

becg

Digital Communications in the Built Environment

Annual Survey 2021

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Digital experience at BECG

Digital communications must change. With everyone spending more time online, it's now much less about individual touch points. Success depends on creating a journey and an experience that can reflect the audience's relationship with you.

We help companies working in the built environment to build stronger foundations for their business, online. Where once we'd offer an FAQ page, we now set up two-way dialogues via live chat. Where once we created social media ads, now we develop holistic experiences, and the long term means to secure rewarding engagement. Today, instead of just creating a virtual consultation website to help your launch, we now deliver longer term community and stakeholder engagement.

This survey looks at the challenges behind us and the opportunities ahead. We hope it encourages you to ask questions about your own digital communications. We're here to help find the answers.



What a difference a year makes

Everyone's lives changed. The last 12 months were transformative for communications in the built environment. With ways of working turned upside down and many campaigns curtailed, industry turned to online communications to keep business moving, and maintain our primal need for human connection.

Digital has become important like never before. And it's had to adapt at pace.

In this short but insightful survey, we asked communications professionals from across the built environment, to tell us how their digital communications has changed. From research and strategy to content and digital innovation, this inaugural questionnaire put the spotlight on challenges and on opportunities.

67%

Recorded their digital spend increasing over the last 12 months

2021

Most responders believe content marketing will have the biggest impact in 2021

63%

Will increase the amount of budget they dedicate to research and insight

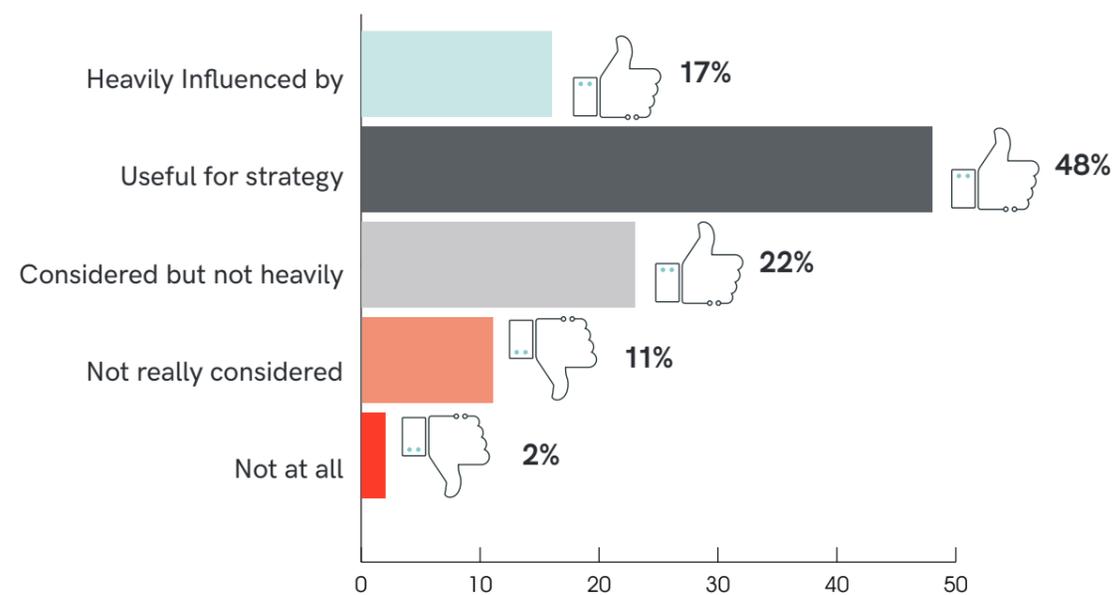
A new approach

The 'new approach' to successful digital comms must be an enhanced iteration of the 'old approach'. Robust audience insights are always the best way to tailor an effective strategy and guarantee the best outcomes.

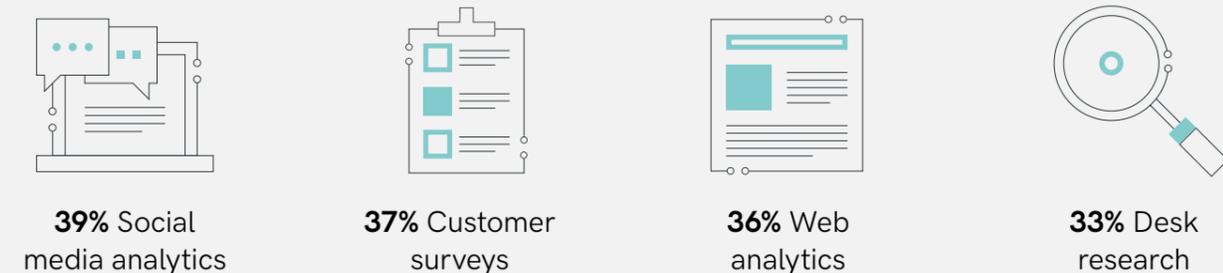
Most respondents to our survey already rely on research and insight for their digital comms strategy. Web analytics and surveys are popular, but social analytics still play the primary, vital role in customer research.

63% of participants planned to put more of their budget into customer research over the next year, but we expect these figures to change in our 2022 survey.

How much of a role does customer research (interviews, surveys, personas etc) and insight play in your digital communication strategy?



Amend to Top sources for Customer Research

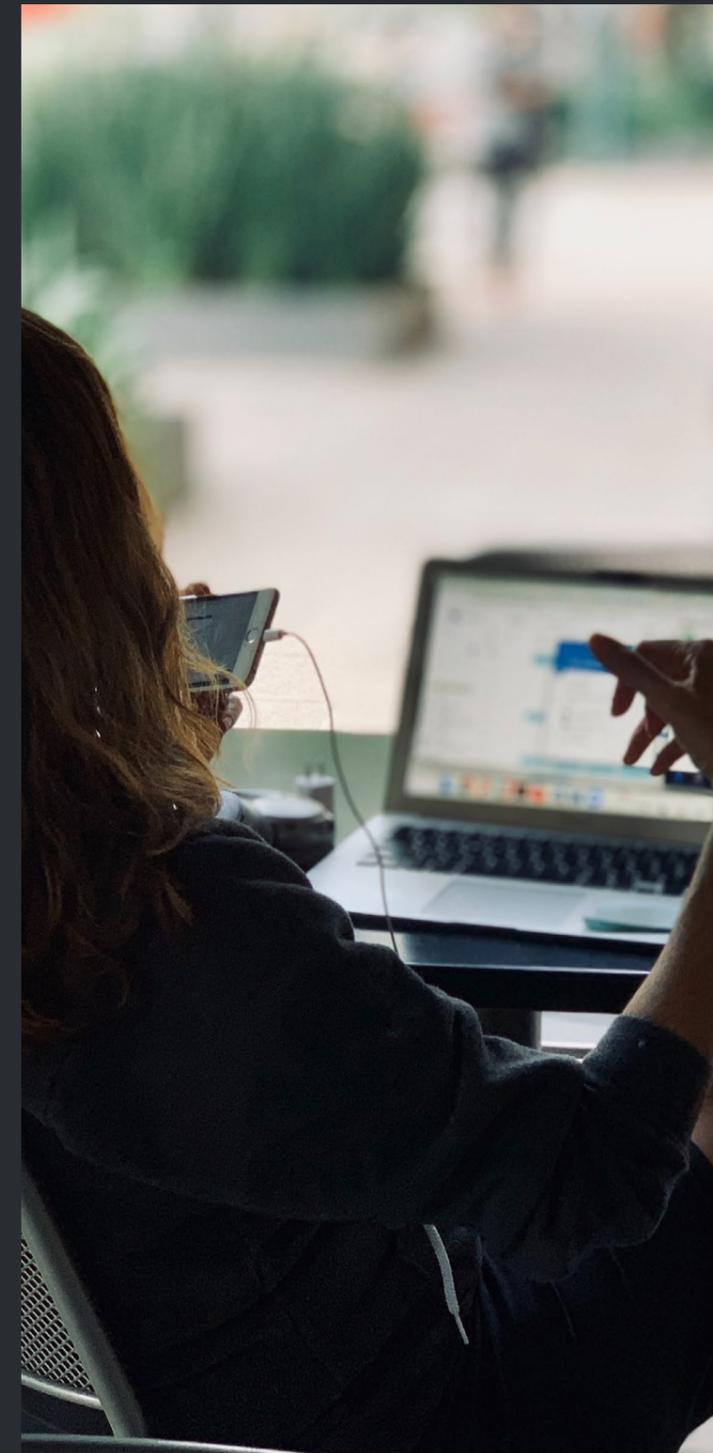


The digital normal

The pandemic has changed the communications industry. Digital-first must be the new approach. 40% of our audience had a digital first marketing strategy and a further 35% are working towards one.

