

2021

State of Marketing to Engineers

| THE COVID-19 IMPACT |

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2021 State of Marketing to Engineers Report. This marks the fourth consecutive year GlobalSpec and TREW Marketing have partnered to better understand how engineers and related professionals find the information they need to make critical work-related decisions.

Each year, we've empathized with industrial marketer's need to justify their marketing spend. They've long needed to make informed decisions— including people, time and budget —to deliver maximum ROI. The market in 2020 has further underscored those needs.

To reflect current conditions, we have included questions about the coronavirus epidemic and its effect on engineers, as well as the emerging marketing tactic of virtual events.

This research report is designed to help you better understand the information needs of your target audience, giving you the critical insight needed to guide your marketing plans in 2021 and beyond.

About the Survey Respondents

A total of 1,361 engineers and technical professionals across the globe responded to our survey, making this our largest sample size of the past four years.

- Eighty-one percent of the respondents are 46 years old or older, up from fifty-two percent in our previous years' study. Thirty-seven percent are 56-65, followed by twenty-four percent at 46-55 years of age. The smallest portion of respondents are 35 and under at eight percent.
- Very large enterprises (over 1,000 employees) and very small businesses (under 20 employees) represent over half of our respondents. Responses come from a widely diverse set of industries, from engineering services, energy and aerospace/defense to automotive, semiconductor and materials.
- Similar to previous years, the most responses are from engineering leadership or management at thirty-three percent followed by engineers in a staff role at thirty-two percent.

Key Takeaways for Industrial Marketers

- **With trade shows cancelled, engineers are turning to supplier/vendor websites.** To replace a traditionally valuable method of learning about new trends and products, engineers are turning to supplier and vendor websites. Also popular are email/e-newsletters and online trade publications.
- **Engineers find value from virtual events, but even more so from webinars.** Eighty-percent of engineers find value from virtual events, but twice as many prefer webinars over virtual events. This supports prioritizing virtual event participation where technical conference session presentations are available.
- **Online content supports over 50% of the buyer's journey.** Our research findings have consistently shown that engineers rely upon online content heavily during the buying process, and this year was no exception. Sixty-two percent of respondents complete more than half of the buying process online, and when looking at engineers ages 45 and under, the online journey lengthens to over seventy percent.

How do we serve the technical buyer's needs with online content? Engineers are looking for deeply educational content, placing the most in value datasheets, case studies, white papers, and product demo videos.

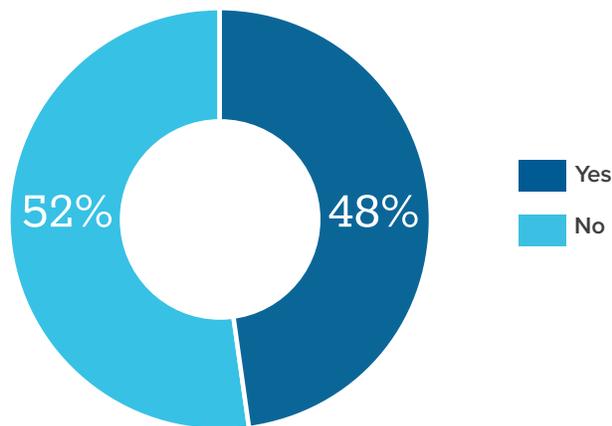
- **Engineers are willing to fill out forms for highly technical content.** White papers and CAD drawings are the most popular premium pieces of content. Video tutorials, webinars and product configurators are also desired by technical buyers. Our research shows that they are most likely to fill out contact information forms for these valuable resources.
- **Videos and podcasts grow in adoption.** Ninety-six percent of engineers watch videos weekly for work, and over half listen to podcasts for work regularly. Twice as much time is spent on watching video content than listening to podcasts.
- **Retargeting – part helpful, part risky.** Forty-four percent of engineers find personalized (targeted) ads helpful, while thirty percent find them creepy. Tread carefully, marketers.
- **Twitter – an engineer's wasteland?** Social media is primarily used for networking and keeping up with industry trends, with professional networks and LinkedIn by far preferred over other social channels. One of the least favored channels for professional use is Twitter. While we do recommend that your company have a presence on all major social media channels for branding and awareness, be wary of making too much investment in these channels.

Survey Findings

ENGINEERS & ONLINE EDUCATION

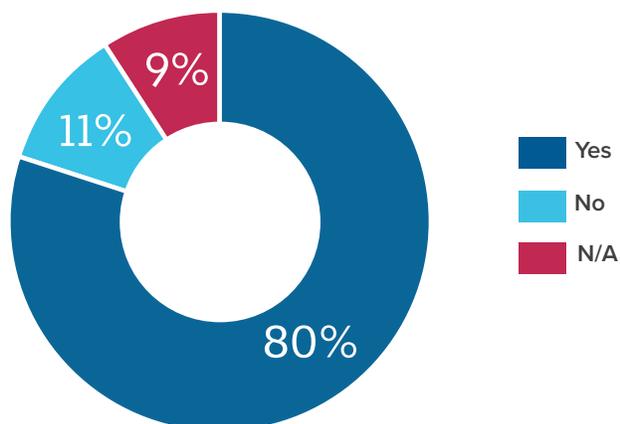
New for 2020, we asked engineers about online events. To date, a little less than half have participated in a virtual trade show or conference. We expect this to increase next year as the future of in-person gatherings remains unclear.

Have you ever participated in a virtual industry conference or trade show event?



For the engineers who have attended an online event, the overwhelming majority found the experience to be valuable. This should be encouraging to marketers that are looking to take their exhibits online.

Did you find the virtual event experience valuable?

