



Worldwide Speakers **Digital Footprint** Survey 2018

An Objective Assessment of Speakers' Websites
and their Capacity to Fully Engage in 21st Century
Online Marketing and Social Media

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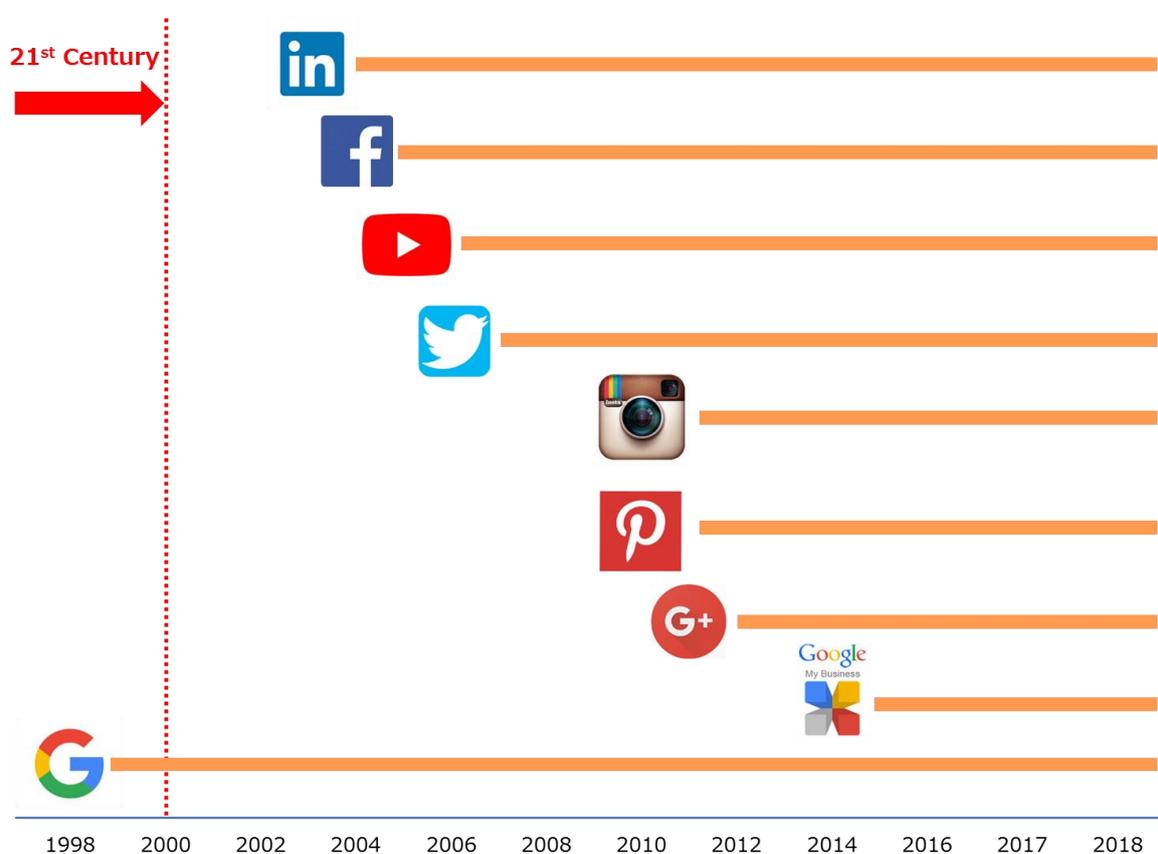
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The 21st Century Online Revolution

This year Google celebrates its 20th birthday. To many people this (still) seems incredibly young for a company that has permeated so many aspects of our everyday lives. We're used to the comfortable feeling of permanence generated by the big industrial names such as Ford, Shell, KLM, etc. And yet when set against the likes of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and all the other niche social media, Google seems a very mature organisation.

While one can point to large technology companies such as IBM, Apple, Adobe, HP and SAS as having been around for a while, all these companies existed in the pre-internet era. As incredible as it may seem, Google and Amazon are the only major players of the 'internet-dependent' cohort of businesses who were born in the 20th Century. While we increasingly consider Google and YouTube to be a single entity, even YouTube didn't start until 2005.



The speed with which the 'online-only' band has made its mark on society is way faster than that we typically associate with fellow humans. How many 20 year olds have had as much impact on the world as Google? How many 14 year olds have as many 'friends' as Facebook? How many 8 year olds have a stash of photos as big as Instagram's? I accept that such comparisons don't stand up to close scrutiny, but they well illustrate the point: *this compression of time is causing real pain for many companies.*

The pain seems to be mostly felt by two groups of people and there are similarities between these groups and the countless people who make a New Year's resolution to 'lose weight and get fit'.