New skills will be needed to help manage processes and improve approaches to communication, and it will still be vital to understand your audience's needs.

Do you have a digital first marketing strategy encompassing all channels?



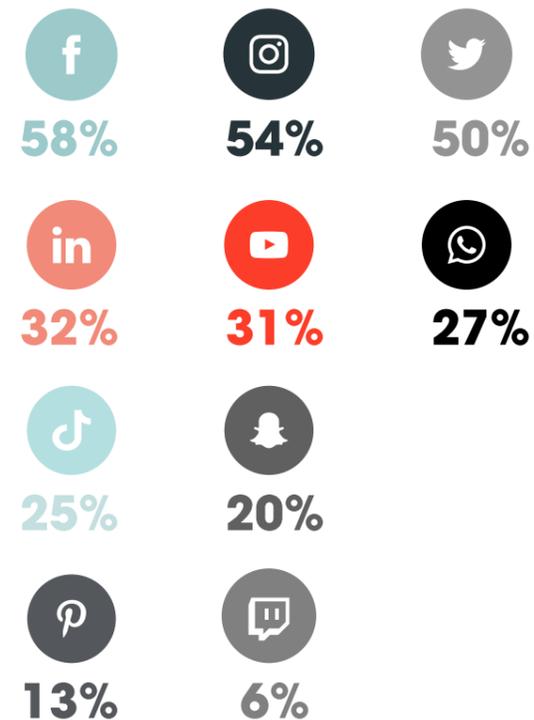
Social media and content marketing

Social platforms empower companies to get closer to their customer and create meaningful connections and conversations. Never more than now have they been more important.

Currently, Facebook and Instagram dominate in the built environment, closely followed by Twitter, but this is reflective of broader society. However, marketers are increasing their use of Instagram with positive results.

The key to success is a test and learn approach using a broad mix of platforms to engage audiences. Using real-time data and insight to optimise each channel's content.

What social media platforms do you regularly use for work?



Top 5 Social Media Objectives

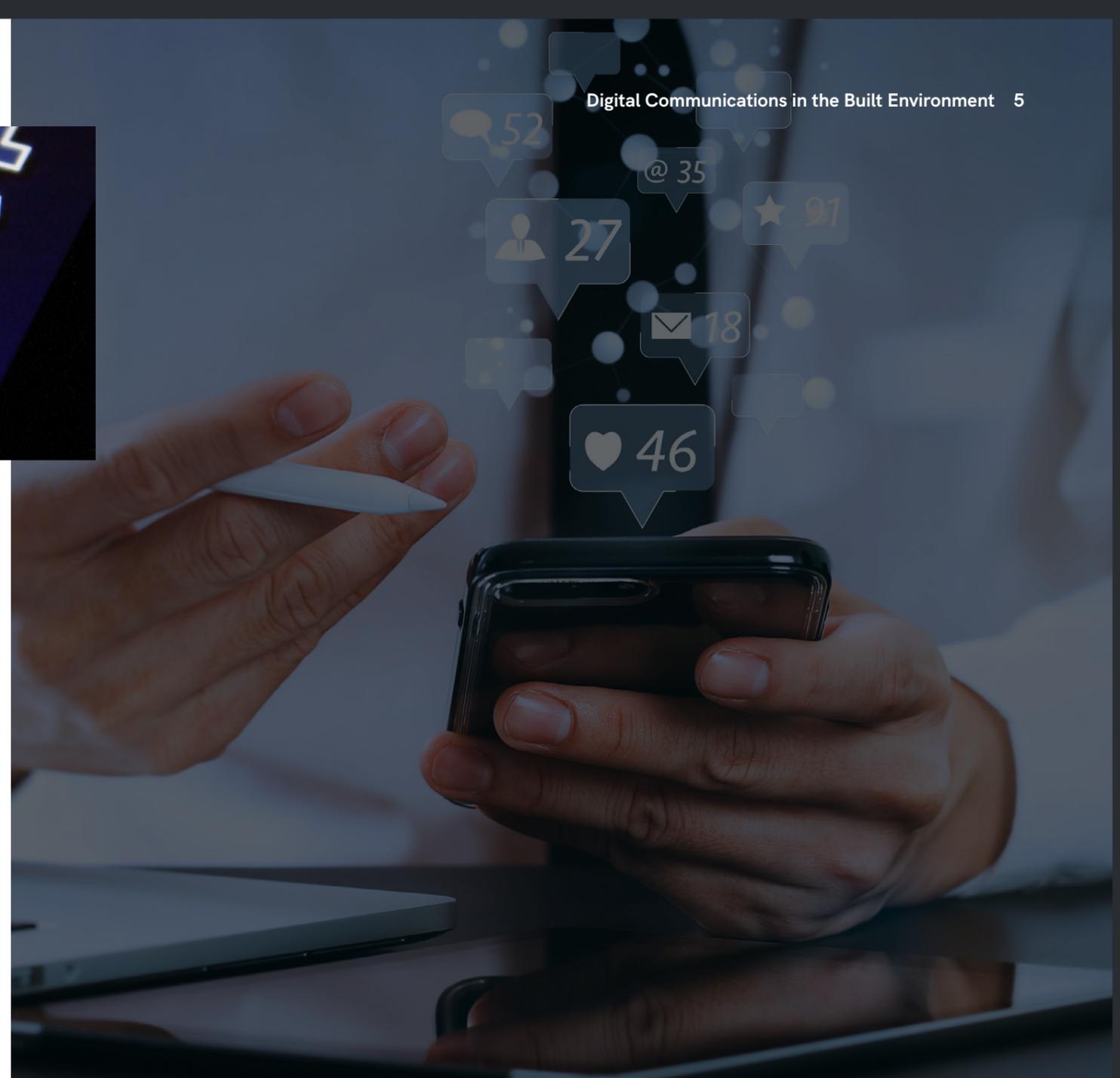
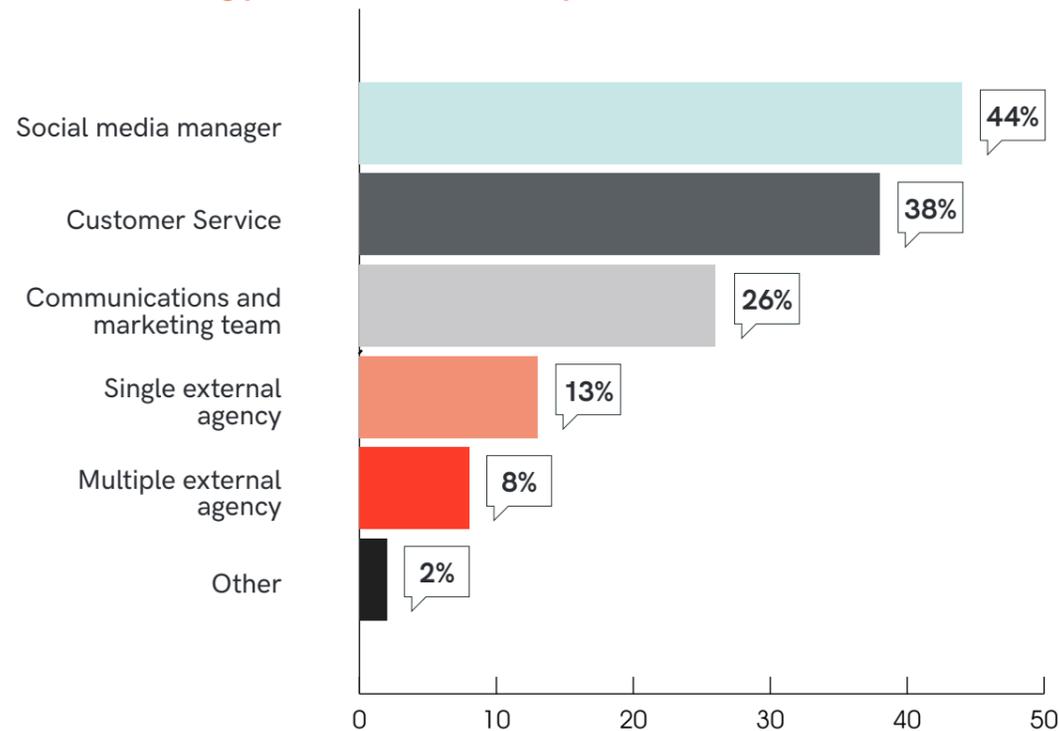
- 1.** 45% to drive audience engagement
- 2.** 36% brand awareness
- 3.** 29% customer service and management
- 4.** 28% to reach a different audience
- 5.** 26% cost effective owned channel