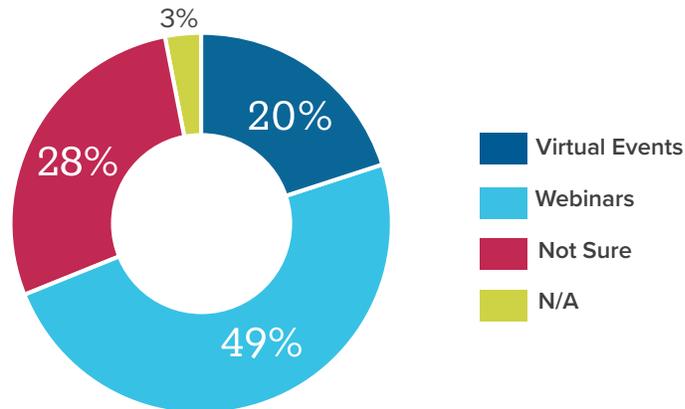


Survey Findings

ENGINEERS & ONLINE EDUCATION

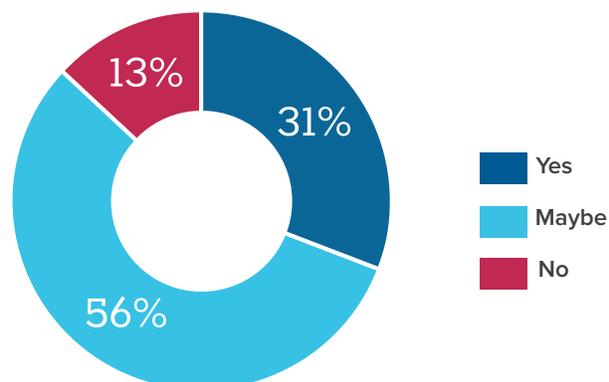
When asked which was more valuable, webinars have a slight advantage over virtual events. However, what really stands out is the number of engineers who aren't sure which they prefer. This makes sense, as virtual events are relatively new, at least in terms of how they function in 2020. Furthermore, many engineers may fail to see a large difference between the two formats, as both offer a dedicated space for consuming information on the latest industry trends, education, and new products. Overall, highly technical presentations tend to be favored over exhibitions – whether in person or virtual.

What would you find more valuable, virtual events or stand-alone webinars?



Again, we see a fair amount of uncertainty surrounding online events. While only twelve percent outright reject the notion of attending an online event, more than half say maybe. This could depend on the format of the event, the quality of the technical conference program, how it is structured, as well as the cost of attendance.

If your favorite in-person industry conference or trade show event is staged as a virtual event in 2021, are you likely to attend?



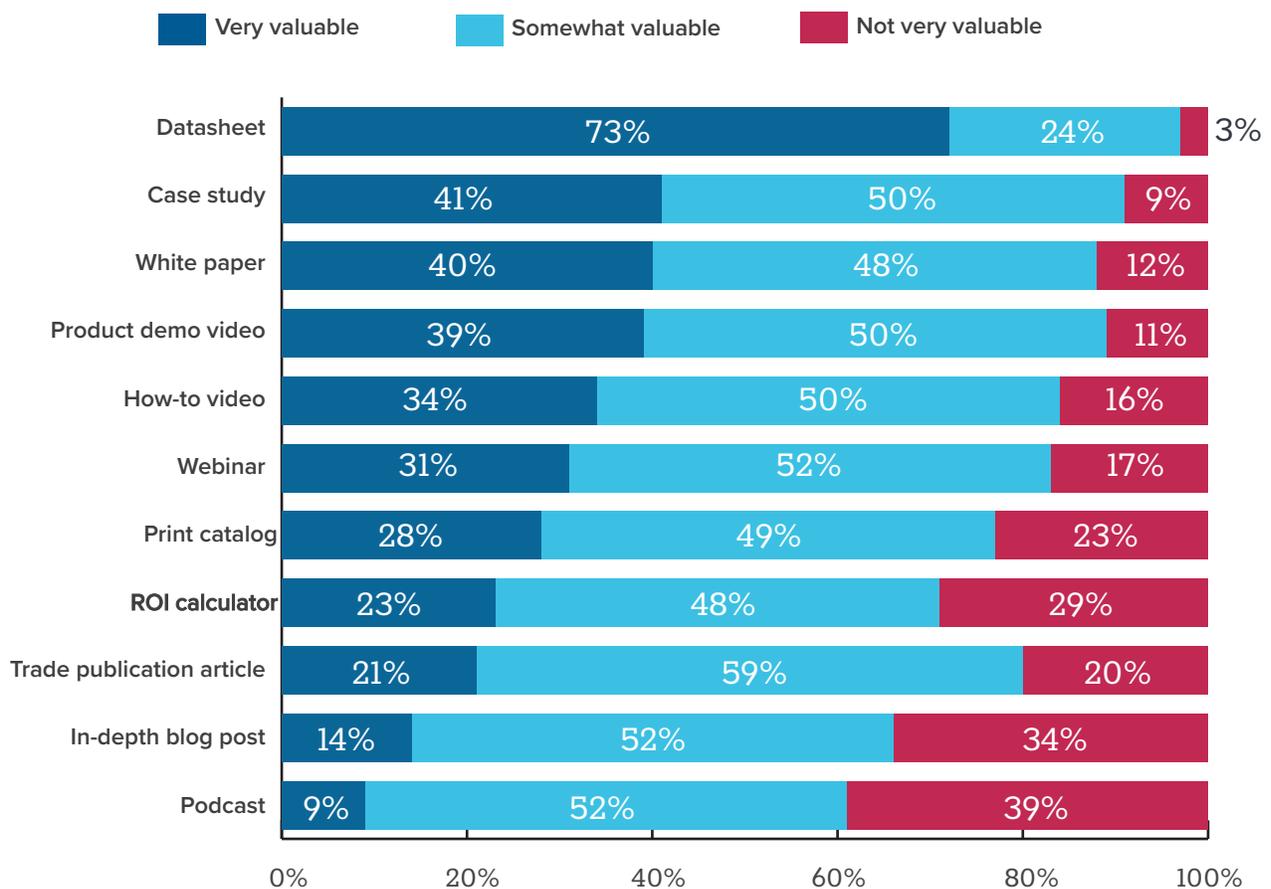
Survey Findings

VIDEOS, PODCASTS AND CONTENT PREFERENCES OF ENGINEERS

Engineers are hungry for information, and consume content in a variety of forms. Datasheets, case studies, white papers, and product demo videos top the list as the most valuable content types for this audience. This is in line with previous years' findings.

When looking at the “not very valuable” category, you’ll see that most content is appreciated by engineer buyers. Podcasts are the least valued of content types, but you’ll learn on the next pages that even this type of content is regularly consumed by a good portion of engineers.