- **Big on resources – poor on motivation**
People in this group have enough time on their hands to take extra exercise and they can afford to join the local gym. What they find difficult is getting their backside off the couch. Intellectually, they acknowledge the need, but they just don't get around to it. Companies in this category tend to be larger, most likely with distributed budgets or some other lack of focus on the online environment. They're rich enough to buy the necessary skill, but for one reason or another, there's always a higher priority to be dealt with first.
- **Big on motivation – poor on resources**
People in this group are ready to make a change. They mostly lack information (on healthy eating) and time (to take extra exercise). Companies in this category tend to be smaller, with clearly defined management responsibilities and tighter budgets. The people charged with doing the work are stressed out because they can't keep up with all the rapid technical changes (lack of information). They don't have the time to implement changes themselves, even if they understood what was required. They're scared of outsourcing work; their budgets are tight and they don't know enough to ask the right questions in what they recognise as a potentially critical area. They feel caught between a rock and a hard place.

Wrestling with all of this from a business perspective is incredibly challenging. Little seems to stand still long enough to provide a base upon which effective strategies can be built.

The Dilution of Trust

The Edelman Trust Barometer¹ provides excellent and extensive background reading. It's well worth combining your reading of this Digital Footprint Survey with a review of Edelman's latest findings. Their 2018 report has recently been published and there are some interesting comparisons with 2017's findings.

- Overall levels of distrust have not improved
- Our trust in platforms has dipped a little
- Platforms and content are blurred into one mass, called 'media'...
- ...and trust in 'media' is at an all time low
- Experts have gained credibility, with technical experts and successful entrepreneurs registering credibility levels of over 50%

The damaging and disrespectful antics of Logan Paul over the dawn of the New Year² were rightly heavily criticised from all quarters. At the time of writing, YouTube has yet to adequately explain how a video that so flagrantly disregarded its content guidelines could apparently bypass all internal checks end up on the list of the company's 'Top Ten' trending videos, worldwide.

Trust sites too have taken a hit. The freelance writer Oobah Butler pulled off quite a scam. He got his London restaurant³ to top place on TripAdvisor. Out of 18,000 restaurants in London, that's a very impressive performance. The only problem was, his restaurant didn't exist.

¹ <https://www.edelman.com/trust-barometer>

² If you're not familiar with the story, an internet search for "Logan Paul Japan video" will provide enough detail.

³ The Shed at Dulwich, <https://www.theshedatdulwich.com>

The whole escapade was a complete prank – and yet, he pulled it off. The video of how he gamed the system certainly makes more delicious viewing than his food does eating.

It's difficult to escape the conclusion that trust is under attack. Many members of the professional speaking associations affiliated to the Global Speakers Federation are experts in particular niches. Their businesses survive on the trust their clients place in them. For new clients that trust begins with how a speaker presents herself or himself online.

And that's why this report is important.

We're knocking on the front door of the third decade of the 21st Century. Speakers who get their online house in order stand to benefit from the increased levels of trust the Edelman Trust Barometer reports is being enjoyed by technical experts and successful entrepreneurs.

The Worldwide Speakers' Digital Footprint Survey

The survey was conducted on a European basis in February 2017. This 2018 edition has been expanded considerably to cover 600 websites in 11 countries across 3 continents.

The survey approach comprised a remote examination of publically available information related to the websites belonging to members of the following associations:

- PSA Holland
- PSA Belgium
- AFCP (France)
- GSA (Germany, Austria and Switzerland)
- PSA UK and Ireland
- NSA (USA)
- NSANZ (New Zealand)
- PSA (Australia)

The survey gauges the extent to which the professional speaking sector is equipped to contend with the challenges presented by an online 21st Century marketplace.

Metrics Measured by the Survey

The survey assessed websites on their implementations of the following:

- HTTPS
- Responsiveness
- FB pixel
- Twitter pixel
- Google Tag Manager
- Google Analytics
- Size of blog and update frequency

Survey Results

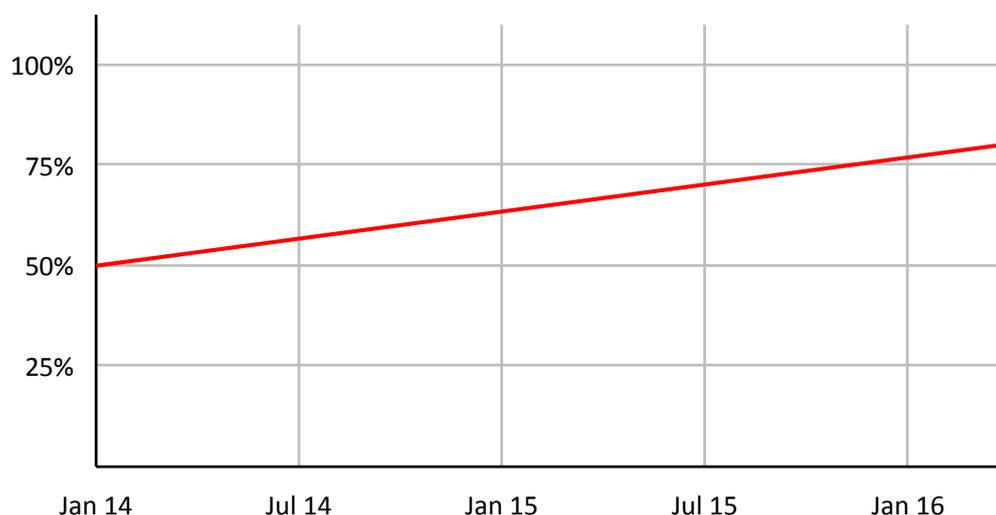
The survey highlighted the degree to which the overwhelming majority of speakers' websites are unable to take advantage of the latest developments in online marketing.