Rather surprisingly, only 44% of respondents have dedicated inhouse social media resources to managing accounts.

This means social media is being overlooked as a serious communications channel. Most respondents used software to manage that engagement, but many are accessing and managing comms via native applications. Moving forwards, as digital options become the backbone of an effective comms strategy, teams will benefit greatly from the efficiencies of using software that manages and tracks content and campaign performance and helps them to identify opportunities to improve results.

Who is responsible for creating, responding to messages and monitoring your social media activity?



The key to success is a test and learn approach using a broad mix of platforms to engage audiences.

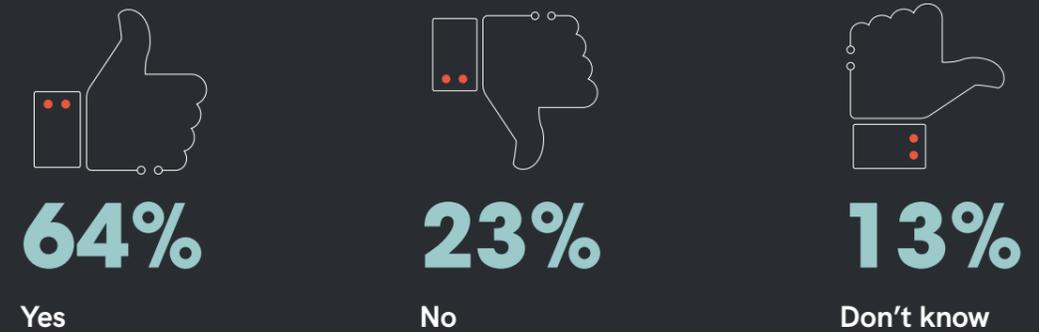
Customer relationship marketing

Most of our respondents use a CRM (64%), but a relatively high number don't have one.

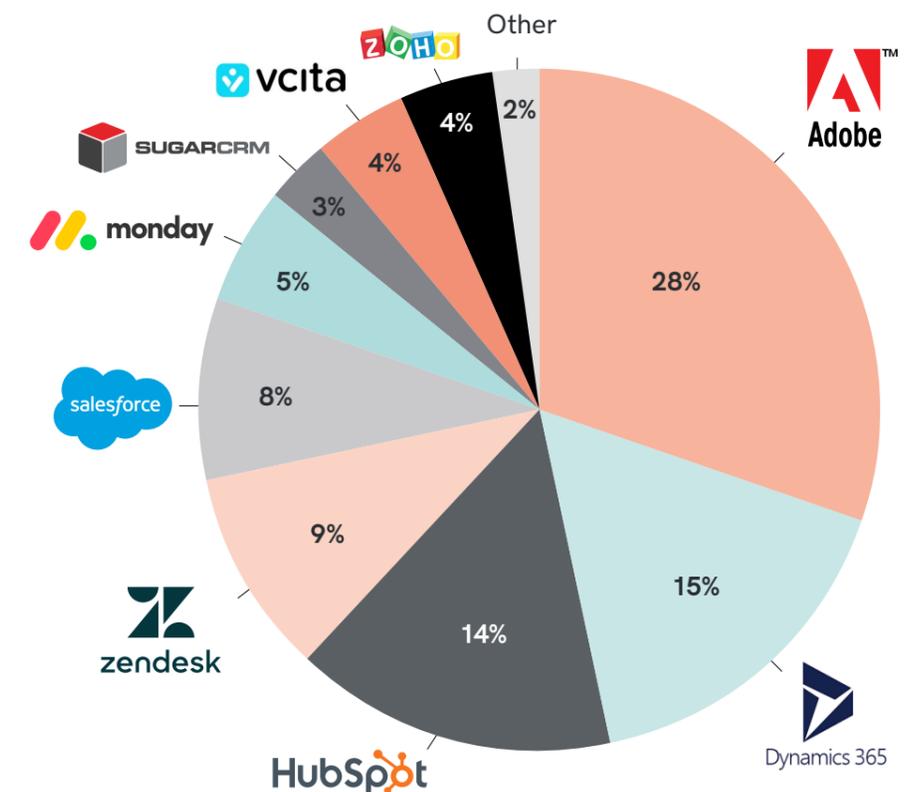
This begs the questions, how do they manage customer databases? How do they handle customer retention and relationship programmes?

Without the ability to segment a database, it's much harder to create targeted campaigns. In fact, without a CRM system, 79% of all leads never convert to sales* - they're incredibly important and must be used properly.

Does your company use software to manage customer relationships (CRM) and database marketing?



If yes, what CRM Software do you use?



