![cipd logo] **100 YEARS** OF LEADING HR INTO THE FUTURE

Survey report
December 2013

Social technology, social business?

Championing better work and working lives

The CIPD's purpose is to **champion better work and working lives** by improving practices in people and organisation development, for the benefit of individuals, businesses, economies and society. Our research work plays a critical role – providing the content and credibility for us to drive practice, raise standards and offer advice, guidance and practical support to the profession. Our research also informs our advocacy and engagement with policy-makers and other opinion-formers on behalf of the profession we represent.

To increase our impact, in service of our purpose, we're focusing our research agenda on three core themes: the future of **work**, the diverse and changing nature of the **workforce**, and the culture and organisation of the **workplace**.

WORK

Our focus on work includes what work is and where, when and how work takes place, as well as trends and changes in skills and job needs, changing career patterns, global mobility, technological developments and new ways of working.

WORKFORCE

Our focus on the workforce includes demographics, generational shifts, attitudes and expectations, the changing skills base and trends in learning and education.

WORKPLACE

Our focus on the workplace includes how organisations are evolving and adapting, understanding of culture, trust and engagement, and how people are best organised, developed, managed, motivated and rewarded to perform at their best.

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The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. We have over 130,000 members internationally – working in HR, learning and development, people management and consulting across private businesses and organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. We are an independent and not-for-profit organisation, guided in our work by the evidence and the front-line experience of our members.

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Foreword

'Responsiveness and agility are two very key issues in our world today – and social media tools can help organisations to become more innovative and responsive to change.'

Social media (or, as I discovered recently, SoMe) has become a driving force in how products and services are marketed across the world. But while individuals have embraced its use in their personal lives, they are less likely to use it in everyday work situations. Organisations have been slow to harness the power of the conversations that take place on social media every day, too often relying on a passive presence on 'flat' websites, conveying knowledge, but not engaging with their audience.

Yet the issues that organisations report are the very same issues that a powerful, easy-to-use, two-way communication tool could address. Responsiveness and agility are two very key issues in our world today – and social media tools can help organisations to become more innovative and responsive to change.

Marketing departments are rising to this challenge, as are those in recruitment, because they focus outwards on specific goals and on specific audiences. More diffuse goals – engagement, communication, productivity and innovation – are still likely to be addressed through traditional methods. It seems that employees are much more sophisticated in their private lives in using such tools than their employers.

Age could be a factor in this – as this survey report confirms, older employees are much less likely to be avid users of social media than their younger colleagues. And the leaders who do use social media tools are far more likely to target external audiences than an internal one – meaning they are missing a key opportunity to influence employees and drive loyalty and engagement.

People have access to social media while at work through their personal devices, whether or not their employer allows such sites to be accessed through work IT systems. Harnessing the power of new communication tools to influence beyond the traditional channels of email and websites is still confined to a minority of employers. This timely research shows that this is slowly changing and looks to the attitudes of employees and managers as the key determinant going forward.

**Susannah Clements
Deputy CEO, CIPD**

Summary

This report presents findings from two surveys on social media and mobile technology, one with UK employees, the other with HR and other professionals focused on organisational policies.

The results shine a light on the start of changes in the world of work due to social technology (social media and mobile technology), but equally highlight that a 'social business' revolution has yet to occur. Just a quarter of UK employees (26%) use social media for work, compared with three-quarters (76%) who use it for personal purposes.

Almost two-thirds of us (61%) use a mobile digital device for work – either a laptop, smartphone or tablet. Interestingly, these are usually personally owned (especially in the case of smartphones and tablets).

These findings highlight how social technology has been driven by our personal access to it and habits in our personal lives, rather than by organisational strategy. It is being led by employees' expectations and understanding of the value that these technologies represent and employers may have some catching up to do.

The 26% figure for work use of social media varies between demographic groups and sectors. Groups who are particularly active users include senior leaders (53% of whom use social media for work), voluntary sector employees (38%) and 18–24-year-olds (42%). The latter figure alone suggests that, as the next generations of 'digital natives' become an ever larger segment of our workforce, social media is likely to become a more common part of our working lives.