The following sections give the detailed analysis for each metric.

1. Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) Implementation

HTTPS is underpinned by Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption and has a number of security benefits. If a website lacks a securely encrypted connection with a visitor, it's possible for an intermediary to tap into the data being sent between the two (and even insert substitute data).

Four years ago, in January 2014 approximately 50% of the requests to Google's servers used encrypted connections. By January 2016 this number had risen to over 75% (excluding YouTube traffic).



Google encouraged this growth in 2014 by announcing that sites migrating to HTTPS would see a minor ranking boost. At the time Google said the minor boost carried “...less weight than other signals such as high quality content”. However, they also said that they “...may decide to strengthen...” the weighting in the future, as the company is keen to “...encourage all website owners to switch from HTTP to HTTPS to keep everyone safe on the web”.

In October 2016, Thao Tran (Google) spoke at the Share 16 conference and said;

“HTTPS and making sure your site is secure is an imperative at this point... Google will start marking things non-secure... The future of the web is a secure one, and so make sure people in your organisation understand HTTPS, and it should be on the road map.”

In October 2017 Google further announced;

“Beginning October 2017 Chrome will show the ‘Not Secure’ warning in two additional situations: when users enter data on an HTTP page, and on all HTTP pages visited in incognito mode.”

Google's direction of travel is absolutely clear and anyone wanting to have a serious web presence ought to heed attention.

The Impact of HTTP/2

Although Google's statements with respect to SSL are clear, the story is incomplete without a brief mention of HTTP/2 and its impact. HTTP/2 is a major amendment of the HTTP network protocol. Most major browsers had added HTTP/2 support by the end of 2015.

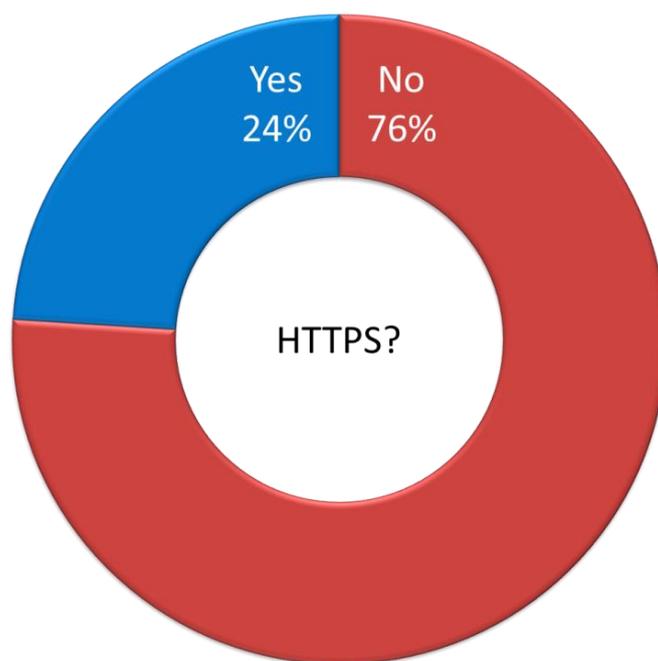
From a user perspective HTTP/2 promises decreased latency and improved web page load speeds. This will be welcomed by content providers wanting to deliver 'heavy' content, such as speaker show-reels, or other video content.

Although the HTTP/2 standard can be implemented for secure and unsecure connections, all practical implementations have required HTTPS as a prerequisite.

HTTPS Implementation – Result & Action Point

Despite all Google's clear messaging and encouragement to move to HTTPS, one still comes across many speakers who believe that they only need to implement HTTPS if they are transacting online sales via their website.

As the figure shows, the overwhelming majority of sites surveyed had not implemented HTTPS.



The crumb of good news in this disappointing result is that this year's result shows a significant improvement on the 2017 survey. However, as the survey populations are not directly comparable, one shouldn't read too much into this.

As a sector, speakers are lagging appreciably – to the detriment of their business credibility and web ranking.

Action summary: Speakers should implement HTTPS. They will benefit from both a **security** and **performance** perspective. It will boost their Google ranking and improve website load speed.