*2017 report by Marketing Sherpa

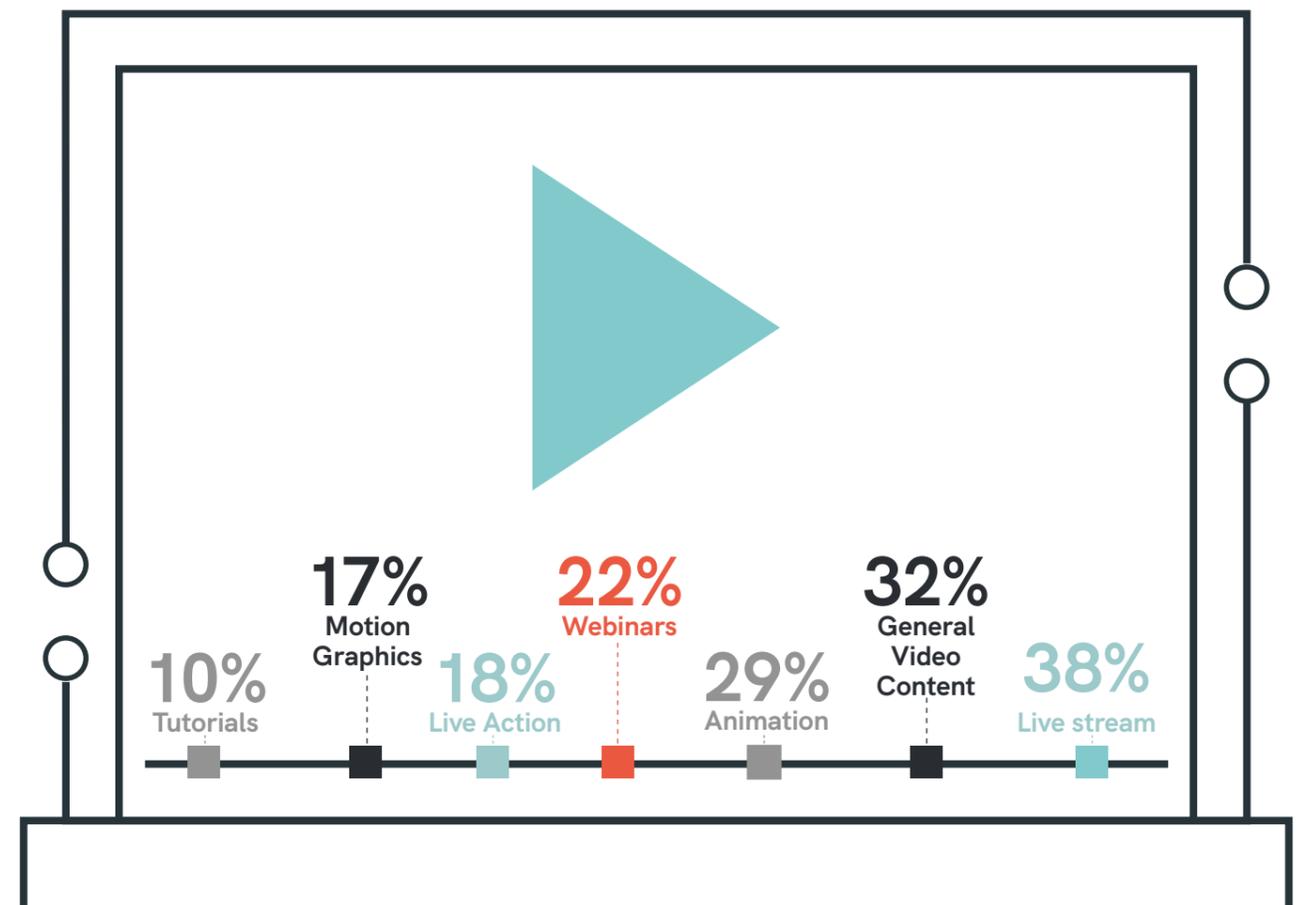
Video content

65% of respondents regularly create video content for communication channels.

It can easily be adapted to multiple channels and the rise of social media presents new and innovative ways to use key video assets.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the quantity of live stream content being created, internally and externally. At BECG, over the past 12 months we've seen an increase of 250% in the demand for live streams and the ability to share content via video.

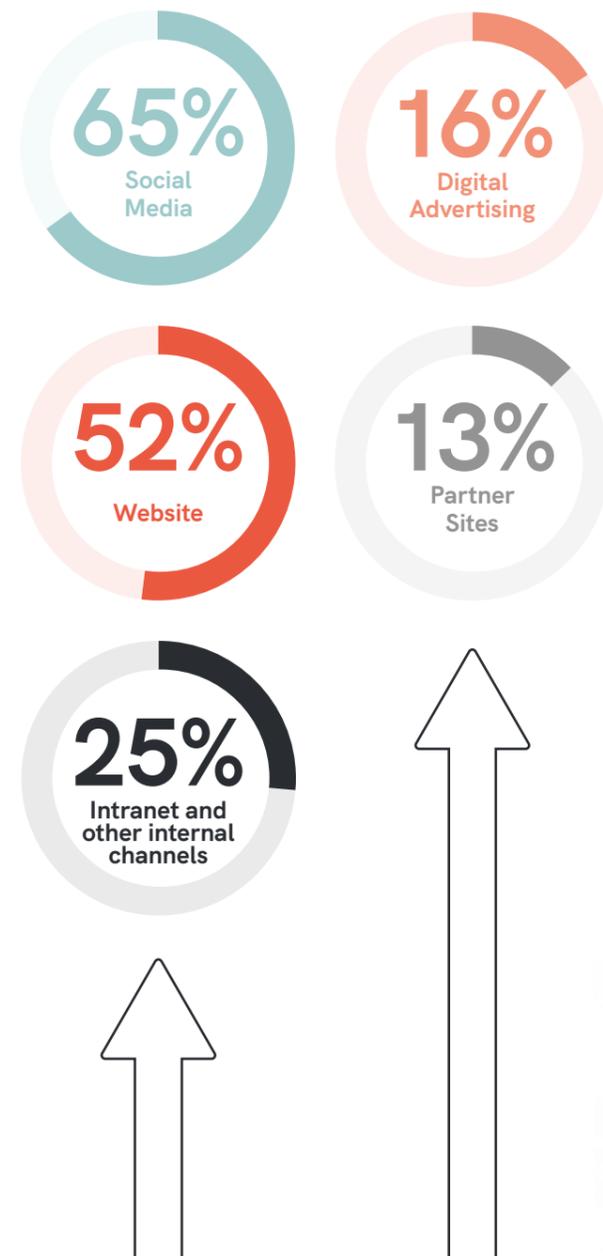
What kind of video content do you create?