So how do we use social media for work and where do we see the greatest value?

- **Efficient communication** – social media can help with the efficiency of communication and effective knowledge transfer, but there are currently seen to be pros and cons pretty much in equal measure. Social media is seen to both help get the right information to the right people (49% of social media users agreeing) *and* to lead to information overload (48%). Perhaps as we become more adept at using it, we will see greater benefit here.

- **Networking and collaboration** – most employees who use social media for work (53%) are clear that it gives meaningful connections with people they would otherwise not know. These tend to focus on relationships external to the organisation. Similarly, collaboration is also a major benefit of social media but again is largely restricted to outside the organisation: 50% of social media 'work users' say that it aids external collaboration, compared with 28% for collaboration inside the organisation. Thus, although a substantial proportion of employees (24%) believe that their organisations need an internal social media platform, it remains primarily driven by the desire to connect with the outside world.

- **Recruitment and job-hunting** – social networking sites play a notable role in the recruitment process. Over half (54%) of employers use social media for recruitment and one in nine employees who have used it to look for work have found a job this way. Both employers and job-seekers use social media to check on each other and inform their choices, although more so employers (38%) than employees (16%).

- **Employee voice** – at first sight, social media may look like it contributes to employee voice, but in fact, the impact seems fairly superficial. Where internal social media platforms exist in an organisation, managers tend to be better at seeking employee views, but there is no difference in how responsive they are to these views or how open they are to being influenced. Clearly, social technology alone will not transform organisational culture and, equally clearly, meaningful voice is more than simply giving employees a platform: they need to be heard.

- **Learning and development** – the use of social media and mobile technology to support e-learning products has not taken off in a major way, with eight in ten employees (78%) stating that their organisations don't use social media to deliver learning and development at all. However, if we take a broader view of learning, it is fairly common to use social media to find out more about areas of interest (32% of those who use social media for work) and to share learning with others (34%).

'We argue that question marks over the relevance of social technology should be taken seriously: the advocates may have overestimated its value and it may not be equally useful in all environments.'

What is holding back the advance of social technology as a commonly used set of tools for work? In the case of social media, one thing that is *not* an impediment for most people is a lack of access: half (50%) of UK employees have some access to social media at work, double the 26% who currently make use of it. Much more salient is the perceived lack of relevance for one's work, which is quite pronounced: just 18% of employees believe social media has an important place in the work they do, whereas 49% disagree with this.

For mobile technology, a major factor is the low level of support for bring-your-own-device (BYOD) practices. In our HR survey, just 24% of respondents worked in organisations where employees could connect their personal smartphones to the IT system, and 10% reported that their organisations offered cost-sharing schemes for mobile devices.

We argue that question marks over the relevance of social technology should be taken seriously: the advocates may have overestimated its value and it may not be equally useful in all environments. However, social technology comprises a broad and flexible suite of tools and, with younger employees already using it for work extensively, it seems inevitable that it will become a greater part of how we work in the future.

Introduction

The last decade has witnessed the inexorable rise of what is commonly known as 'Web 2.0', whereby Internet sites opened up for anyone to share online. This harnessed the full potential of the Internet to help people make connections on an unprecedented scale. The shift has been facilitated by the growth of online forums, 'wikis' and social networking sites as well as Google and can be witnessed in the growth of blogs, comments and microblogging and the number of online connections we have.

Web 2.0 has also gone hand in hand with, and is made possible by, a cultural shift that has been termed 'default to public'[1]: our attitudes to information-sharing have changed and, increasingly, anything we don't explicitly declare private is treated as public (Krogerus and Tschäppeler 2012).

Another behavioural shift is a blurring of boundaries between 'online' and 'offline' relationships and activity. This has been witnessed especially among the younger 'digital natives', who cannot remember a time before the Internet. It is predicted that many of us will soon not remember which friends we made face to face and which online, or even distinguish between virtual and real friends.

How is this playing out in the world of work? Great claims are made by advocates of 'social business', a term used to describe the active use of social media and digital technology (hereon 'social technology') to create a more connected environment.