2. Responsive Website Implementation

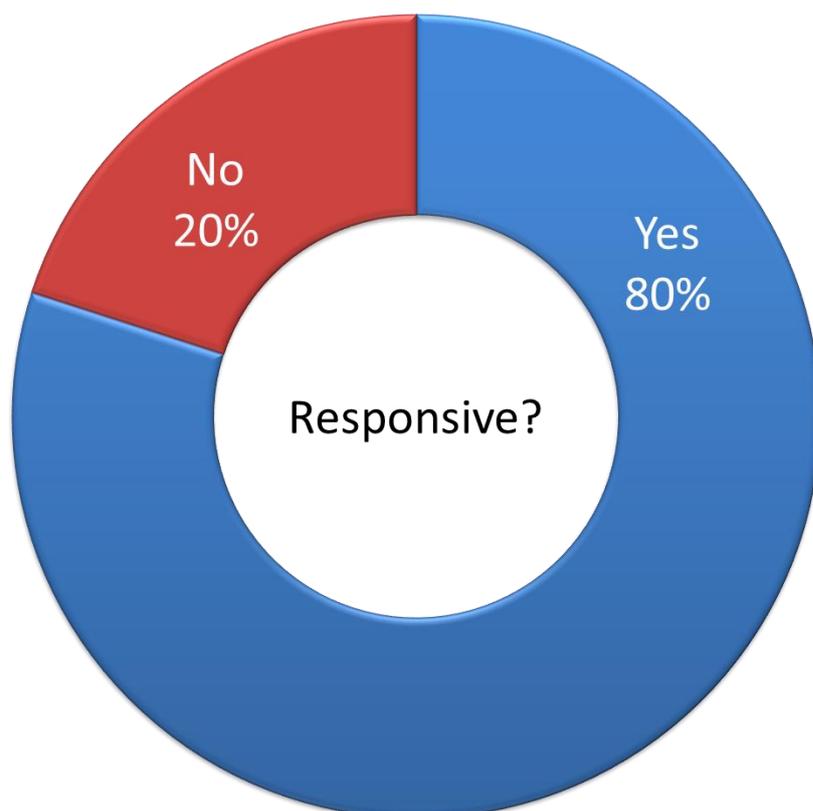
The wide adoption of mobile computing is fuelling the demand for websites that deliver a good user experience across all devices. According to Google, the majority of searches are now conducted from mobile devices and the company is keen to deliver a good service to these users.

In November 2016 Google revealed plans for its 'mobile-first' index. Although announced without much of a fanfare this was a highly significant announcement that quietly ended an era. Google has clearly signalled where they are investing their development dollars. The company is developing (and now testing) a new index based on the results from mobile devices.

The highly significant part of the announcement is that Google intends the new mobile index to be their primary index, moving forwards. It's the one that will be updated and maintained most frequently. In time, the original index (known as the 'desktop-first' index) will assume secondary importance.

Responsive Implementation – Result & Action Point

The chart shows a comfortable majority of speakers already have websites that deliver a good user experience, independent of device. However, a fifth of those surveyed represent a significant minority who stand to lose out as a result of Google's 'mobile-first' strategy.



This result shows only a small improvement over the 2017 survey. A possible explanation being that the 'No Camp' lack the funds (or time) to invest in a new, responsive website.

Action summary: Speakers should ensure their websites deliver a good user experience across all devices. Those that do will benefit from Google's 'mobile-first' strategy.

3. Facebook Pixel Implementation

Facebook is a powerful advertising platform. Along with that power comes an unavoidable degree of complexity. Used with reference to online advertising, the term 'pixel' refers to the use of a browser cookie to track website visitors. This allows them to be identified as members of a target audience – and advertised to at a later date). The pixel is a piece of JavaScript code placed on website pages.

Facebook used to have a separate *custom audience* pixel and a *conversion* pixel. In 2015 Facebook simplified their pixel environment by introducing the Facebook Pixel – one pixel to replace both the previous pixels. This new all-in-one pixel has **retargeting, optimisation and tracking**, allowing you to

- Build Custom Audiences from your website visitors (and use them for retargeting)
- Optimise your Facebook adverts
- Track conversions (and associate them with your adverts)

Retargeting is very powerful and its use is only really limited by your creativity. For example, you could do any of the following:

- Target Facebook adverts to people who have visited your website
- Target Facebook adverts to people who have visited an opt-in page and didn't opt-in
- Discover Facebook users (to target adverts at) who are similar to the people who have already visited your website

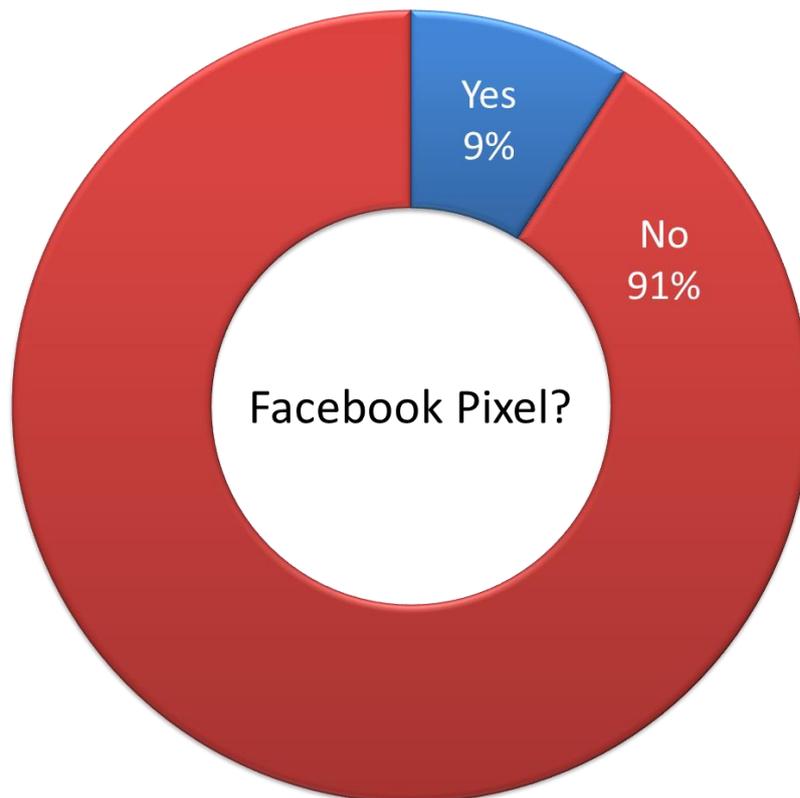
Here's an example of a more comprehensive use of the Facebook Pixel – and one that's closely linked to other metrics measured by the survey.

