

Social Media Usage Study

Retailers' Perspectives on Improving Their Social Media Presence and Which Platforms Work Best

Study Overview

More and more retailers are engaging with customers on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram.

However, most independent home improvement store operators believe their online social engagement could be far better than it is.

In fact, only 2 percent of participants in this 2016 *Social Media Usage Study* identified their social media efforts as “excellent,” and 46 percent classified their efforts as “fair” or “poor.”

To understand what retailers are doing with social media to promote their stores, the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) conducted this study and spoke with retailers whose stores have high-performing social media accounts.

For the 2016 *Social Media Usage Study*, NRHA surveyed 281 independent home improvement retailers about the social media platforms they use for their businesses and the tactics they implement to manage, schedule and report for their social media accounts. The study was conducted in a three-week time frame via an online survey.

You probably run circulars, have a website and occasionally advertise through TV or radio. Do you wonder if your business needs social media to connect with customers, too?

Data from a recent NRHA consumer poll, which surveyed 1,000 people, shows that more than 30 percent of respondents follow businesses on social media platforms.

Consumers’ reasons for following businesses include finding new products and learning about special offers.

You can use social media to personalize online touch points with your customers.

Read on to learn which platforms other retailers prefer to use, how those retailers strategize and what they could improve. Then, think through how your business’ social media presence compares to others in the industry and what you can do better to engage with your customers online.

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Learn More About Social Media

In addition to conducting this study, *Hardware Retailing* spoke with independent home improvement retailers who are highly engaged on social media with their customers. The retailers discuss the types of content they post, how they grow their audiences and ways they track what is working and what is not. To read the full story, visit TheRedT.com/SocialMedia16.

In addition to this article, *Hardware Retailing* created a social media toolkit, that includes resources you can use to take your social media accounts from good to great. To download the free toolkit visit TheRedT.com/SMKit.

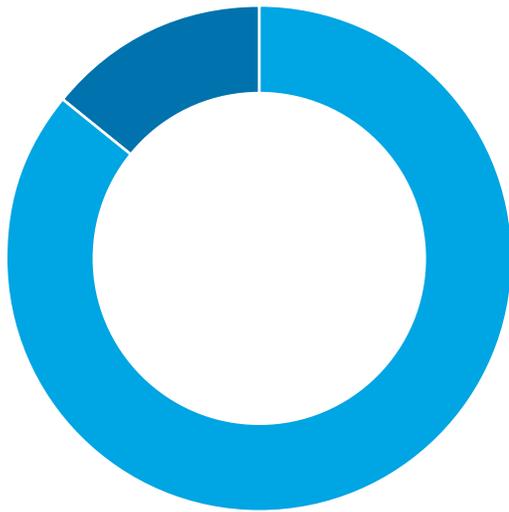
The toolkit includes:

- **Analytics Template:** The template includes tracking formulas for several data points, and allows you to easily compare engagement month to month.
- **Scheduling Template:** The template allows you to plan post details including date, time, platform and person responsible for posting.
- **Social Media Best Practices:** We’ve compiled social media best practices as a tip sheet for you.
- **Facebook Page Builder:** This visual guide explains essentials to making your pages helpful and easy to use.

FACEBOOK PAGE BUILDER

- Profile Picture**
Your profile picture should be a clear, current version of your company's logo. This will help customers recognize and easily find your page.
- Cover Photo**
Use a high-quality graphic promoting a store sale, in-store event or holiday, or use a fun photo that shows your company's personality.
- Call to Action**
Use this button to bring customers directly to your store's website. Ask them to "Shop Now" and link to the website or "Sign Up" for store emails.
- Like**
You want customers to "Like" your page, but you can't "Like" other local businesses as your page to stay engaged in the community.
- Tabs**
Arrange your page's tabs so the most relevant categories are displayed front and center. Customization options are also available.
- About**
Make sure this section is complete with the details your customers are looking for: website, address, phone number and related information.
- Videos**
Similar to photos, videos can showcase your company's offerings and personality. These should be on par with company brand standards.
- Links**
As often as possible, add a link to posts that leads to a source of more information on your website. It increases chances for engagement.
- Photos**
Photos are a great way to promote your brand and engage followers. Make sure pictures are high quality, and consider creating photo albums.