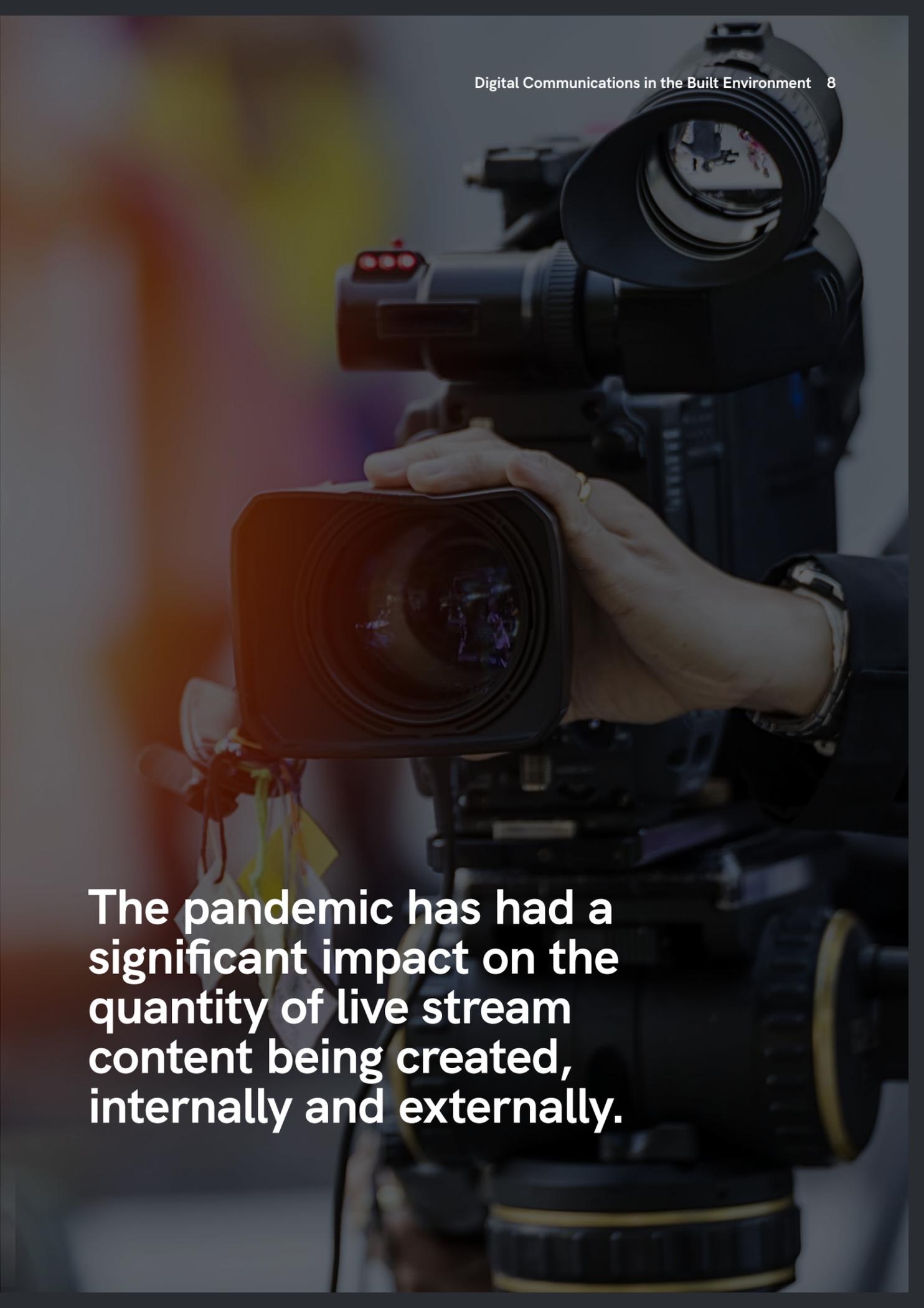
A new approach

Video content is highly engaging. But it's vital to derive value from video - using it in multiple channels and with different audiences. It's also important to consider the different metrics in play, so that results can be analysed effectively and ROI can be demonstrated.

What channels do you use to distribute video content



The pandemic has had a significant impact on the quantity of live stream content being created, internally and externally.



Budgets and focus

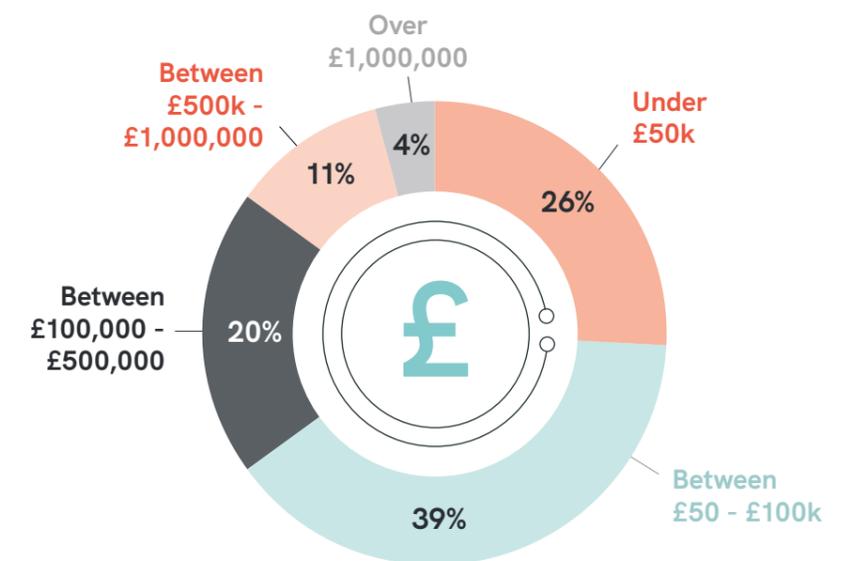
Budgets and focus

Digital spend has increased over the last 12 months, with close to 70% of our respondents saying their spending has increased either a bit or dramatically.

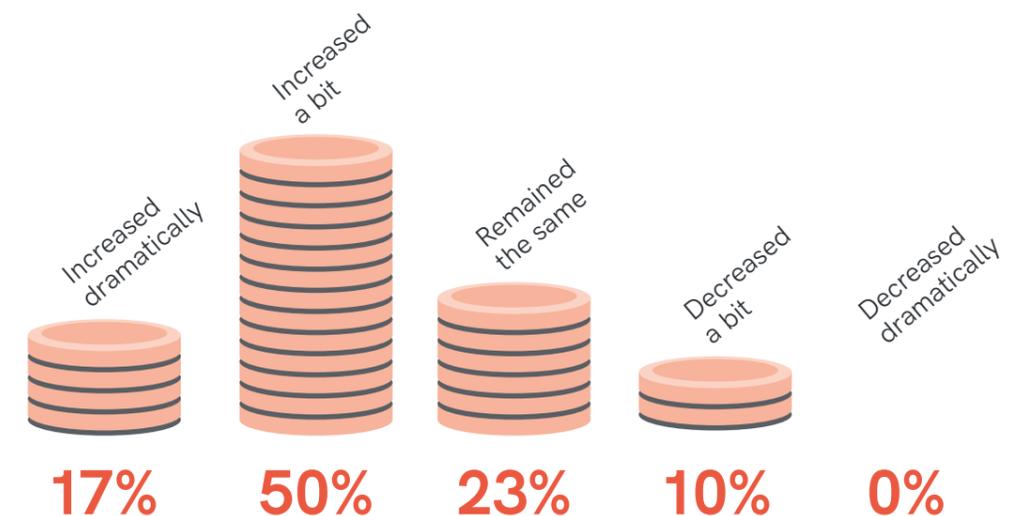
The pandemic has put the spotlight on digital comms. We believe this trend will extend over the next year, into the "new normal". Digital lets us manage comms and engagement effectively, and track ROI. With more respondents now adopting a digital-first approach it will be interesting to see how this fares against traditional budget line items over the next 12 months.

Will this trend continue or will companies revert back to previous pre-Covid spend?

How much of your organisation spend is on digital communications annually?



How has the amount of digital spend changed in the last 12 months?