1. Produce high quality content for your website – blog articles, for example.
2. Include reference to additional relevant material, available via an opt-in process.
3. Make sure that the 'thank-you' page for that opt-in has the Facebook Pixel. In this case, you'll need to include a Standard Event code with the pixel. Don't be too concerned about that now, just follow the overall approach.
4. Create a retargeting audience for people visiting the article.
5. Setup a Facebook advertising campaign that drives people to the article.
6. Retarget people who visited your article with further offers requiring an opt-in. As they are already familiar with your content to some degree, there is a greater chance that they'll opt-in. This gives another chance at getting people to subscribe to your email list, having turned down the previous opportunity.

Clearly, the Facebook Pixel is powerful and therefore a valuable addition to a marketer's armoury. Given the activity of many speakers on social media – Facebook especially – you'd expect to see widespread adoption of the Facebook Pixel, if only for retargeting.

Facebook Pixel Implementation – Result & Action Point

The chart tells a sad tale. Despite the evident power of the Facebook Pixel, it's implemented by fewer than 10% of speakers. Over 90% of the speakers surveyed are losing valuable marketing traction by failing to get to grips with what Facebook has to offer.



Last year's survey showed a similarly disappointing result. When it comes to online marketing, the speaking sector has a long way to travel

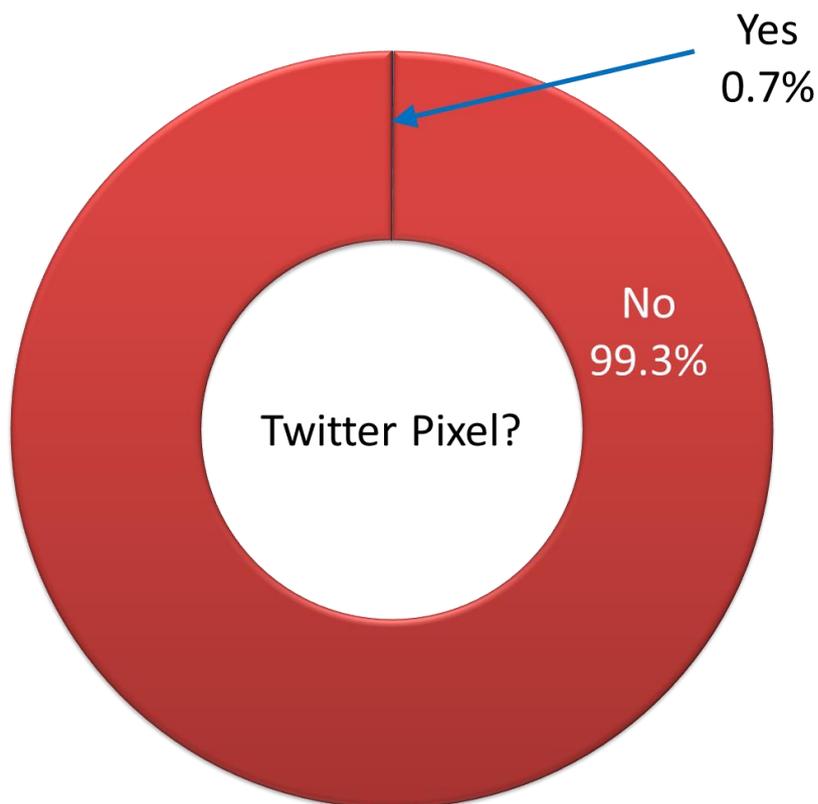
Action summary: Speakers should initially implement the Facebook Pixel for retargeting and move into more complex advertising later.

4. Twitter Pixel Implementation

The concept of pixels has been introduced in the previous chapter. For the purposes of brevity, I'll restrict the explanation of Twitter's pixel by simply saying it's Twitter's version of Facebook's pixel. There are differences, but none that need concern us at the level of this survey.

Twitter Pixel Implementation – Result & Action Point

The Twitter pixel is even less well used than Facebook's – to the extent that hardly any of the surveyed sites had the pixel installed.



The lack of take up of the Twitter pixel may result from Twitter's poorly developed advertising engine, when compared with Facebook's. The results from last year's survey are comparable to this year's.

Action summary: Many speakers are active users of Twitter. Those that are ought to invest time and effort in understanding how they could improve their marketing by implementing the Twitter pixel in parallel with their existing use of the platform.

