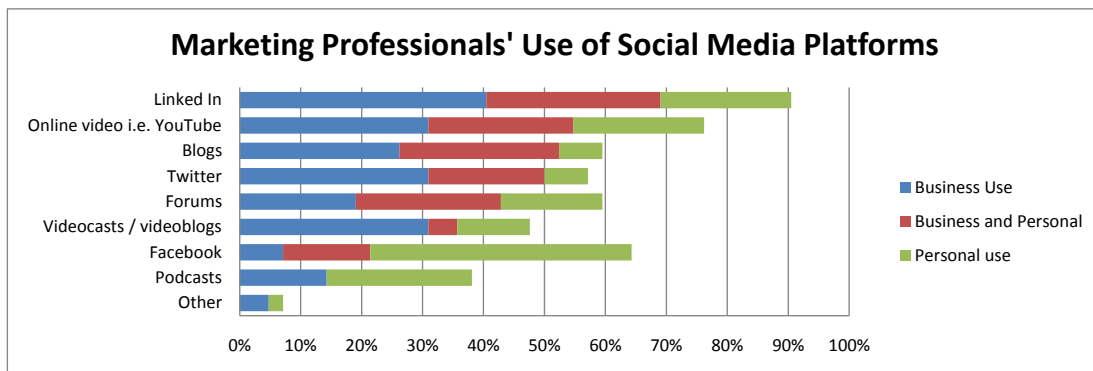
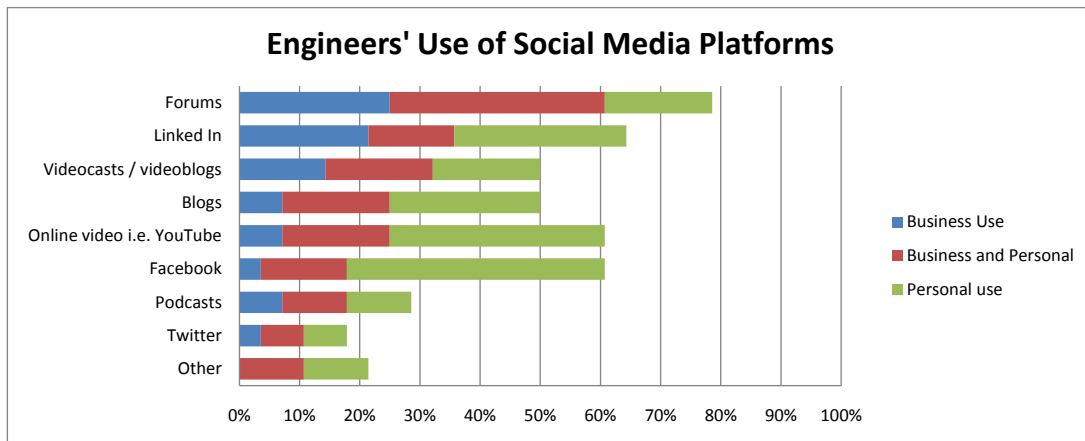
to take advantage of the opportunities these channels present, with 88% committing resources to social media channels. Before abandoning more traditional communications channels and racing to start up a Twitter account, however, companies should be aware that there has been an increase in the number of engineers who have access to social networking sites blocked. The change is slight – from 29% in 2009 to 33% of engineers in 2011 who have blocked access – and

obviously many of the respondents who don't consider social media a useful business tool are those who can't access it at work. With network security continuing to be high on the agenda it's likely that blocking of social media will mean that around a third of engineers are unable to benefit from social media channels at work, even if they find them useful.

Of the marketing and PR professionals from the sector who were surveyed, only 4% had their access blocked. It may be that Marketing Departments are most successful in lobbying IT professionals for access to carry out their role, but a key part of their target audience is prevented from engaging with them if the engineers they aim to reach are not granted the same privileges.

## FORUMS STILL THE PREFERRED MEDIA FOR PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION, BUT LINKEDIN GROWING IN POPULARITY.