How valuable are the following types of content when researching information to make a product or services purchase decision?

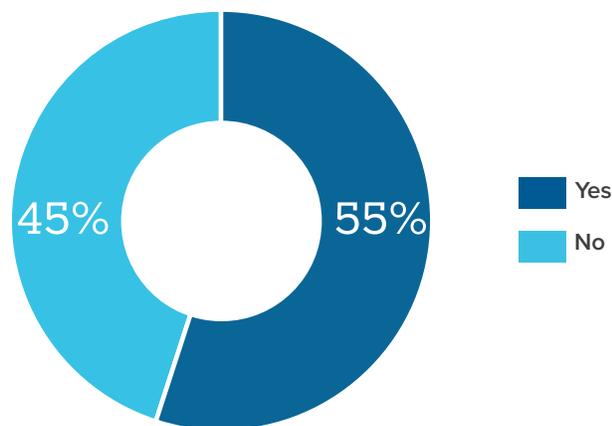


Survey Findings

VIDEOS, PODCASTS AND CONTENT PREFERENCES OF ENGINEERS

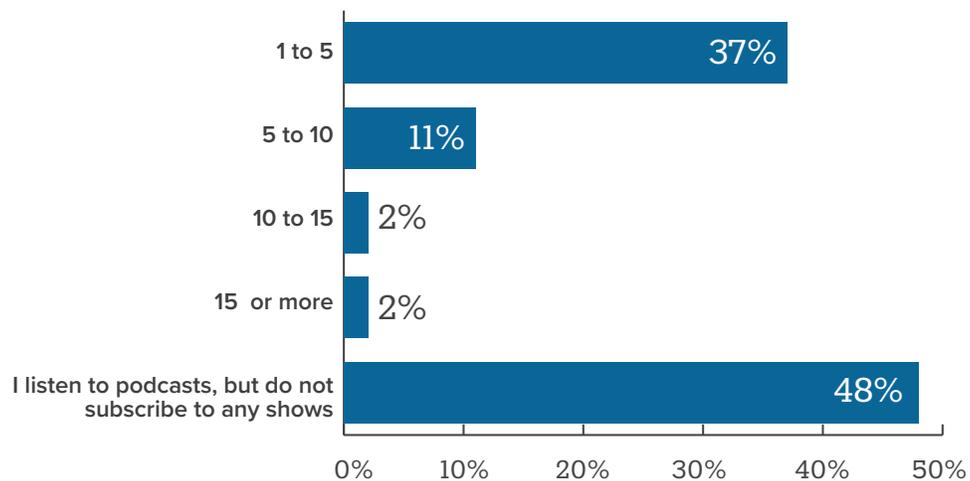
This year we added new questions about podcasts. Slightly over half of engineers listen to podcasts for work.

Do you listen to podcasts?



Out of the group of podcast listeners, half subscribe to podcast shows, whereas 48 percent of listeners have no subscriptions. Thirty-seven percent subscribe to 1-5 podcasts, and the number of subscriptions trickles downward to only four percent subscribing to 10 or more podcasts.

How many work-related podcasts do you subscribe to?

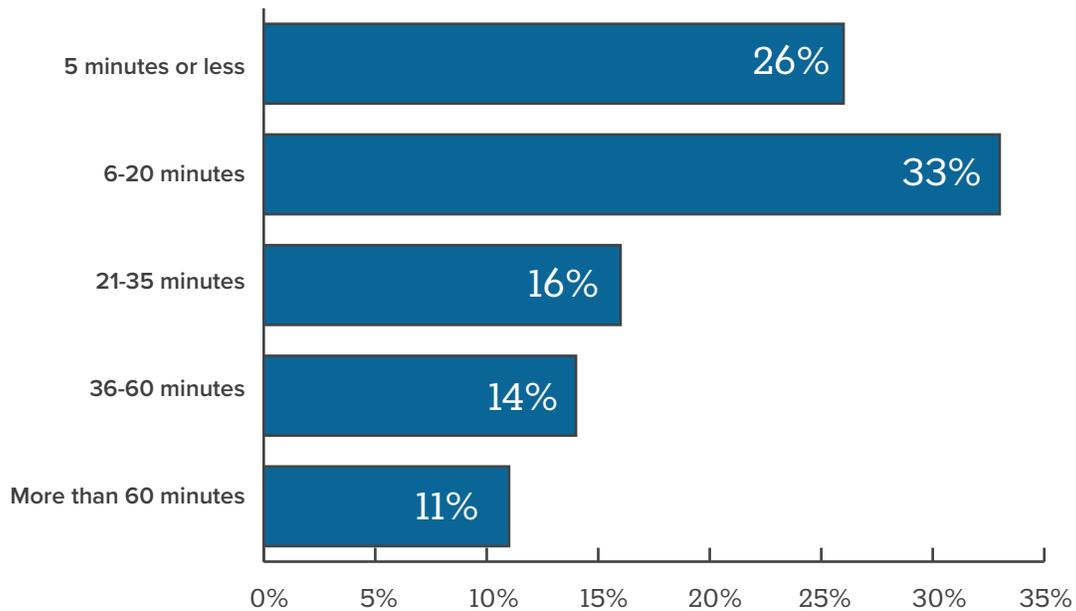


Survey Findings

VIDEOS, PODCASTS AND CONTENT PREFERENCES OF ENGINEERS

Out of those engineers that listen to podcasts, 33 percent listen for 6-20 minutes a week, followed by 26 that say they listen for 5 minutes or less. Given that the average podcast is 15-25 minutes per week, this data indicates that engineers are listening to one episode for work per week.

How many minutes a week do you spend listening to work-related podcasts?