5. Google Tag Manager and Analytics Implementation

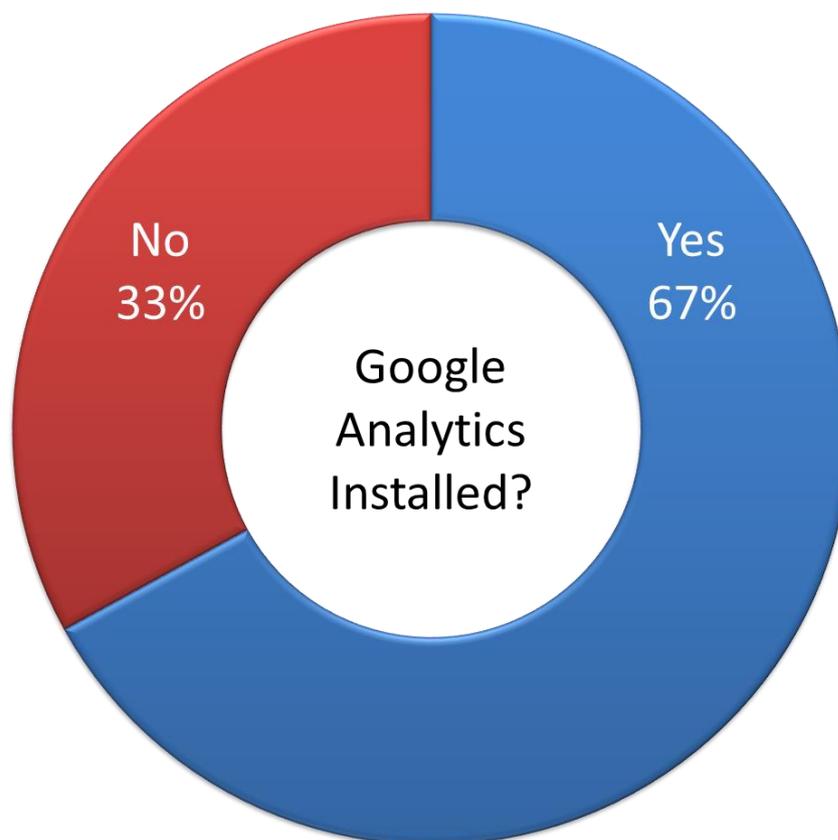
Google Analytics (GA) has reliably been collecting, processing and reporting on website visitors for many years. Google Tag Manager (GTM) is a much newer product, being launched by Google in 2012.

GA and GTM are very different products. Google Analytics is concerned with measuring website traffic. Google Tag Manager's job is to manage the increasing number of snippets of JavaScript that third parties want us to install on our websites. Google calls these snippets 'tags', hence the name 'tag manager'. GTM makes life easier by simplifying the process of adding JavaScript snippets to your website.

The phrase 'Google loves Google' is oft repeated and so it's no surprise that GTM and GA work together very well. Using GTM makes it easier to track website activity with the latest version of Google Analytics (called Universal Analytics). GTM can also manage the Facebook and Twitter pixels mentioned in the earlier chapters.

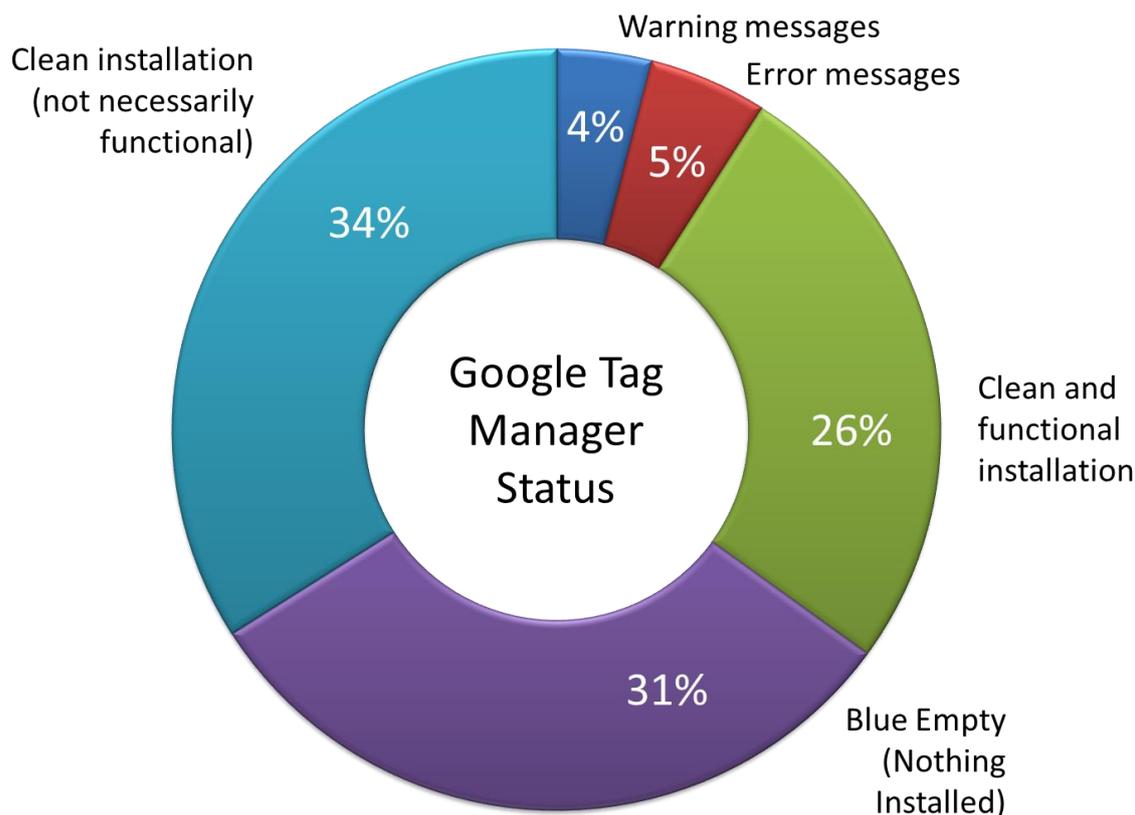
GTM & GA Implementation – Results & Action Point