The creation of new social networking tools has not led to the death of the forum. 78% of engineers surveyed used forums, which can allow for more in-depth and specialist debate than open networks such as Twitter. The format of forums allows for more details to be communicated than the 140 character limit of the microblogging site, but it is not just the need for brevity which keeps engineers away from Twitter. Forums are often linked to manufacturers or distributors, and engineers can have a high degree of confidence that companies will be monitoring them. Their lack of enthusiasm for Twitter may be due to the fact the companies are not yet responsive enough via this channel.



In 2009 Facebook emerged as the second most popular online communication tool for engineers after forums, but this recent survey showed that LinkedIn has overtaken Facebook in popularity and relevance. The distribution of engineers using the professional networking site for both business and personal use suggests that engineers are using LinkedIn to engage with the online community professionally, search for new career opportunities and raise their personal profile in the industry.

LinkedIn still has some way to go before it surpasses forums as a preferred method of communication, and it is unlikely that they will ever be replaced as the primary tool for support, advice and discussion. What is clear is that the growth of LinkedIn suggests that a strong presence on the site is essential for engineering organisations both for brand management and as a recruitment tool.

Not all popular social networks can claim the same success in the engineering community - with just 18% of engineers using the medium, Twitter continues to trail significantly behind Facebook (61%) and LinkedIn (64%). With almost no increase in adoption over the past two years, Twitter continues to struggle against resistance to the medium from a large section of the engineering community and therefore the opportunities to reach engineers through this channel are limited.

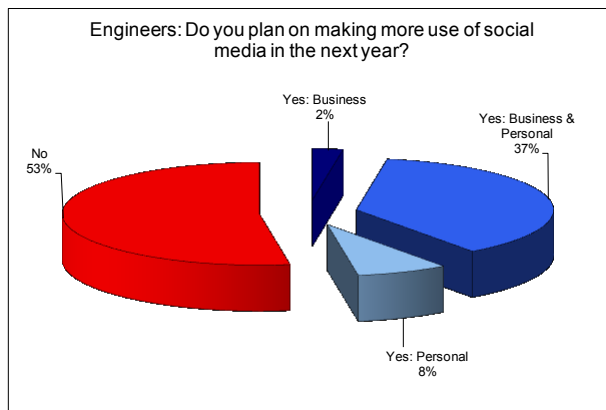
At the moment, there is a disparity between the channels preferred by engineers and those being used by marketing professionals in the sector. Both groups seem to agree that Facebook is the social network for personal use, but marketing departments' enthusiasm for Twitter is not matched by engineers'. Marketing professionals are increasingly adopting online video, and it will be interesting to see if the content being generated results drives increased use of video by engineers when we next run this survey.

Marketers need to find out exactly where their audience is and clarify their objectives with each network before embarking on a campaign to ensure that they deliver successful campaigns across

social media. It's pretty clear that increasing the focus on participation in forums should be a priority if marketers want to reach more engineers. Traditional media looks set to remain a central part of any electronics company's marketing efforts as social media continues to fail to reach about a third of engineers.

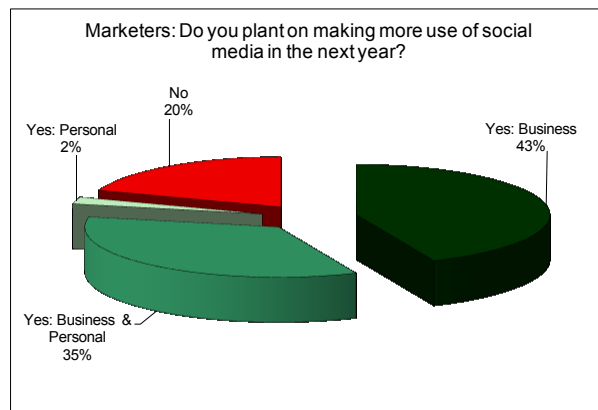
## ENGINEERS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA HAS INCREASED, BUT MARKETERS ARE NOT MEETING THEIR EXPECTATIONS.