And anecdotally, there are cases of organisations using social technology in a purposeful way that helps transform the way they work. But there is a lack of reliable data showing how far most organisations have gone down the road of becoming social businesses.

Focusing on the UK and Ireland, we have undertaken this research to understand how much social media and mobile technology have actually impacted to date on the way we work. We attempt to gauge the extent to which social technology is benefiting organisations and working lives and understand how common the phenomena are that underpin the notion of social business.

In this survey we investigate key claims made about how social media contributes to the world of work. These include:

- **Networking** – we use social media to connect with people with similar interests, develop those relationships and connect with other people in useful ways. The growth of social media has seen many of us collect virtual 'friends' (Facebook), 'contacts' (LinkedIn) and 'followers' (Twitter) by the hundreds, if not thousands. As is often pointed out, it can be debated how meaningful so many connections are. Clearly, the value comes not just from the number but from the quality of connections we make, but nonetheless, the potential is there to be better connected and raise our profiles or those of our organisations.

'The last decade has witnessed the inexorable rise of what is commonly known as Web 2.0, whereby Internet sites opened up for anyone to share online.'

- **Employee voice** – social media has given greater voice to many groups, including consumers and campaigners. Advocates of social media – in particular *internal* social media platforms or 'enterprise social networks', such as Yammer – also argue that it can empower employees to be able to challenge, raise concerns and influence their organisations (Silverman et al 2013, Gannaway 2013). Effective employee voice is crucial for the health of any organisation. By supporting constructive workplace dialogue, it can foster innovation and improvement and mitigate operational risk, while avoiding the need for *external* whistleblowing and thus protecting against reputational damage. Equally, it is a fundamental basis for ensuring employee well-being and quality of working life, fairness in the employment relationship and employee engagement.

- **Learning and development** – social media can host e-learning tools and support learning more informally, enabling people to find out about areas of interest and share information and insights with others. Through engaging in forums and crowdsourcing, social media also provides a vehicle to understand different groups of people, for example, gaining customer insight (Bradley and McDonald 2011) and engaging with the younger generation of 'digital natives' (CIPD 2013a). In this way, social media leads to organisational as well as individual learning (Martin et al 2013). It makes it easier to locate expertise and to develop collective intelligence through blogs, forums and 'wikis' (Bradley and McDonald 2011).

- **Collaboration** – this can be the most tangible function of social media, when we move to actually working together with people we've met online. It is often the point at which we make the transfer from online to offline relationships. Social media is argued to be a catalyst that, through interaction and collaboration, can promote 'doing things differently and just as importantly, if not more so, talking about doing things differently' (Usher 2012). Collaboration combined with learning leads to innovation and the creation of more adaptive and agile organisations.

Running through these is another benefit claimed of social media: that it makes communication more efficient by helping get the right information to the right people. Indeed, some proponents of social media argue that it will be used to replace email. Ben and Jerry's is one company that has done just this (McEleny 2010).

Of course, for this to function requires the 'right' people to be users of the 'right' social media platforms. A threshold has to be reached within the population in question – a tipping point at which it starts to become more convenient to use social media than to avoid it and be out of the loop. In our personal lives, many now feel that social media platforms such as Facebook are indispensable. Politically, we witnessed it playing a role in the Arab Spring (in Egypt and Tunisia this being dubbed a 'Twitter revolution'), although a role that many have argued has been overstated (Alterman 2011). What is the picture for the world of work?

We have taken a broad definition of social media, describing it as *'any online platforms for networking or sharing information*

or opinions, for example Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or blogs, but not email'. Social media is distinctive from email and static webpages in that it provides an open, voluntary channel through which people seek out information and engage in conversations they are interested in. It is a user-led form of communication. By contrast, emails are either more exclusive, for limited numbers of recipients, or less discriminant circulars that contribute to email overload (Thomas et al 2006).