Google Analytics is reasonably well represented across the surveyed sites, with approximately two thirds of speakers implementing it. However, this suggests that a third of the speakers surveyed are either not measuring their website traffic, or using some alternative – and most probably more time consuming alternative – such as analysing server log files.



In terms of an installed base, **Google Tag Manager** was well represented across the surveyed sites. However, despite its apparent adoption there is a significant percentage of users who aren't really using GTM to any real extent (even though they have it installed).

Only a quarter (26%) of the surveyed sites had a '*clean and functional implementation*'. All other implementations were suboptimal in some way or another, leaving much room for improvement.



Action summary: Speakers should first ensure their implementations of GTM and GA are working cleanly. Having done this, GTM provides a more straightforward path for those wanting to implement Facebook or Twitter pixels.

6. Size of Blog

Being at the top of Google's organic search results remains an important target for many organisations. For businesses driven by ideas or the application of knowledge – the typical speaker business – blogging has become increasingly important. Blogging offers an exceptional platform for sharing ideas, knowledge and opinions. It allows speakers to lay out their stall and demonstrate the very things for which they are booked.

It's true that potential clients could find your website by typing your name into Google, but you'd already have to be on their radar for them to do that, so you're not necessarily attracting additional (new) traffic.

Every blog post you publish adds an additional indexed page to your website. If you research your posts well and consistently implement some elementary search engine optimisation, you'll be continually adding to the value of your website.

Social media plays an increasingly important role in providing social 'glue' to an ever more complex internet. Your prospects and clients are out there somewhere – so you need to be there too. Your blog posts can be shared across social media, which helps expose your businesses to new audiences. It's true that organic social media posts will be shared across smaller audiences. This is hardly 'new news', Facebook has been heading in this direction for many years. If businesses want to play, then have to be prepared to pay. Speakers will have to significantly up

their game in making economically efficient use of pay-per-click routes to market, such as Google AdWords or Facebook Ads.

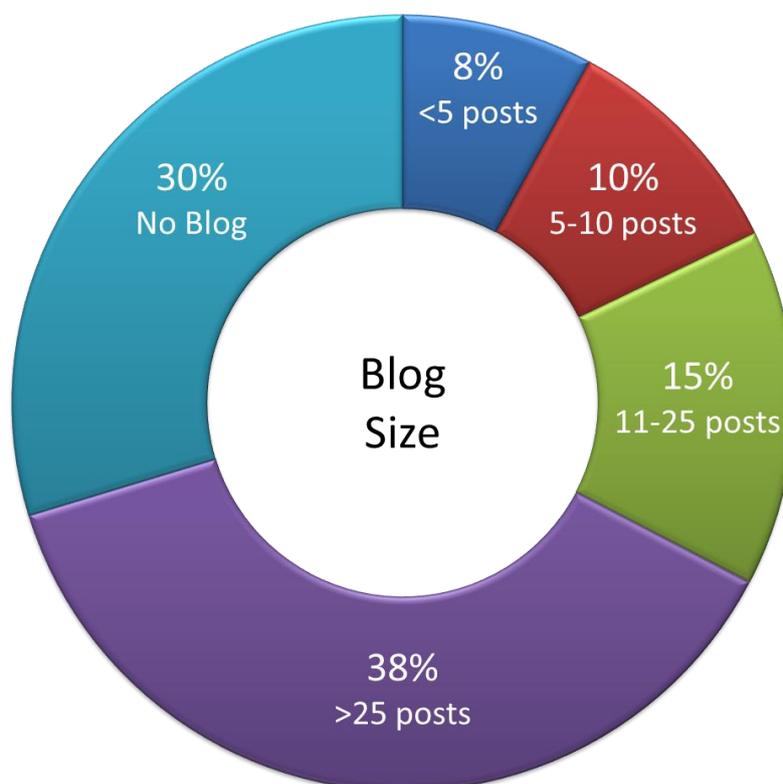
The principle remains, that all of this helps drive more traffic to your website, where visitors can be converted into new leads via a variety of calls-to-action.

All of the above helps establish you as an authority, which you can build on in subsequent posts. If the majority of your posts provide evergreen content, then they continue to contribute to long-term growth long after they've been written, as they are increasingly shared across the web.

Size of Blog – Result & Action Point

The survey results show a wide range of blog sizes, as measured by number of posts. This may relate to the age of the individual websites, with the larger blogs belonging to the more established websites.