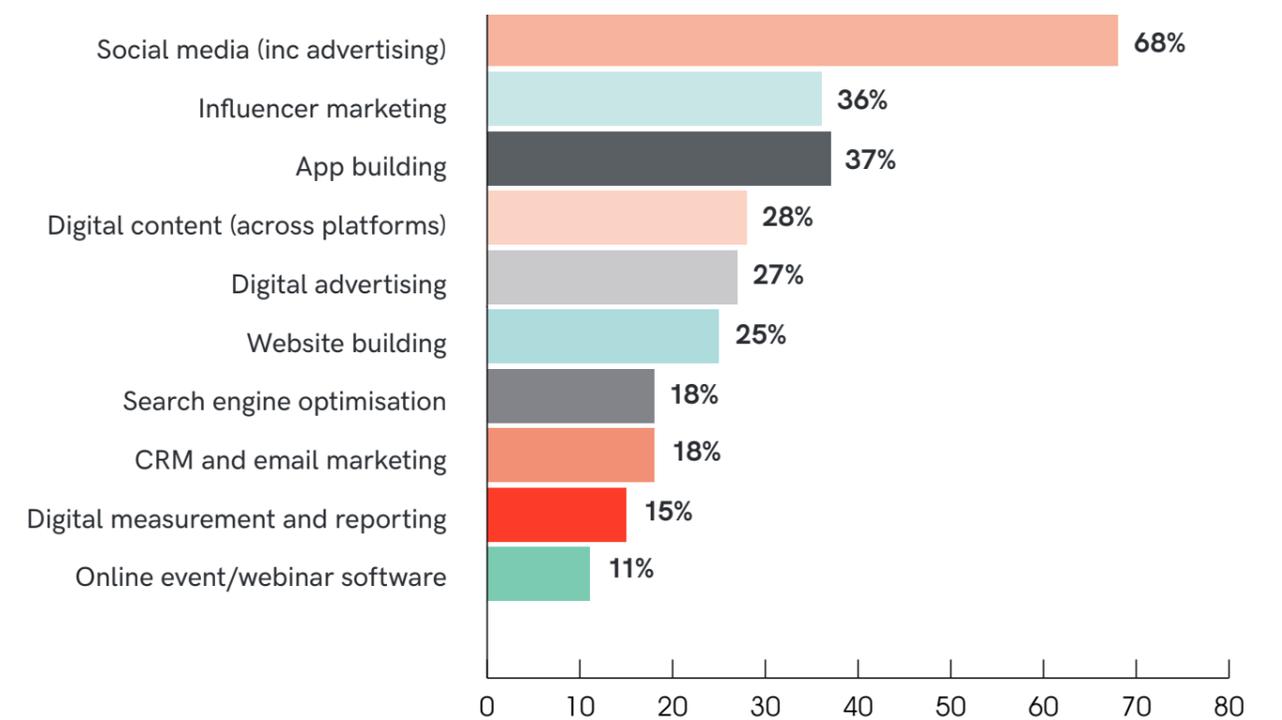
Looking ahead

The power of social

Social media is the stand-out area in which opportunities lie for companies working in the built environment – but it's essential to plan activity as an integrated part of a campaign. Spotlight campaigns may be useful, but they deliver isolated results.

Influencer marketing is becoming more important than ever before. Collaborating with influencers can help enhance reputations, build engagement with a wider audience and increase conversion.

Where do you think your organisation could improve its digital communications?



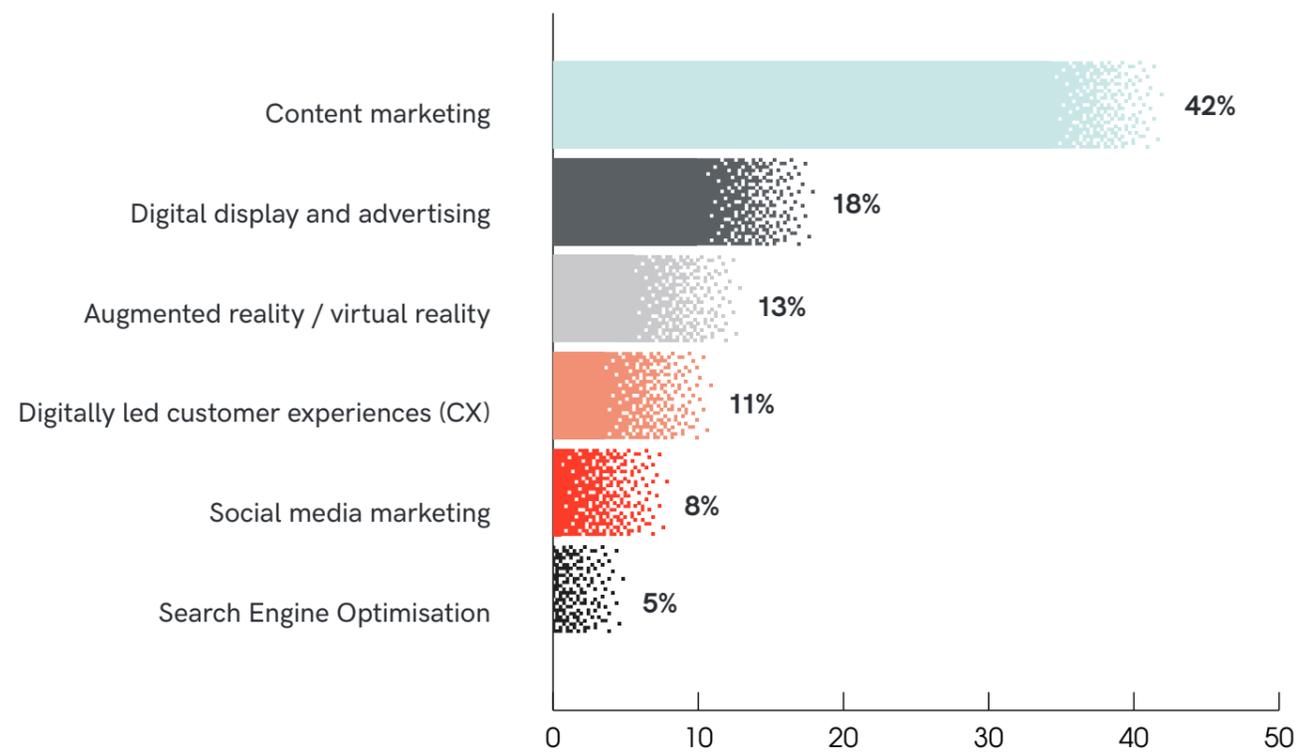
The opportunities ahead

We asked our respondents which activity they believed would have the biggest impact over the next year. Not surprisingly, 'content marketing' came out on top.

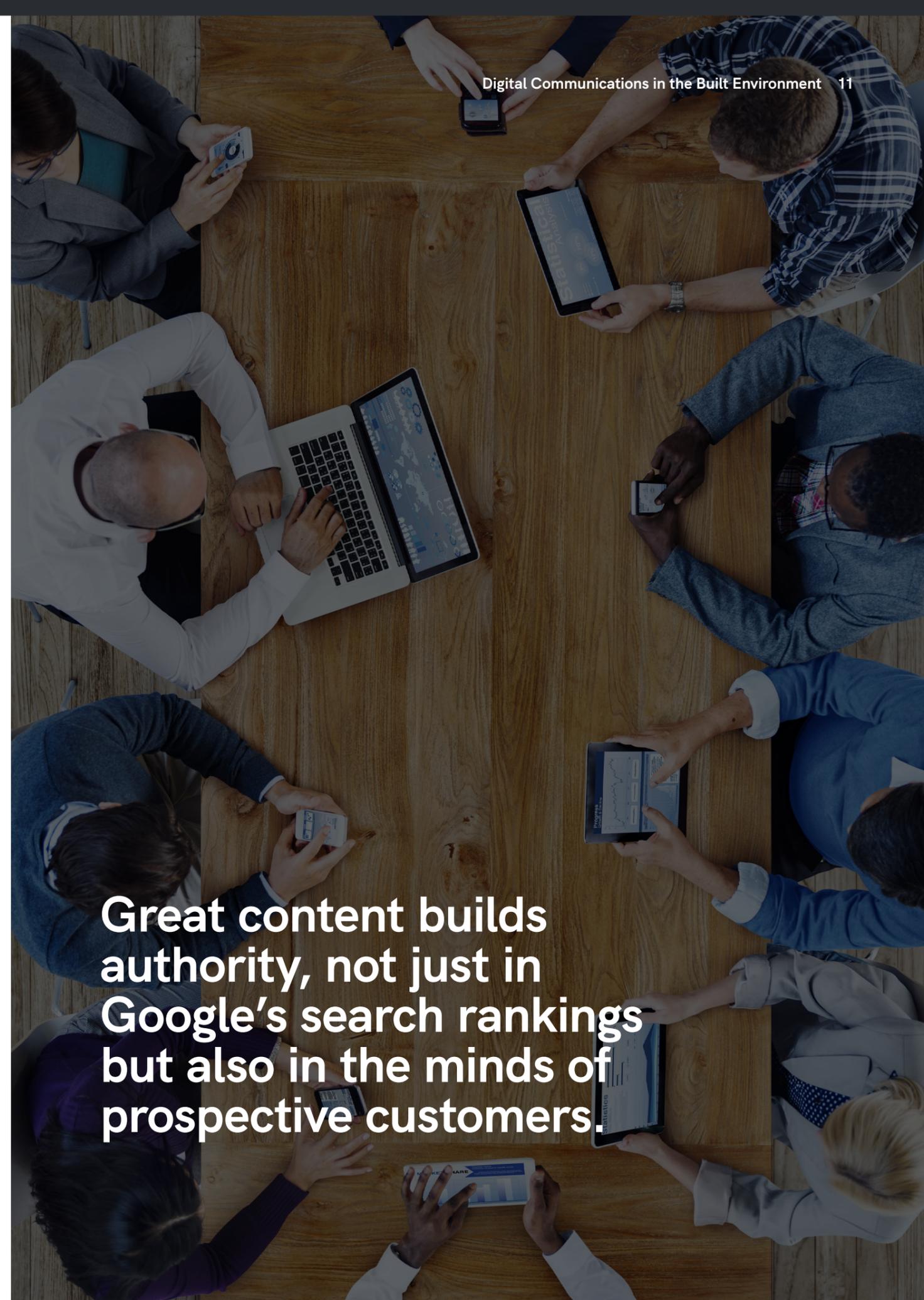
Content marketing has been a focus for over 20 years, with digital channels providing quick and easy distribution. Great content builds authority, not just in Google's search rankings but also in the minds of prospective customers.