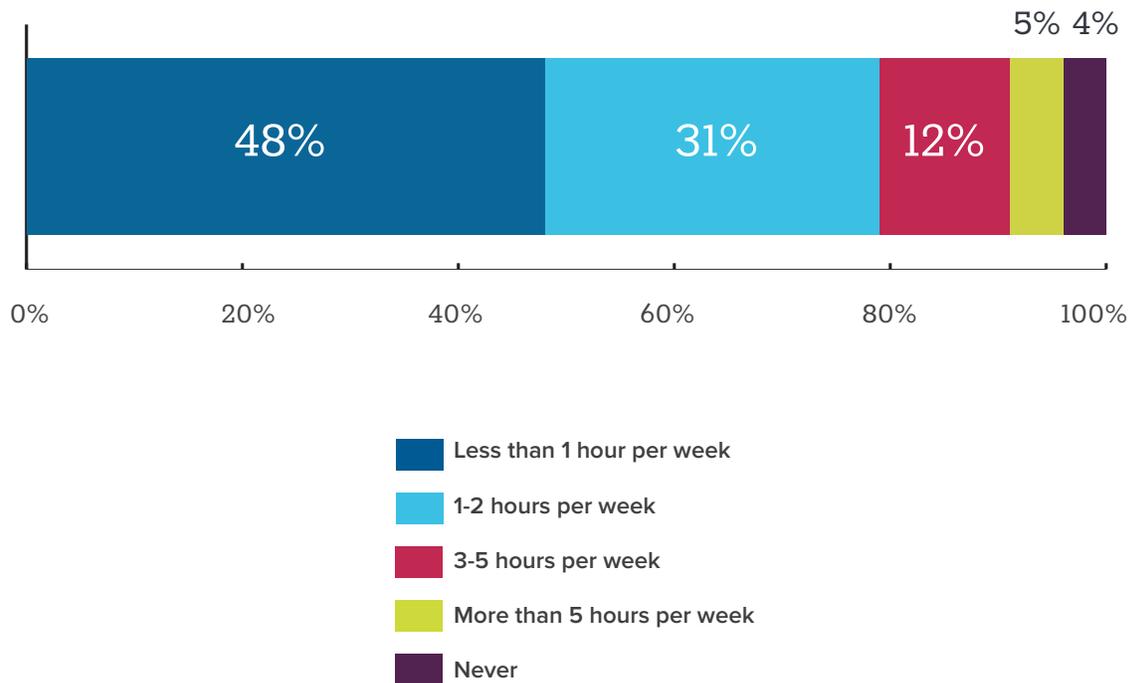


Survey Findings

VIDEOS, PODCASTS AND CONTENT PREFERENCES OF ENGINEERS

When it comes to video content, 96 percent of engineers watch some videos for work, up from 93 percent from the previous year. Forty-eight percent watch less than one hour, while another 48 percent watch for one hour or more.

How often do you watch videos for work?



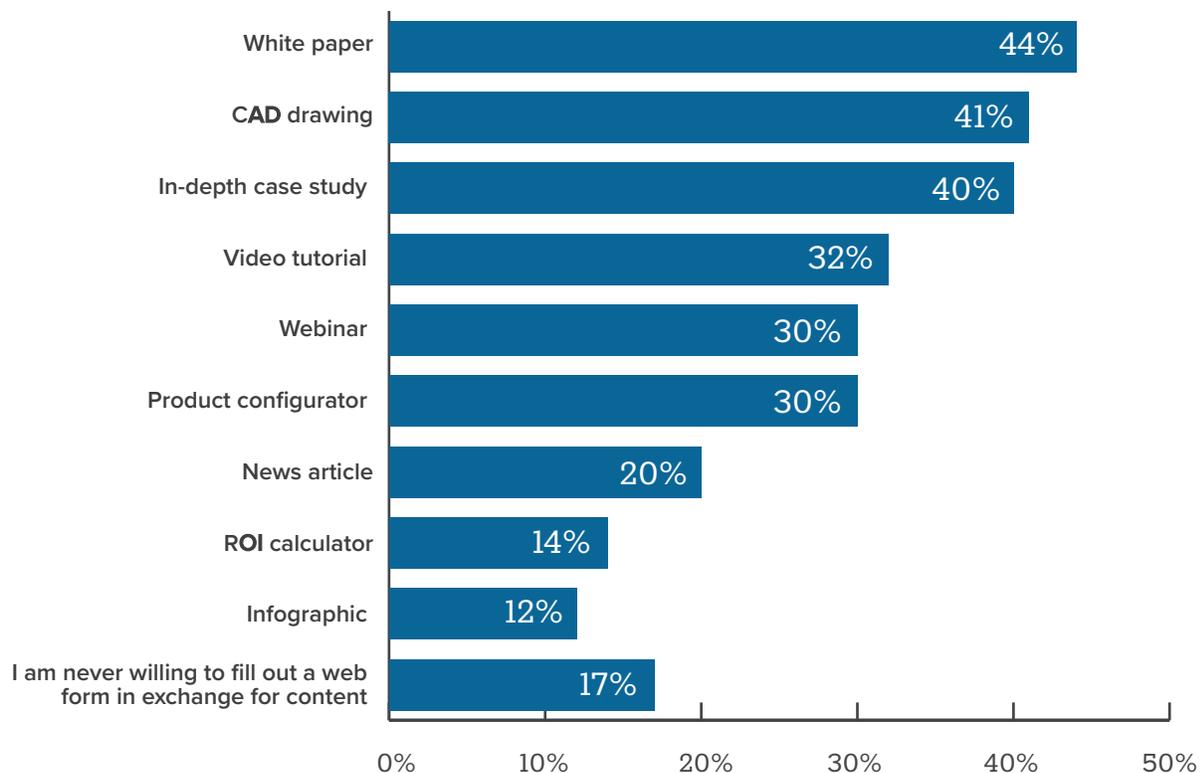
Survey Findings

VIDEOS, PODCASTS AND CONTENT PREFERENCES OF ENGINEERS

Gated content (content that requires the completion of a form) is a popular and effective way to generate leads on your website. The top three most valued content pieces remain the same from last year's findings, with white papers jumping ten percentage points to bump CAD drawings into a close second place. Video tutorials is a new response option this year, and comes in at thirty-two percent, just ahead of webinars and product configurators.

Engineers are least enticed to provide their contact information for ROI calculators and infographics. Only seventeen percent of engineers responded that they are never willing to fill out a web form in exchange for information.