Alongside social media, the other focus of this research is mobile digital devices, which have the potential both to directly affect how we work themselves, and to support the use of social media. Laptops became increasingly popular from the 1990s, as wireless networking became more widespread, and have continued to become more common as connectivity has improved. Over recent years – in particular since the advent of Apple's iPhone in 2007 and iPad in 2010 – smartphones, tablet computers and now 'phablets' (7-inch smartphones) have also become ubiquitous. Sales of smartphones already outstrip those of PCs, and tablets are predicted to permanently overtake PCs in 2015 (Titcomb 2013).

Mobile devices potentially give much greater flexibility in where we work. We are not bound to the office to work on documents, email, use the Internet or even complete learning and development courses. Moreover, remote access to IT networks gives us the potential to work on and share centrally stored files regardless of where we are located. But how much of an impact have mobile devices had on the world of work and how are they managed by organisations? We use our survey to explore these areas.

This research does not set out to help people keep abreast of new digital technologies. The marketplace for social media and mobile technology is proliferating at speed and developments can be followed best through other sources, including social media itself. What we present here is a more sociological view of the function that social technology currently has in our working lives.

Research approach
This research draws on two surveys. The first, conducted in partnership with YouGov, is a survey of UK employees with a boosted sample of 18–24-year-olds to allow reliable age comparisons. A fairly large sample of 2,109 was used to allow both for analysis of employees who use social media for work and for comparisons between users and non-users of social media. The sample was weighted to be representative of UK working adults, giving a weighted base of 2,140 employees.

The second survey focuses specifically on organisational policies and HR practices relating to social media and mobile devices. We thus limited the sample to people in organisations of more than one person who were able to discuss these areas. The majority of these

work in HR (74%), followed by learning and development (21%), operations or productions (9%) and communications (9%). We also restricted the sample to the UK and Ireland. Using the CIPD's membership and contacts database, and also making the survey available through our website, we achieved 590 usable responses.[2]

This report
Following this introduction, Section 1 gives an overview of the extent to which UK employees have embraced social technology in their working lives and how this compares with our personal use. We then look in more detail at the ways in which social technology is currently used for work purposes, before in Section 3 looking at demographic and organisational trends in the use of social technology. In Section 4 we investigate how social technology is managed within organisations and in Section 5 we consider the impacts it has on the world of work. In the last section, we present our conclusions.

Full data tables of the figures presented in this report are available in the separate Appendix at **cipd.co.uk/socialtech**

'The marketplace for social media and mobile technology is proliferating at speed...'

1 To what extent has the world of work embraced social and digital technology?

Key figures
- 26% of UK employees use social media for work.
- Only 18% say that social media is important for their work.
- 58% separate their personal and professional use of social media.
- 61% use a mobile digital device for work.

'By social media we mean any online platforms for networking or sharing information or opinions, for example Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or blogs, but not email.'

Employee use of social media
Our survey shows that social media has become embedded in the world of work to some extent, although far less so than in our personal lives. One in four UK employees (26%) uses social media for work purposes, compared with three in four (76%) who use it for personal purposes.

For those who do use social media for work, it tends to take up a small slice of the working day: among daily users, half (53%) spend less than 30 minutes using it, with less than one in five (18%) using it for over an hour.[3]

Friends and family are by far the group most of us connect to and also who we spend most time connecting to on social media (83% ranking them first). After this, as shown in Figure 1, the most significant group overall is colleagues, followed by contacts met online and professional contacts in other organisations (although for some groups such as senior leaders the trend looks very different – see Section 3).

The large differences between personal and professional usage of social media are reflected in our views: we generally place little importance on social media for our work. Indeed, the *strength* of opinion here is remarkable. Thirty-six per cent strongly disagree that social media 'has an important place in the work I do' (a further 13% slightly disagree) and 45% strongly disagree that they need it 'to do my job effectively'.