Appendix 2 shows the contrasting responses of engineers to questions in 2009 and today, and the overall trend is one of growth in the usage of social networking tools for a variety of activities, from researching companies and products to finding a new job.



It's clear that the opportunity presented by social media for the engineering sector is growing, but not as much as some marketers would like. The contrasting plans for future usage demonstrate that marketers need to align their plans more closely with their target audience in order to succeed – whilst only 40% of engineers plan on making greater use of social networking in the future, 78% of marketing departments have allocated budget and resources in this field.

The growth of social media use for personal reasons appears to be slowing for marketers, with 38% planning to increase use of social media in their personal lives, whereas 78% planned to increase social media use for business. Engineers appear to be much more conservative with 45% planning to increase personal use of social media and only 35% planning to increase use in their business lives. It is impossible to tell whether these results represent different philosophies about social media and its value, or if engineers are relatively late adopters of the medium.



If marketing departments can provide relevant and useful information through these channels, they may be able to encourage more engineers to develop their usage of social media, but they should be aware from these results that this may be a longer term strategy which is unlikely to deliver an immediate ROI.

## DO SOCIAL MEDIA OFFER A MARKETING OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ENGINEERING SECTOR?

75% of marketing professionals surveyed are already making use of social networking tools, and as the results above demonstrate, they have plans to expand this activity in the future.

The survey also highlighted that although three quarters of companies are making use of social media, only half had a strategy in place relating to this activity, and the same amount had a social media policy and staff guidelines in place. With the online channel playing such a vital role in a company's brand and reputation management, companies need to have policies in place to protect their brand. A social media strategy can not only ensure that the communications have a structure in order to adhere to company policy, but can also make it much easier to integrate into an overall communications strategy and plan.

With a significant number of engineers remaining reluctant to embrace social media, it is clear that it cannot be used to the exclusion of more traditional marketing communications such as direct marketing and press activity. To be successful any social media campaign must be part of a broader integrated marketing strategy.

Although within consumer marketing social media campaigns are gaining new levels of sophistication, yielding strong results and making the headlines, for the engineering community it is a medium which is very much in its infancy. Marketers should take a back to basics approach to social media and give close consideration to the objectives of their activity and the audience they're intending to reach. There are signs that some marketers are plunging into social media before they have a coherent strategy in place, and without any strong awareness of which networks the engineers they are aiming to reach are using.

The remedy to this is to go back to the beginning – develop a strategy, clarify the objectives and the audience and consistently execute a clearly targeted campaign. If marketers can get this right and deliver information which is relevant and timely for the engineering community, social media could become an efficient and effective communications channel for the sector.

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

The surveys from 2009 and 2011 were both developed and hosted online. An email was then sent to engineers and marketers working within Europe – a total of 15,934 in 2009 and 12,519 in 2011, with an incentive of a prize draw that would allow one respondent to win an iPod Touch. A total of 359 responses (2.3%) were received in 2009, and 98 (0.8%) in 2011.

## APPENDIX 2: RESULTS



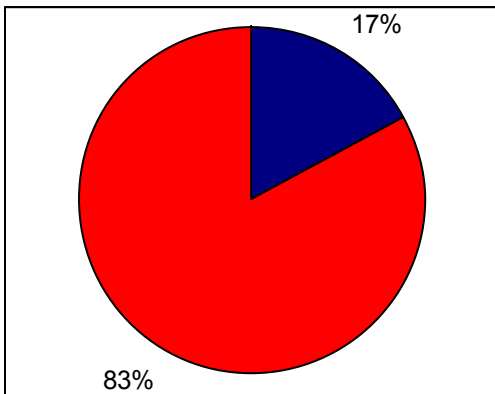
YES



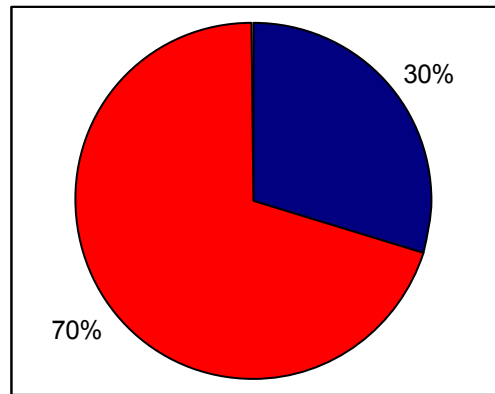
NO

Have you ever used social media tools to get a job?