Retailing Brought to you by the North American Retail Hardware Association

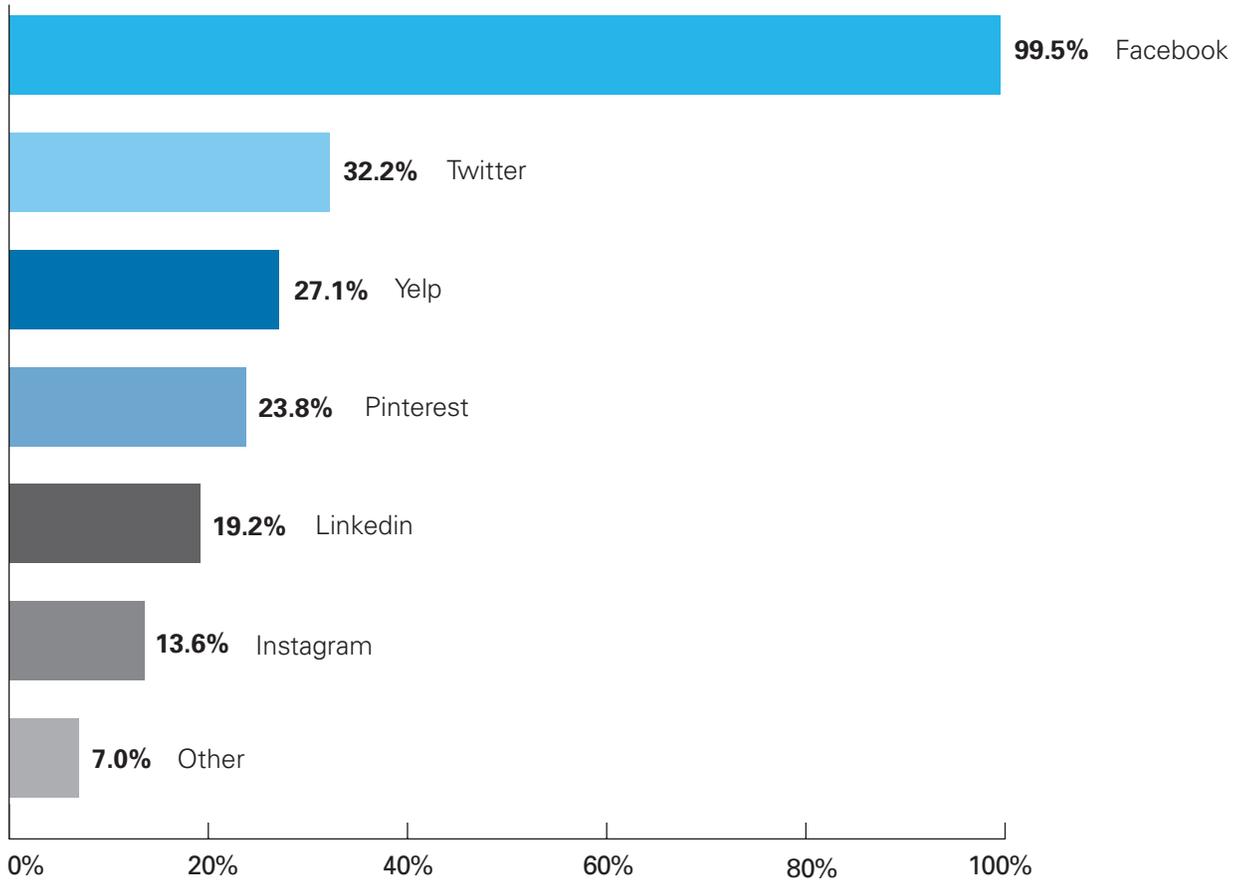


Do you currently use social media in your business?