Just under a third of the speakers surveyed didn't publish a blog, and they are missing out on many options for growing their authority over the long-term. Taken together with the smaller blogs, nearly half the speakers surveyed had either no blog, or fewer than 10 posts.



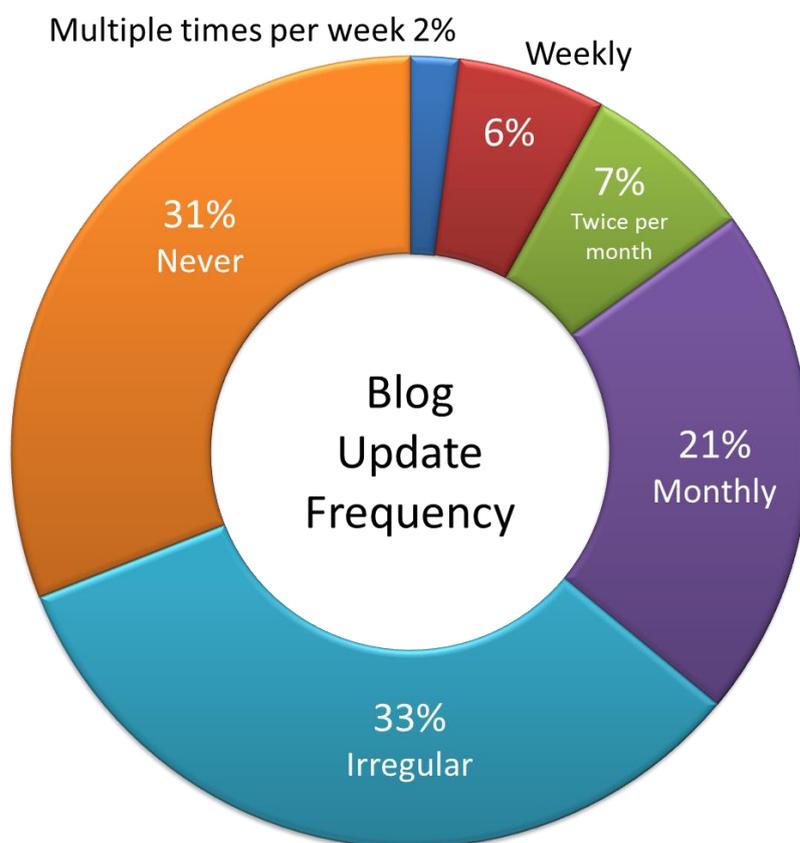
Action summary: Acknowledge the potential long-term value blogging can bring to your business. Treat your blog as you would a valuable, regular client (and not something you do when you have a spare moment).

7. Blog Update Frequency

Google loves regularity. The only thing that beats high quality content is regular, consistent, high quality content. Establish a rhythm and you'll encourage Google to index your site regularly.

Blog Update Frequency – Result & Action Point

The survey revealed a wide range of updating frequencies.



Approximately two thirds (64%) of the blogs surveyed had either never been updated, or had been updated irregularly. This number is roughly equivalent with last year's result. The percentage of blogs updated monthly has more than doubled in comparison with last year.

Action summary: Establish a regular blog publishing schedule. Two posts per week is an exceptionally good schedule. Treat a post per week as the minimum. However, anything regular beats anything irregular.

Closing Remarks

The intention is to repeat this survey regularly and widen the sample size. The objective is to promote good practices for 21st Century online marketing and thereby add value to the entire speaking sector. A rising tide floats all boats. In summary, it seems clear that speakers need to significantly invest in their online environment, if they want to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the 21st Century.

What About the LinkedIn Insight Tag?

LinkedIn announced its Insight Tag towards the end of the third quarter of 2016. As it is a relative newcomer – and given the lack of adoption of the Facebook and Twitter pixels – the use of Insight Tag was not examined as part of this survey. It can be implemented through Google Tag Manager and may feature as a data point in future surveys.

About the author

The Speakers' Digital Footprint Survey is the brainchild of Chris Davidson. The Survey was first published on a European basis in 2017 and greatly expanded for 2018.



Chris is an author, speaker and recognised expert in workplace communication. He's published five books on the subject and is a Fellow of the Professional Speaking Association of the UK and Ireland.

Following a successful career in aviation, IT and telecommunications, Chris founded the communications consultancy Active Presence in 2002. The company helps organisations communicate clearly and memorably, and specialises in creating engaging and memorable sales presentations.

Active Presence is based in north west England and serves clients in continental Europe and North America, in addition to the UK.

Chris follows Goju Ryu karate and can often be found walking along the beach near his home.

How to obtain copies of the Speakers' Digital Footprint Survey

The Survey is sponsored by Active Presence Limited and can be downloaded from the company's website.

<https://www.activepresence.com/digital-footprint-survey>

The Survey was launched at the Global Speakers Summit in Auckland, in February 2018.

Book Chris to present the survey to your audience

Although the Survey targets the speaking sector, the underlying principles apply to independent consultants, trainers, coaches and a multiplicity of other knowledge oriented businesses. Chris is an engineer by training and bases his commentary and presentations in fact and observation. He's an engaging presenter, who leaves audiences more knowledgeable than when they arrived, and with a clear idea as to their next action. Contact Chris today and ask how he can support your event.

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