2009

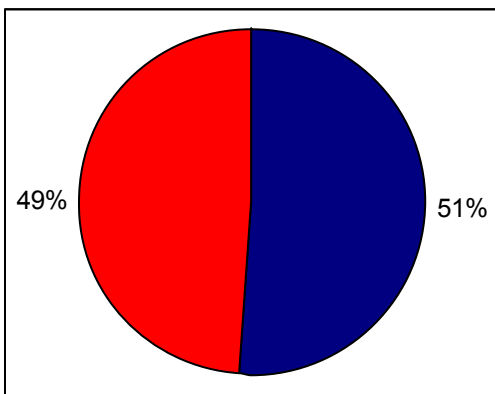


2011

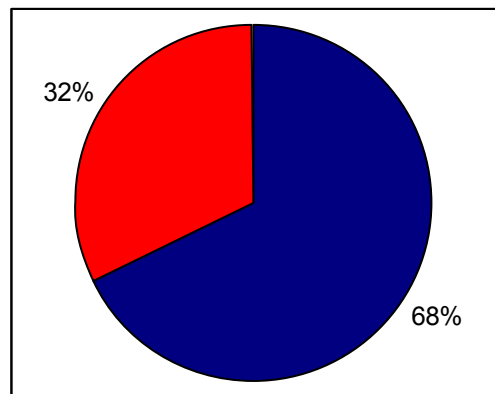


Have you ever used social media tools to find out information about a company?