- Yes 86.0%
- No 14.0%

What social media platforms do you use for business purposes?

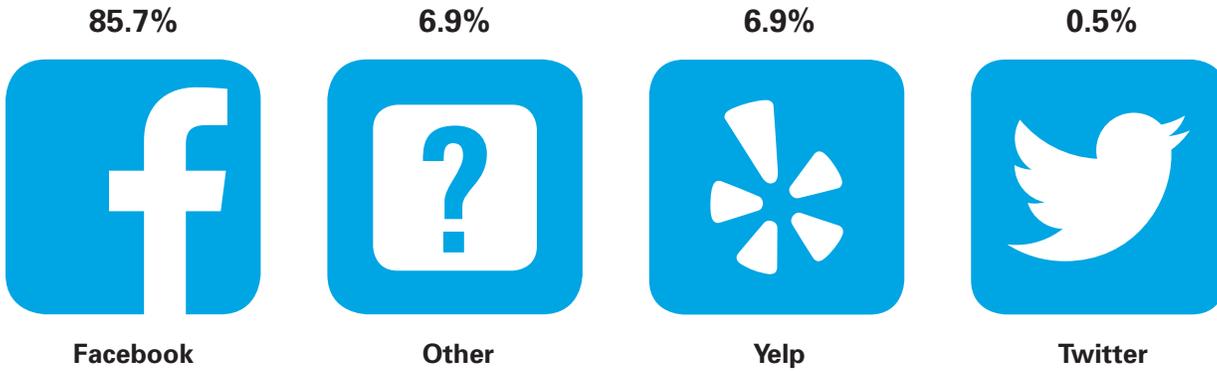
(Please select all that apply.)



Respondents Who Answered "Other"

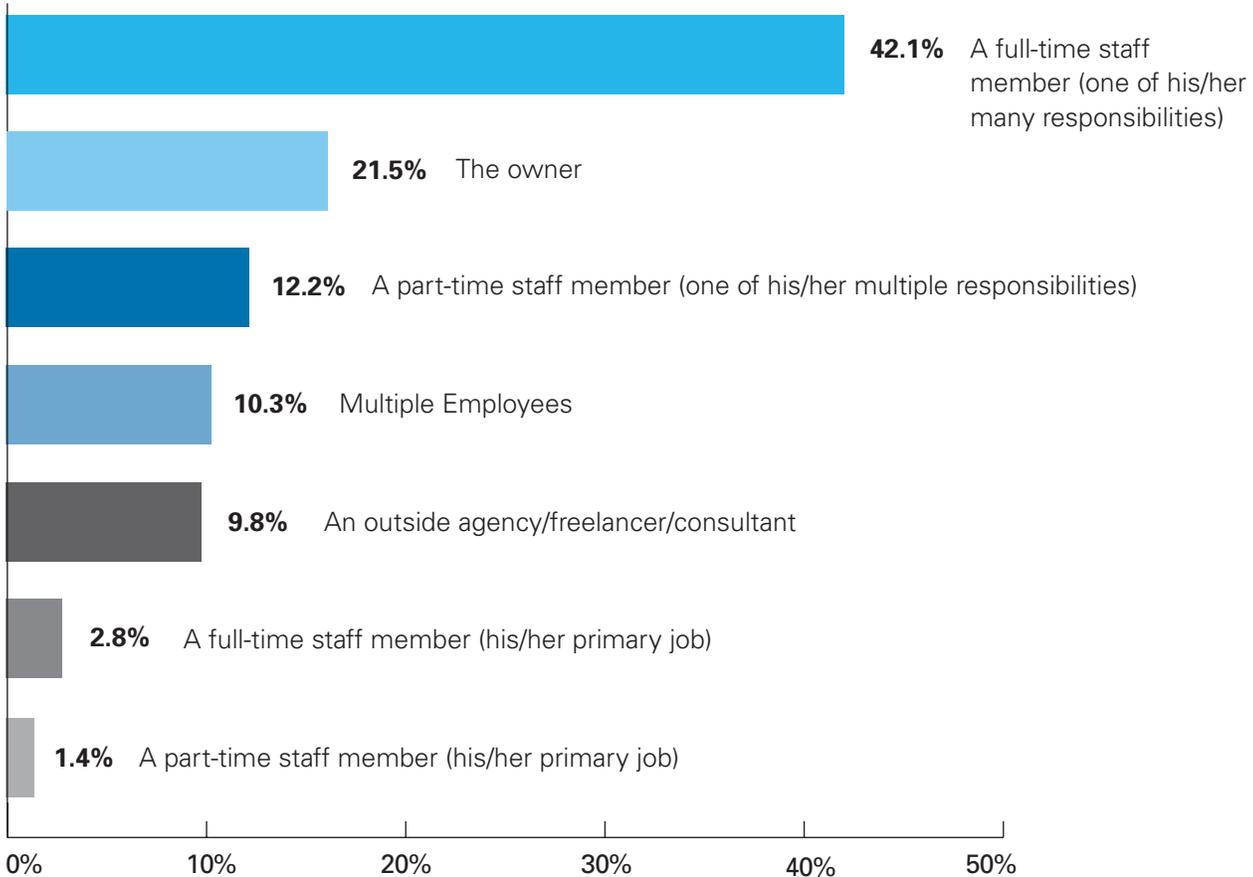
Google Plus	Craigslist	Angie's List
YouTube	Foursquare	Houzz