When offered technical content, but asked first to complete a short form (e.g. name, email address) to download the material, which types of content are most likely to entice you to provide your information? (Check all that apply)



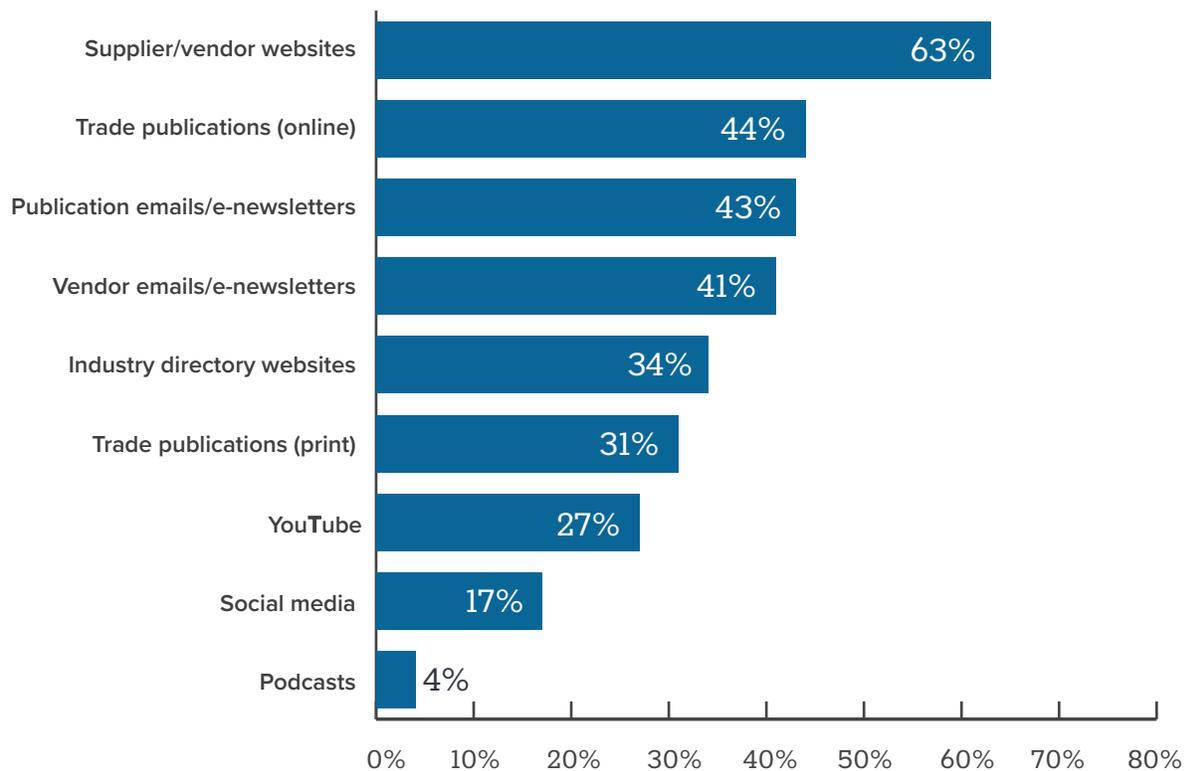
Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

With industry conferences and trade shows canceled, engineers are turning to their tried and true channels for information and networking opportunities. Supplier websites, e-newsletters, and industry websites have long been popular channels for engineers to turn to when seeking information.

In the wake of cancellations, an increasing number of engineers are turning to trade publications. This switch may be because these publications are often responsible for organizing in-person events, and engineers are looking for the news they normally would have gathered in person.

When industry conferences and trade show events were cancelled, where did you go for alternate information and/or networking opportunities? (Check all that apply)

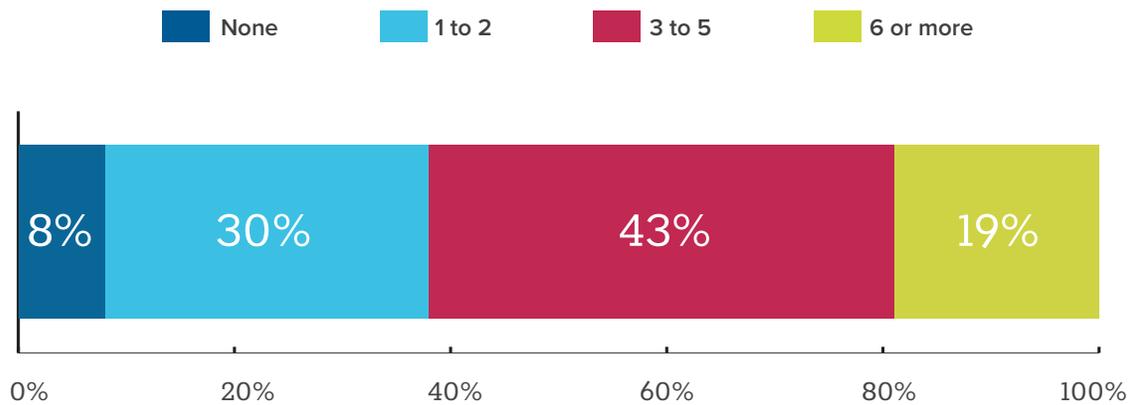


Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

Engineers' interest in e-newsletters remains consistent. As in past years, 92% of engineers subscribe to at least one newsletter. 43% of engineers subscribe to 3-5, and nearly one-fifth subscribe to 6 or more.

How many e-newsletters do you subscribe to?



Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

When broken out by age, we see that engineers 36-45 are most likely to subscribe to 6 or more newsletters, at nearly double the rate of their younger counterparts.

While the youngest engineers are most likely to subscribe to at least one newsletter, they seem to be more discerning in how many newsletters they're willing to receive.