Equally strong is our desire to separate our personal and professional use of social media, 46% strongly agreeing that they make this separation. For all the talk of digitally enabled flexibility and suggestions that the boundaries of work and personal lives are being blurred (Silverman et al 2013, Miller 2012), it seems that is at least one area in which we prefer to keep them separate. One of the reasons for this may be views on what is considered professional or unprofessional behaviour and the potentially serious consequences of misjudging this (see Section 4).
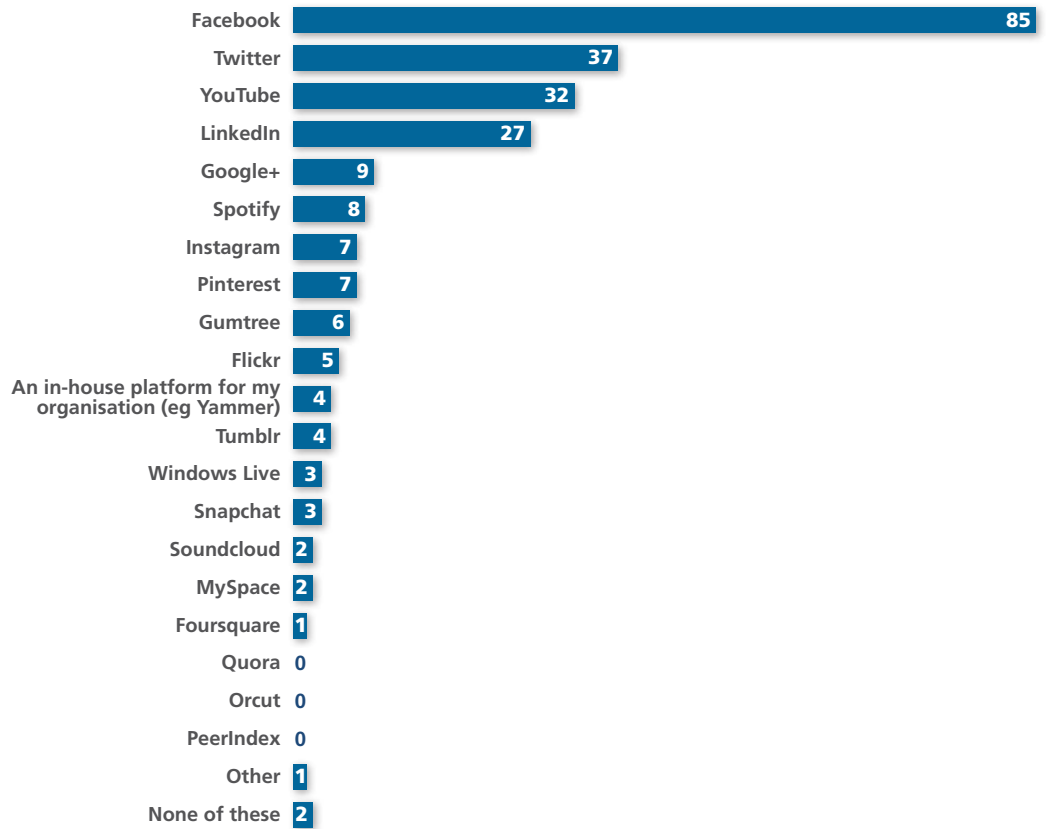
Figure 1: How often do you use social media for personal or work purposes? (%)

Personal	Work
37	5
	3
	2
14	4
	4
5	10
7	
8	73.4
24	
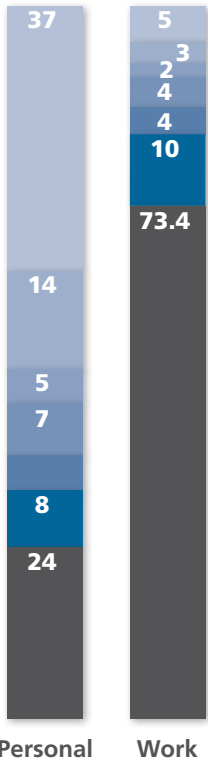
Legend:
- Several times a day
- Once a day
- 4–6 days a week
- 2–3 days a week
- Once a week
- Less often than once a week
- Never

Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Figure 2: Which social media platforms do you use at least once a month? (%)