Which social media platform benefits your business the most?

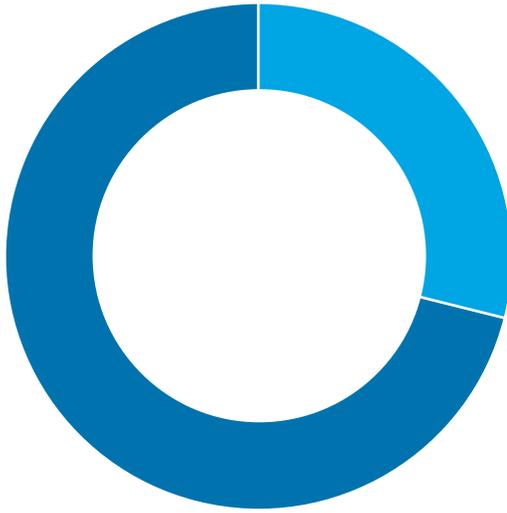


Respondents Who Answered "Other"	
Not sure.	Angie's List

Who maintains your store's social media accounts?

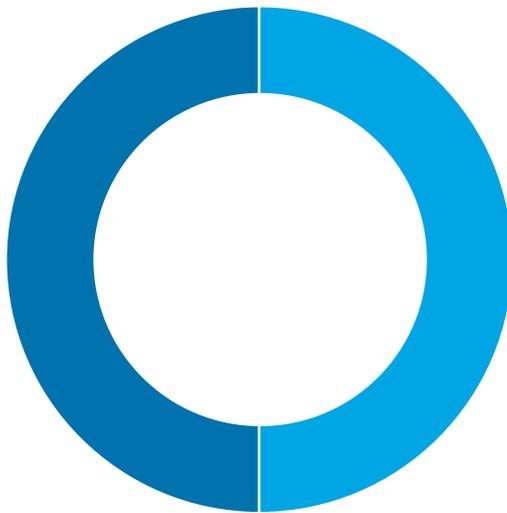


RETAILERS' PERSPECTIVES



Does your business use a social media calendar to plan and schedule posts?