How many e-newsletters do you subscribe to? (By age)

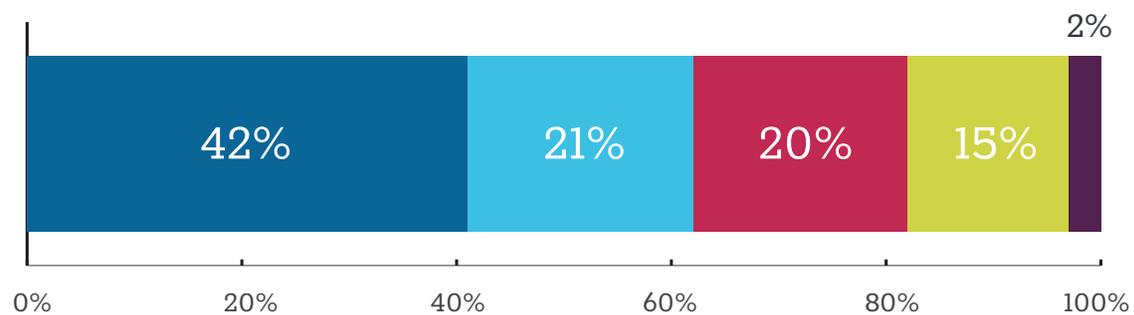


Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

Engineers are judicious when it comes to which emails deserve their full attention. Forty-two percent scan e-newsletters for intriguing subject lines and delete the rest. Twenty-one percent open most or all to scan for content. This underscores the need for marketers to focus both on relevant and attention-grabbing subject lines as well as valuable content.

How do you interact with e-newsletters in your inbox?



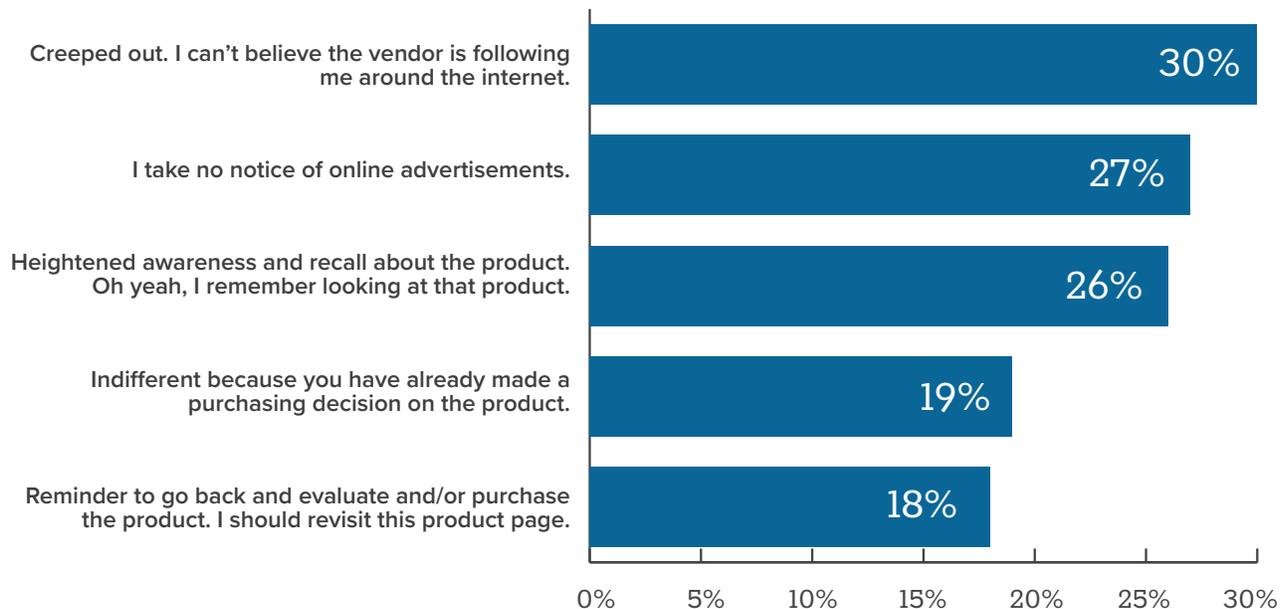
- I scan for subject lines that intrigue me and delete the rest
- I open most or all to scan for content and delete the rest
- I read every one for important information
- I save them to read at another time
- I delete most automatically

Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

While retargeted advertisements might not make marketers bat an eye, 30 percent of engineers are creeped out by them. However, nearly as many (26 percent) point to increased awareness and recall of the product, and 18 percent use it as a reminder to revisit the product page. To take full advantage of targeted ads without alienating customers, make sure your targeting is accurate but not overbearing. Additionally, review your lead nurturing process to ensure that these prospects aren't further creeped out by representatives that mentioned their browsing history.

Imagine when browsing online, you are served up a personalized advertisement for a product you recently viewed on a vendor website. What might your reaction be? (Check all that apply)