Platform	%
Facebook	85
Twitter	37
YouTube	32
LinkedIn	27
Google+	9
Spotify	8
Instagram	7
Pinterest	7
Gumtree	6
Flickr	5
An in-house platform for my organisation (eg Yammer)	4
Tumblr	4
Windows Live	3
Snapchat	3
Soundcloud	2
MySpace	2
Foursquare	1
Quora	0
Orcut	0
PeerIndex	0
Other	1
None of these	2

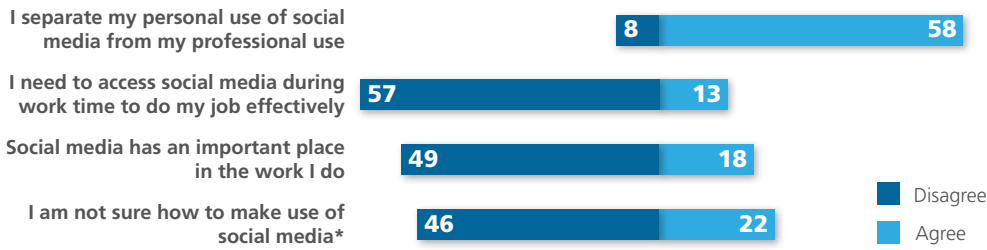Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Figure 3: Which, if any, of the following groups do you ever communicate with through social media? (%)

Group	%
Family or friends	86
Colleagues inside my organisation	39
Professional contacts outside my organisation	23
People I've not met face to face	30
None of these	7

Base: Employees who use social media (n=1,642)

Figure 4: The role of social media in our jobs (%)

	Disagree	Agree
I separate my personal use of social media from my professional use	8	58
I need to access social media during work time to do my job effectively	57	13
Social media has an important place in the work I do	49	18
I am not sure how to make use of social media*	46	22

■ Disagree
■ Agree

Base: Employees who use social media (n=1,670) except * UK employees (n=2,109)

Finally, it is worth noting some of the things that are *not* holding back the advance of social media. Certainly a lack of access to social media at work is not an impediment for most people. Half (50%) of UK employees report that they have some access to social media at work (see Section 4), double the number who currently make use of it.

Nor is a lack of familiarity with social media holding us back from applying it to the world of work. One in five employees are not sure how to make use of social media, so IT skills support may be appropriate for some, but for most people the real question mark is over its relevance for their jobs.
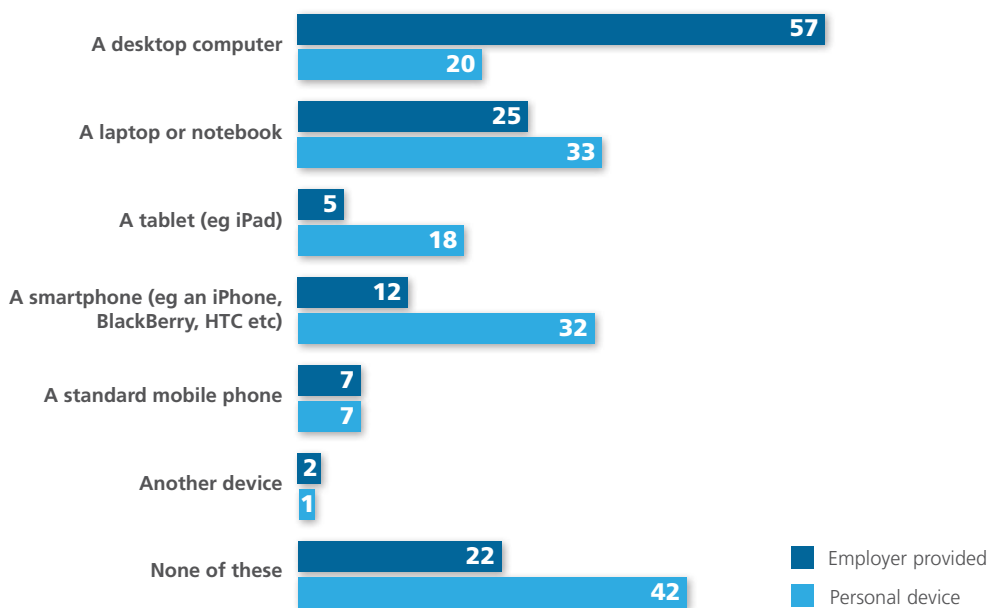
Employee use of mobile digital devices

Although we still rely heavily on desktop computers, nearly half (45%) use a tablet or smartphone for work. This figure rises to almost two-thirds of us (61%) for any sort of mobile digital device (that is, including laptops).