It's essential to consider the wider plan, and how content plays a role in driving prospective customers and stakeholders to your website and other channels. We've seen some of the best successes via localised content, targeting specific messages to local audiences.

Select the single digital communications activity that you think will have the biggest impact in the built environment sector in 2021



Great content builds authority, not just in Google's search rankings but also in the minds of prospective customers.



Who took part?

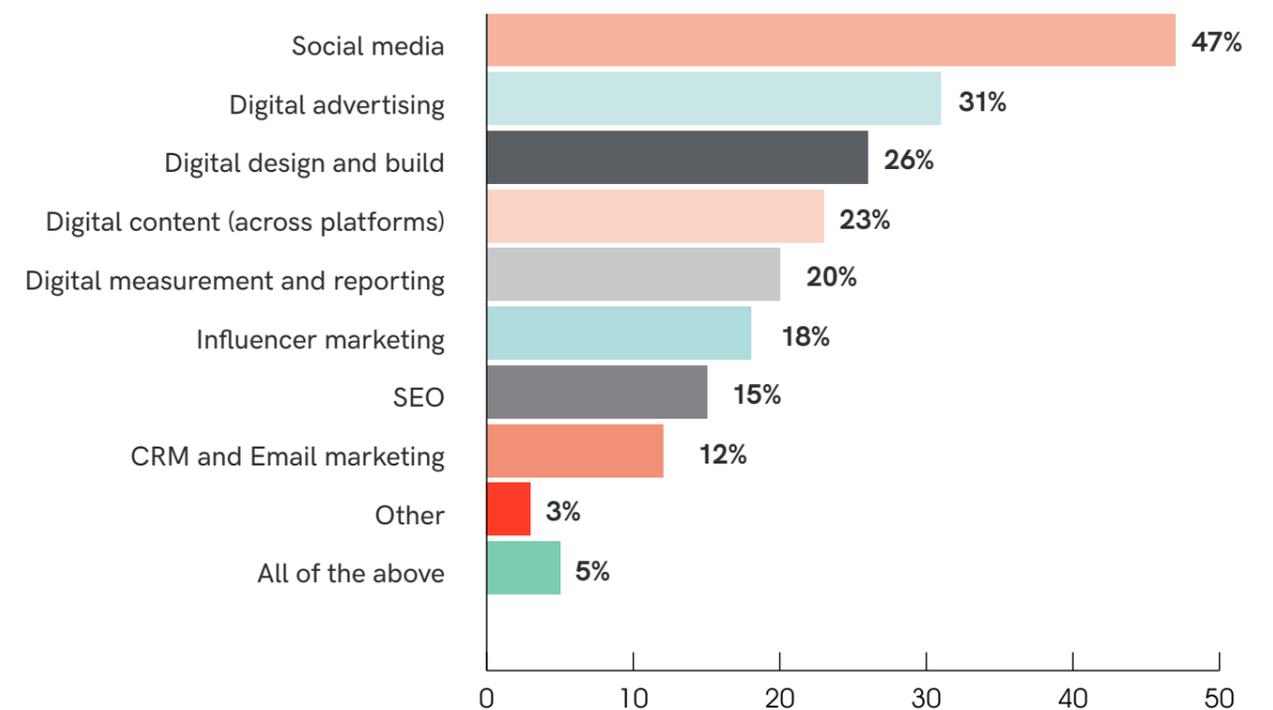
In January – February 2021, we surveyed digital communications specialists working in the built environment.

They worked across a variety of sectors with property being the most common. The respondents covered most key digital disciplines with social media and digital advertising being most common. The majority of responses were from marketing professionals working in SME companies which reflects the composition of the UK business population within which SME's account for 99.9%*.

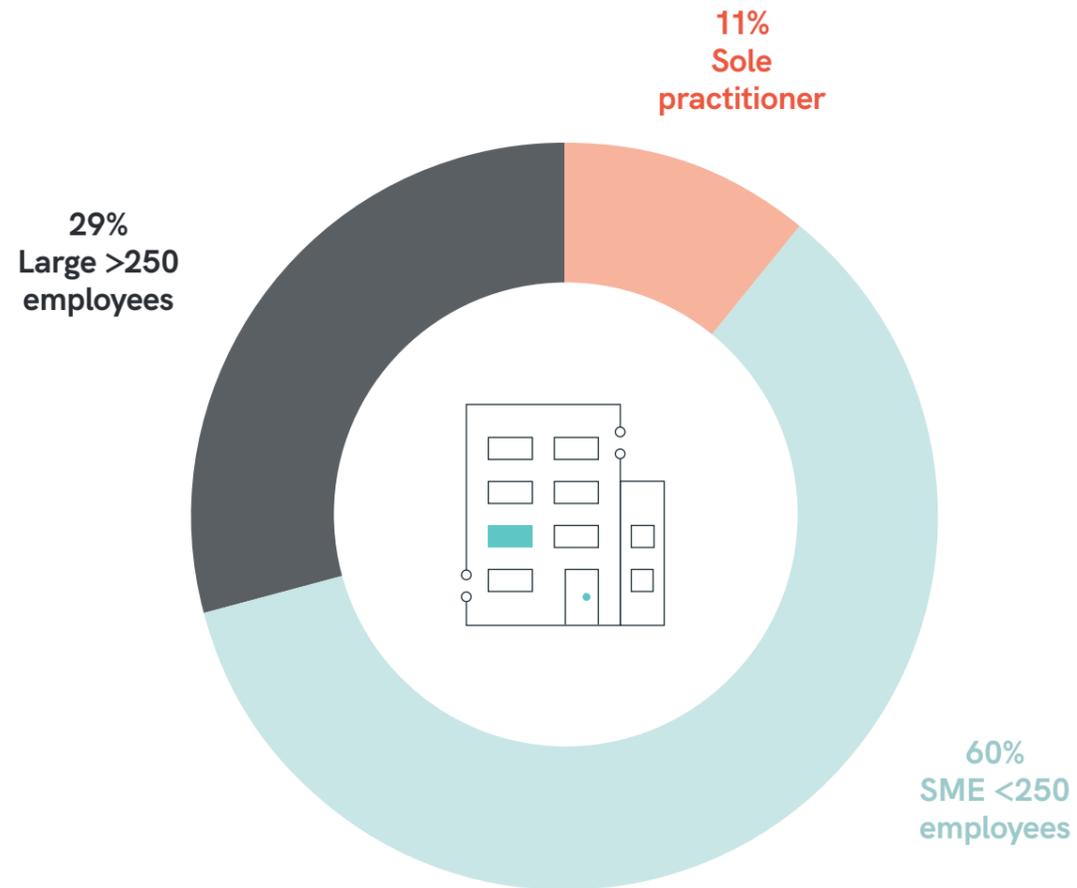
*<https://www.fsb.org.uk/uk-small-business-statistics>