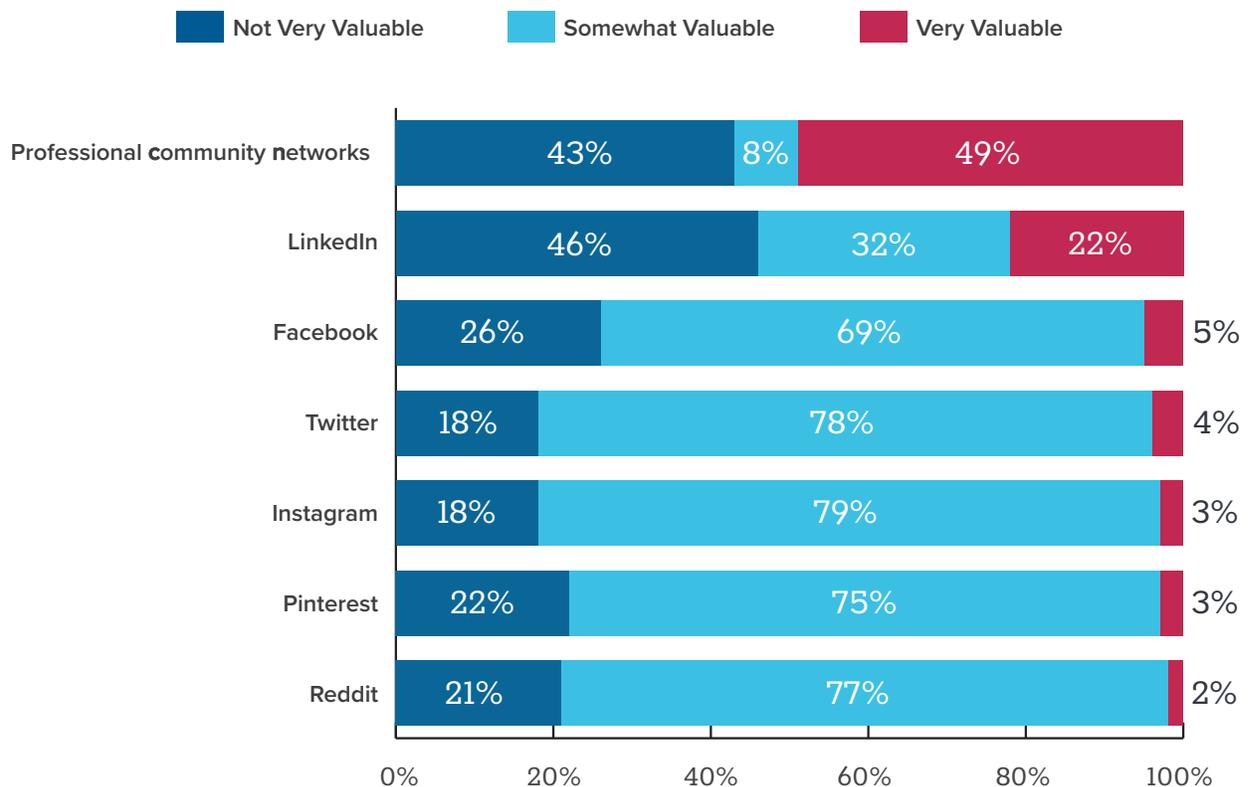


Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

Similar to past studies, engineers do not place much value in social media when it comes to their work. Professional community networks, such as those tied to a professional association, were seen as slightly more valuable, possibly because in-person networking has been difficult. Despite not associating social networks with their work, most engineers (and people in general) have social media accounts, and will be exposed to your brand as they browse in their free time.

How valuable are the following social media channels when seeking information on the latest engineering technologies, industry trends, and products?

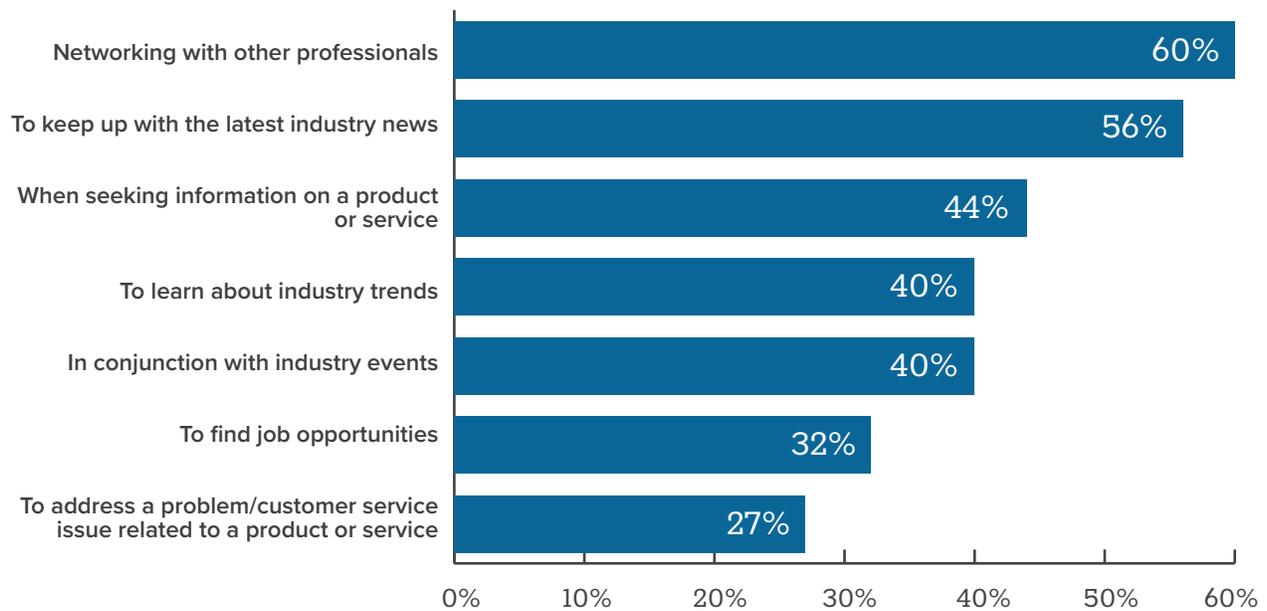


Survey Findings

WHERE ENGINEERS FIND INFORMATION

When engineers do use social media for business, it's most often in a networking capacity. However, more than half of engineers see social media as a source for industry news.

**In which situations are you likely to use social media platforms for business?
(Select the top 3)**

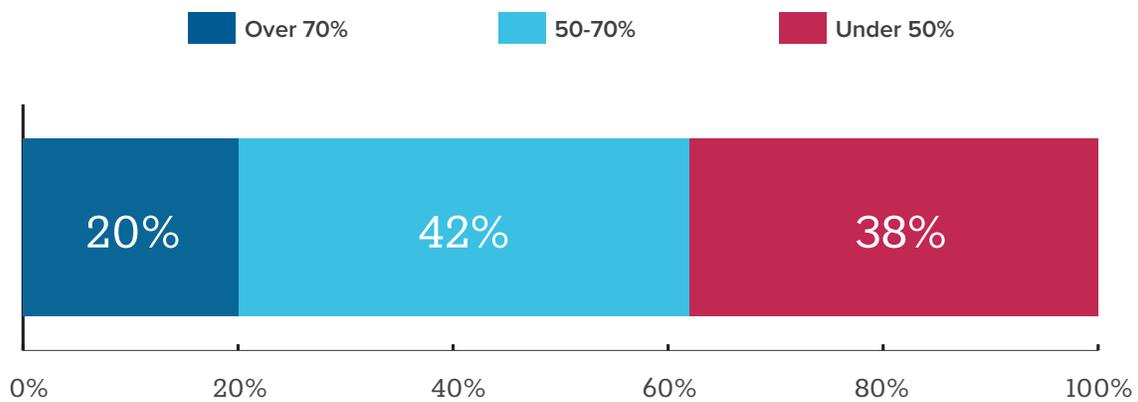


Survey Findings

ENGINEERS ENGAGEMENT WITH SALES

Engineers have moved online to complete much of the buying process. Sixty-two percent of respondents completed more than half of the buying process online, which falls in line with previous year's findings.