2009

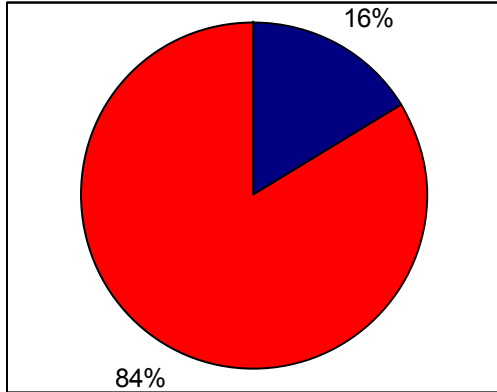


2011

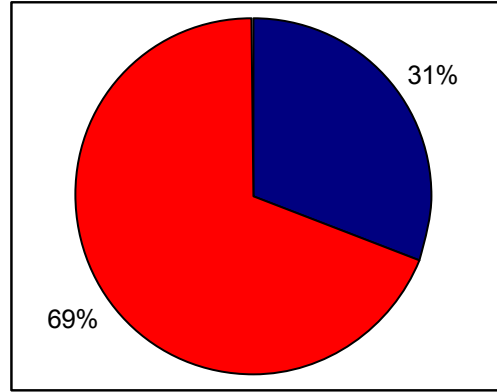


**Have you ever used social media tools to advertise products?**

**2009**

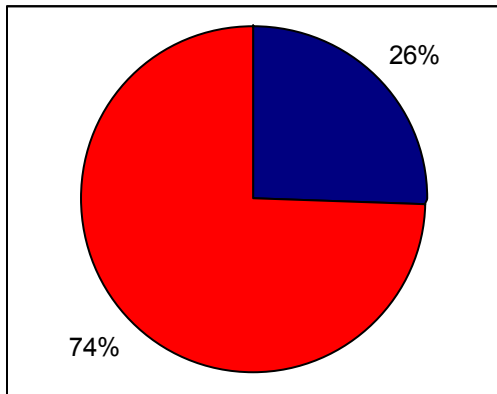


**2011**

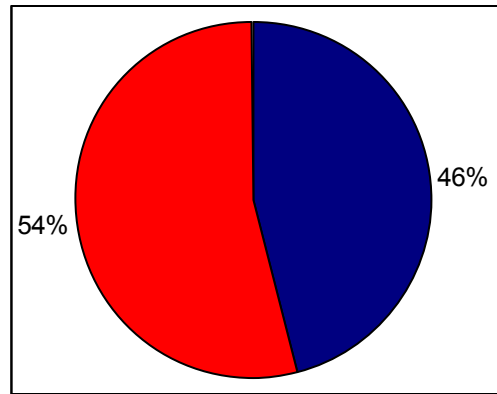


**Have you ever used social media tools to communicate with customers?**

**2009**

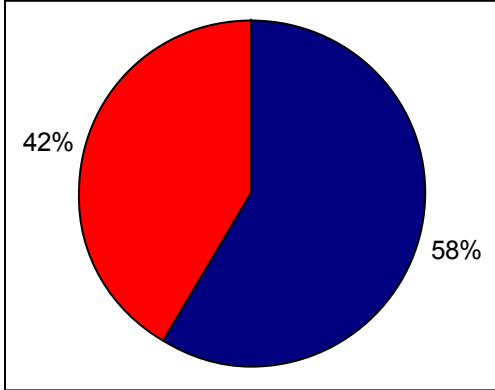


**2011**

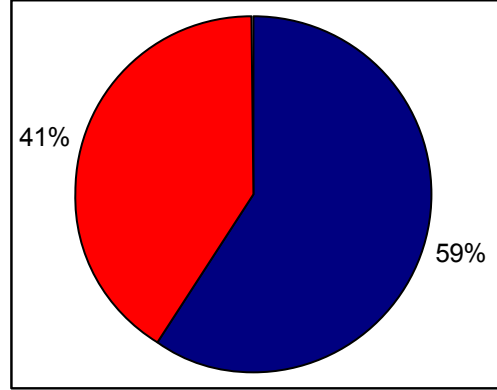


Have you ever used social media tools to communicate with co-workers and team members?

2009

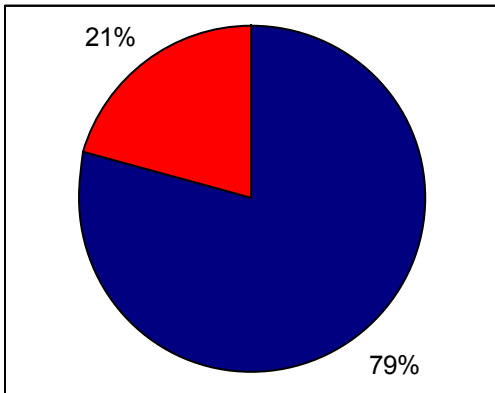


2011

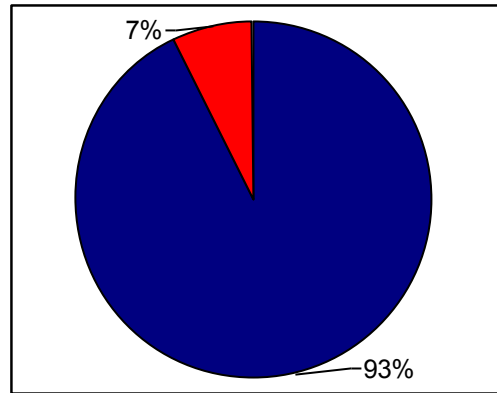


Have you ever used social media tools to communicate with friends and family?

2009



2011



## ABOUT NAPIER

Napier is a PR-lead, full service marketing agency that specialises in the B2B technology sector. We work closely with our clients to build campaigns, focusing on achieving results that have a significant positive impact on their businesses and which, above all, ensure maximum return on their investment.

Napier's services include training, consultancy and full outsourcing of social media marketing within the engineering and technology sectors.

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