Our Participants

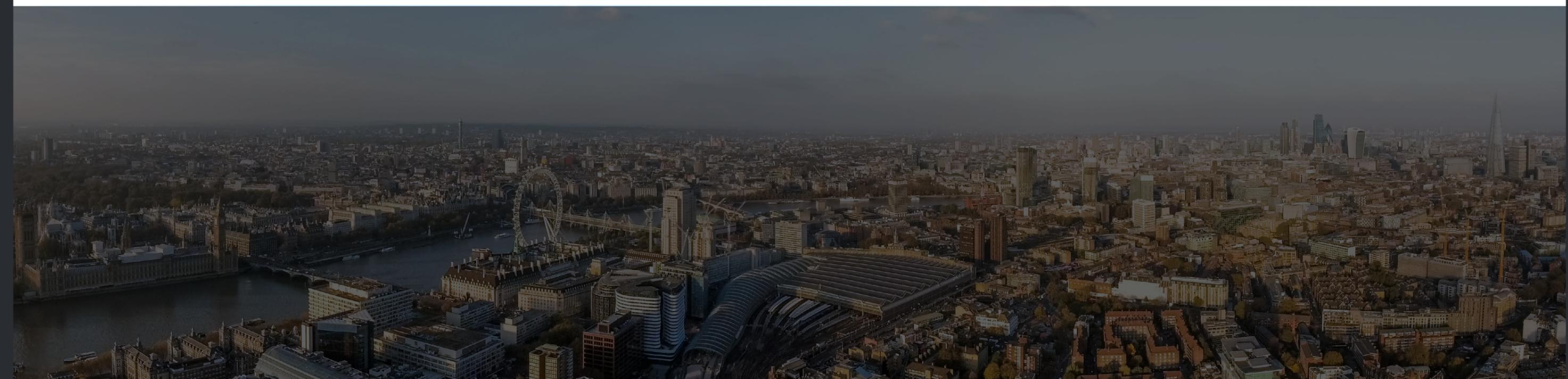
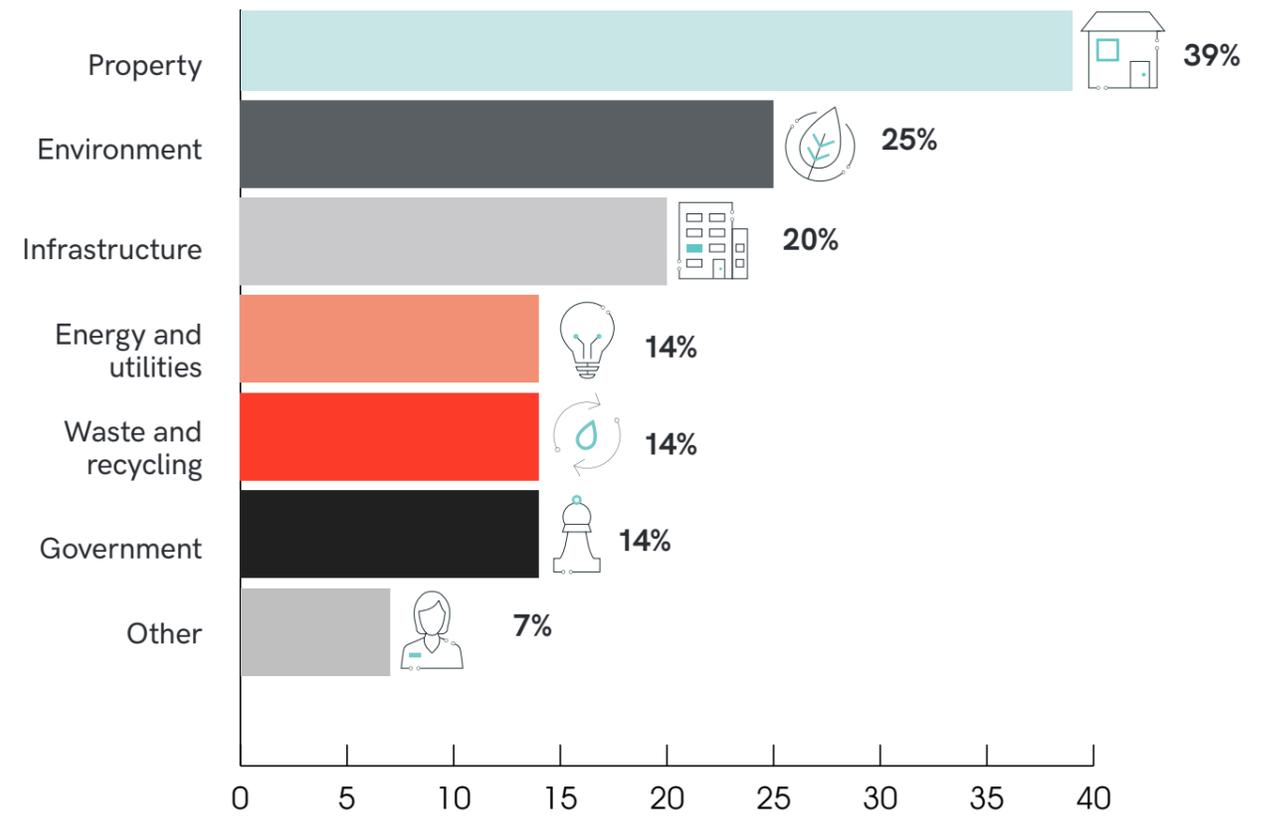
What digital disciplines do you work with in your role?



What size is your company?



What sector(s) in the built environment do you work in?



BECG

Building opportunities



Let's talk digital

When it comes to engaging with audiences online, we know how to inspire, engage and change minds through brilliant digital experiences.

Listening, designing, building, testing and iterating, we help companies to build the strongest foundations online.

Designing and building websites

Defining social strategies.

Delivering virtual consultations.

Creating digital campaigns.

Earning attention, reaching new audiences.

Digital expertise



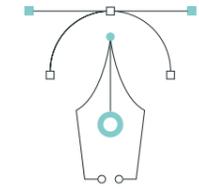
Strategy

Our integrated strategy team defines key insights, then develops digital propositions that deliver value for your brand, business and audience.



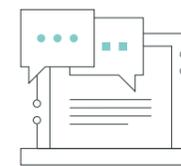
Experience

Our experience team works with the strategy team, finding out what your customers need, building a solution based on those needs.



Design

Our design team create websites, brand assets and digital ads for social and online advertising.



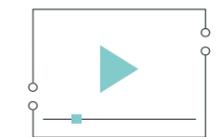
Content & Editorial

Our teams create content plans, optimise content, and craft editorial and SEO content for web and social media.



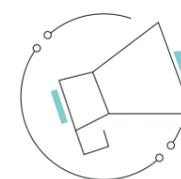
Build & Deploy

Our developers build websites, apps and offer virtual consultations to clients.



Video

Our award-winning video production team are experts in producing high quality and compelling video and animation.



Social media

Our team deliver all levels of support - from developing multi channel strategies to implementing and ongoing optimisation.



Community management

Via CrowdControlHQ we provide social media management platform, to help engage audiences, manage activity and analyse performance.





Top 3 Public Affairs



WINNER
Consultancy
of the year



CIM

MARKETING
EXCELLENCE
AWARDS 2020

FINALIST
AGENCY OF THE YEAR

If you'd like to find out more about our digital services please get in touch with Will Balme, Digital Client Delivery Lead at will.balme@becg.com or **020 3697 7637**

Take part in next year's survey at becg.com/comms-survey

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