- Yes 29.1%
- No..... 70.9%



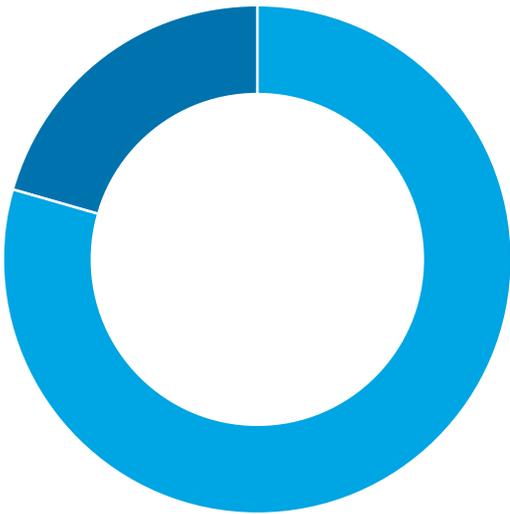
Does your business track its social media analytics?

- Yes 50.2%
- No..... 49.8%

Please explain how your business tracks its social media analytics.

- The platform's analytics systems.
- Google Analytics.
- Monitored by a third party.
- Sales and services sold from the post.
- POS system has a social function.

The majority of respondents track their analytics on a weekly basis.



Does your business respond to positive and negative comments received on social media?

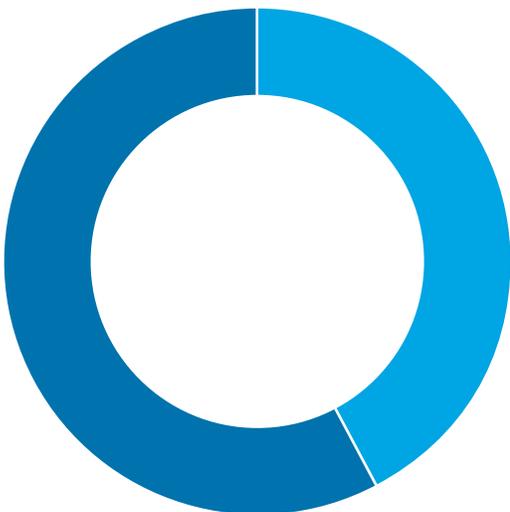
- ◆ Yes 79.5%
- ◆ No 20.5%

How does your business respond to negative comments?

(For example, reply to the comment publicly on social media so everyone can see, reach out directly to the individual who commented, offer a coupon)

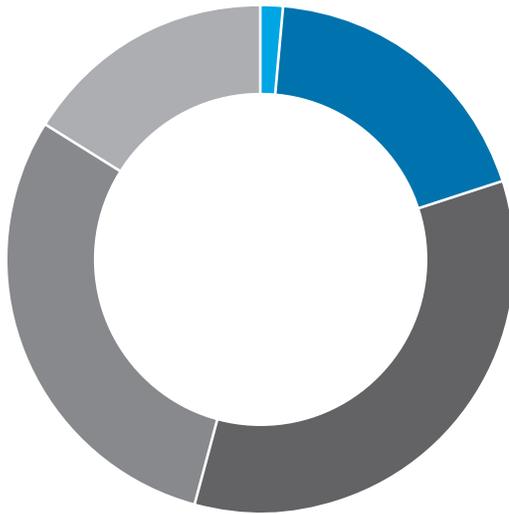
Reply to the comment or individual on social media.
Reach out to the person directly.
Both reply to the comment and reach out to the person directly.
Each situation is different.
Have not had a negative comment.
Delete the negative comment.

RETAILERS' PERSPECTIVES



Does your business use paid advertising on social media to target advertising and/or boost posts?

- ◆ Yes 42.4%
- ◆ No 57.6%



How would you rate your business' social media presence?