An interesting aspect of this is that most mobile digital devices used for work are personally owned, rather than provided by employers.

This is especially the case for smartphones and tablet computers, but is even the case for laptops.

This suggests that the rise of mobile devices in the world of work is being driven by our access to this technology and habits in our *personal lives* and not from organisational strategy. It is led by employees' expectations and understanding of the value that these technologies represent. Indeed, as we shall see in Section 4, it seems that many organisations are not living up to employees' expectations of how they can use mobile devices.

Figure 5: Which of these do you use for your job? (%)

	Employer provided	Personal device
A desktop computer	57	20
A laptop or notebook	25	33
A tablet (eg iPad)	5	18
A smartphone (eg an iPhone, BlackBerry, HTC etc)	12	32
A standard mobile phone	7	7
Another device	2	1
None of these	22	42

■ Employer provided
■ Personal device

Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

2 How do we use social technology for work?

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Key figures

- 38% of employees who use social media for work do so to network and 34% to share learning.
- 26% of employees work in an organisation with internal social media.
- 14% have looked for or been approached about a job through social media.
- 38% of employers look at social media profiles to check job candidates.

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'While many of us connect with colleagues online, we tend to view this networking as a less important end in itself.'
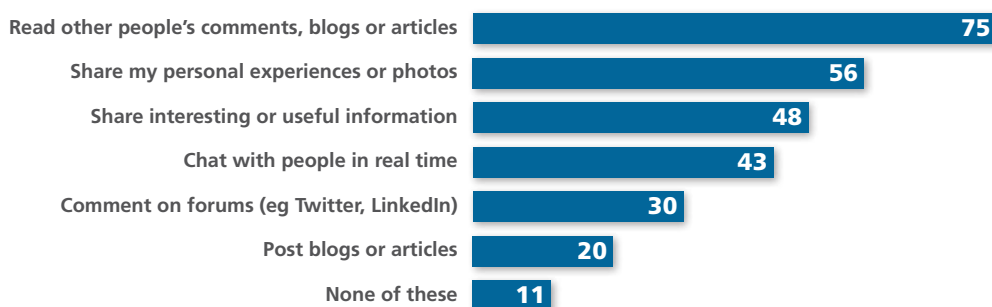
What we do on social media and why

The term 'lurkers' has been used to describe people who rarely publish content or engage with other people on social media, preferring to simply look at other people's activity (Bishop 2007). Our survey shows that most of us spend more time 'lurking' than anything else: reading other people's comments, blogs and articles is by far the most common activity on social media.[4] The most common activity following this is sharing things of interest with others, be it personal photos and experiences or useful work-related information, and chatting in real time. These come above publishing our own articles, blogs and comments.

As mentioned in Section 1, more of us connect with colleagues than with contacts outside our organisations. However, this may not give an accurate picture of the main reasons why we use social media for work. As Figure 7 shows, building and maintaining our *external* networks is one of the main drivers, clearly in front of

Figure 6: What employees do on social media (%)

Read other people's comments, blogs or articles	75
Share my personal experiences or photos	56
Share interesting or useful information	48
Chat with people in real time	43
Comment on forums (eg Twitter, LinkedIn)	30
Post blogs or articles	20
None of these	11

Base: Employees who use social media (n=1,642)