In thinking about the entire buying process for significant work purchases, from early research to the final purchase decision, how much of the process happens online before you choose to speak to someone at the company?

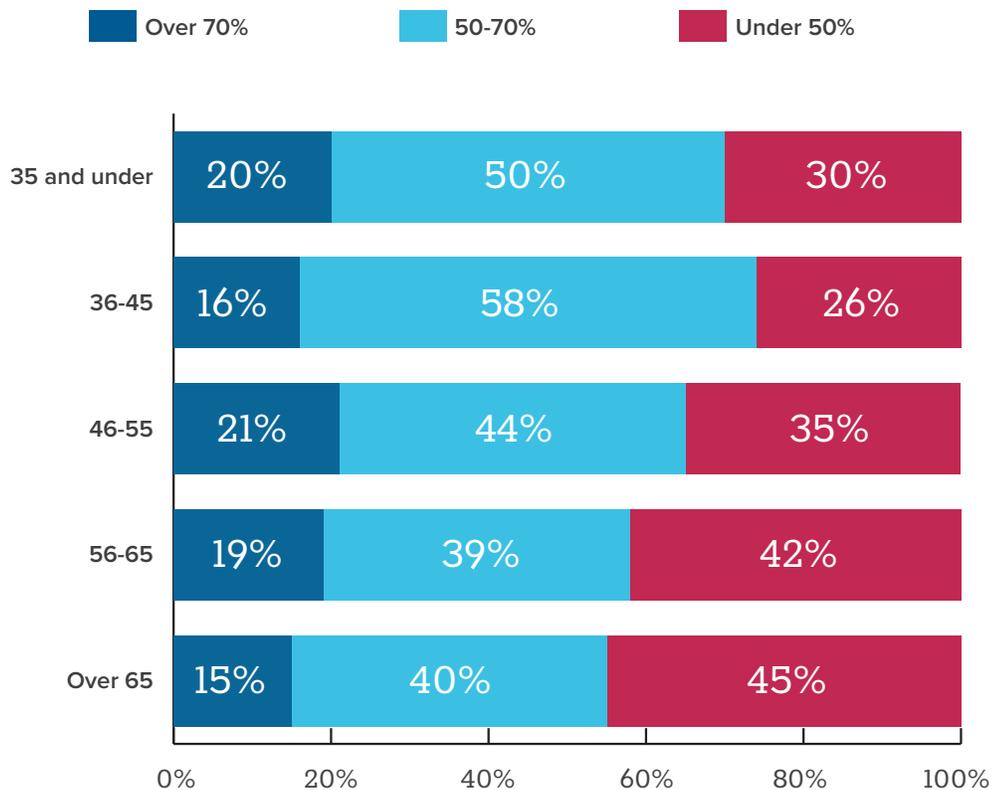


Survey Findings

ENGINEERS ENGAGEMENT WITH SALES

Engineers 45 and under spend even more time online before choosing to speak to someone at a company. 70 percent or more of people in these age groups report completing more than half of the buying process online.

In thinking about the entire buying process for significant work purchases, from early research to the final purchase decision, how much of the process happens online before you choose to speak to someone at the company?

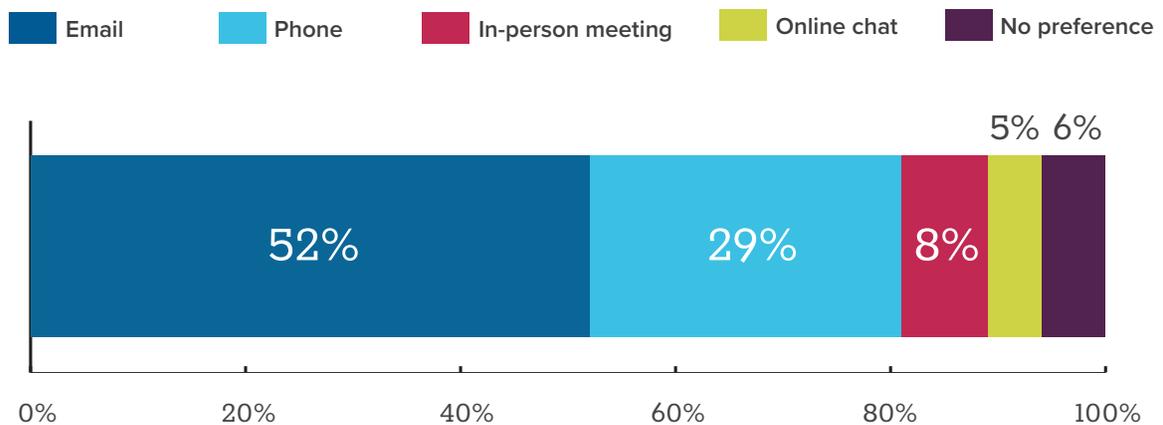


Survey Findings

ENGINEERS ENGAGEMENT WITH SALES

When engineers are ready to speak with a company, the majority prefer email over other forms of communication. Interest in online chat grew slightly over previous years, but adoption of this sales tool in the B2B engineering space remains low as a whole.

When you are ready to speak with a salesperson at a vendor company for the first time, which of the following is your preferred communication preference?



About GlobalSpec

GlobalSpec is a provider of data-driven industrial marketing solutions designed to help companies promote their products and grow their businesses.

Our audience of engineers and technical professionals relies on the GlobalSpec family of brands as a trusted resource for content, community, and engagement at all stages of the research, design, and purchasing process.

Our clients count on us to deliver deep industry intelligence, customized marketing programs, and measurable campaign performance.

For more information about GlobalSpec, visit www.globalspec.com/advertising.

About TREW Marketing

TREW Marketing, headquartered in Austin, Texas, is a full-service content marketing firm serving B2B companies in North America that target technical buyers. With deep experience in the embedded, measurement and automation, and plant management industries, TREW Marketing provides branding, marketing strategy, content development, and digital marketing services to help customers efficiently and effectively achieve business goals.

For more information, please visit www.trewmarketing.com.

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