- Excellent 1.5%
- Very Good 18.6%
- Good 34.2%
- Fair 29.7%
- Poor 16.1%

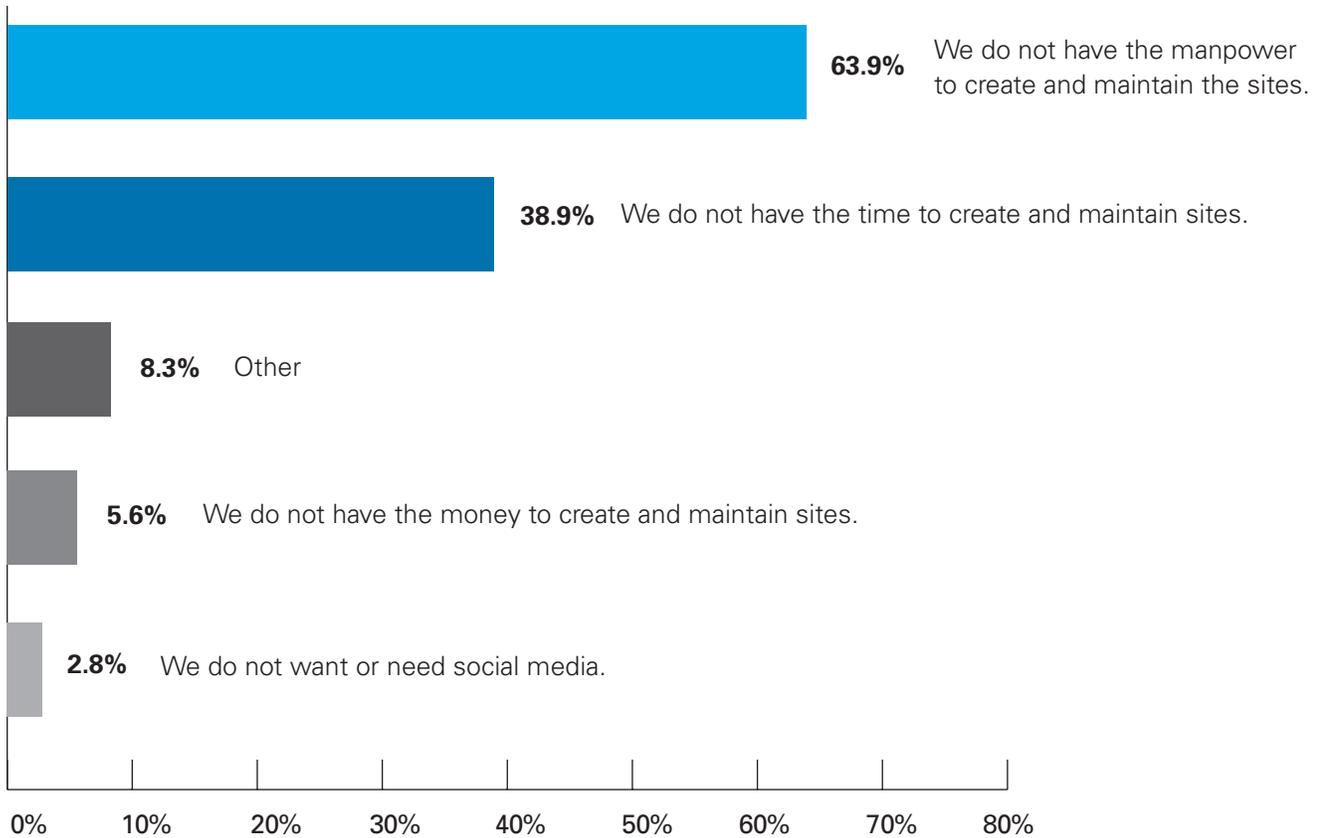
What changes are PLANNED for your business' social media accounts in the next year?

Begin posting on a regular basis.
Expand to more platforms.
Use paid advertising more.
Reevaluate content being posted.
Assign an employee to be in charge of the accounts.
No changes are planned.

What changes would you LIKE to make to your business's social media accounts in the next 1 to 3 years ?

Create a well-rounded social media strategy.
Create better content to share on social media.
Interact more with followers.
Expand to more platforms.
Determine social media's return on investment as it relates to sales and foot traffic.
Assign an employee to be in charge of the accounts.

Why does your business not have a social media presence?



Respondents Who Answered "Other"

Our co-op covers all we need as a small store.

Afraid of negativity.

Have not taken the time to get started.

The North American Retail Hardware Association and *Hardware Retailing* have compiled multiple reports and studies on the home improvement industry. A library of this research can be found at hardwareretailing.com/research-guides.

Social Media Usage Study

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