'Social media activity is about being part of something larger than ourselves. It is less narcissistic and more collaborative than it is often given credit for.'
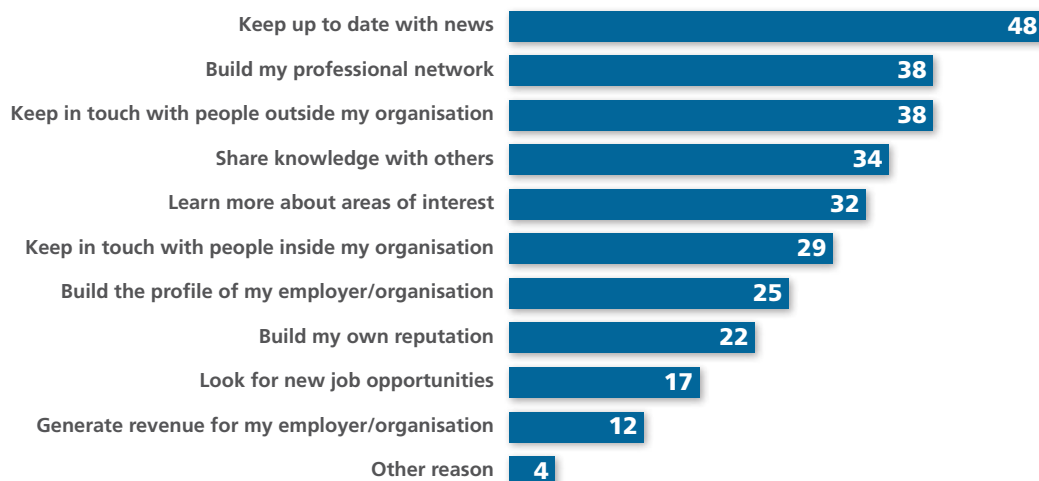
keeping in touch with colleagues.[5] The contradiction between these findings may be because there is overlap between friends and colleagues, or because we see colleagues as a route to connecting with more people externally. At any rate, while many of us connect with colleagues online, we tend to view this networking as a less important end in itself.

Learning also ranks fairly highly among reasons we use social media, although it is interesting to note that we are just as likely to help others' learning by sharing useful or interesting knowledge as to focus on our own. Building profile is a slightly less common driver of using social media for work, but here too it is noticeable that we are at least as concerned with how we can serve others (notably, raising the profile of our organisations) as building our own reputation.

Indeed, these findings consistently confirm the genuinely interactive and sharing nature of social media. The least common of the listed reasons for using social media for work are the most hard-nosed and business-focused: looking for new job opportunities (see below) and generating revenue for our organisations.

Engaging with social media is about being part of something larger than ourselves. It is not primarily a medium we use to broadcast and promote ourselves. It is inherently beneficial, of value in and of its own right, more than it is instrumental to financial gain. Discussions and press coverage of social media often refer to boastful or crass comments, inane sharing of details of our personal lives and postings of 'selfies' (photos taken of oneself on a mobile device), but it seems that our use of social media is less narcissistic and more collaborative than we are often given credit for.

Figure 7: Main reasons we use social media for work (%)

Reason	%
Keep up to date with news	48
Build my professional network	38
Keep in touch with people outside my organisation	38
Share knowledge with others	34
Learn more about areas of interest	32
Keep in touch with people inside my organisation	29
Build the profile of my employer/organisation	25
Build my own reputation	22
Look for new job opportunities	17
Generate revenue for my employer/organisation	12
Other reason	4

Base: Employees who use social media for work (n=617)

Internal uses of social media

There has been a growth over recent years in bespoke enterprise social networks and off-the-shelf platforms such as Yammer, both of which can be used to communicate with employees, gather employee views, build relationships, share knowledge, provide learning and development and encourage collaboration (Silverman et al 2013, Gannaway 2013).

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the main drivers behind social media (see Figure 7), our survey shows that organisations' use of social media remains more externally focused than internal.

Only one in four employees (26%) currently works in an organisation with an internal social media platform. In our HR survey we asked how these platforms were used (Figure 9). The results show that the main uses are for standard communications on management issues and the potential for employee voice and collaboration is largely not realised. But it is interesting to note that one concern over internal social media – that it will reduce productivity due to significant non-work chat – is not upheld.

In line with this, few employees see their organisations using social media to give employees a voice or for leaders to understand them (see Figure 10). In comparison, we are better at engaging with customers.

Employees broadly agree with this balance towards the external, attaching more importance to their organisations' use of social media to raise external profile than to facilitate communication between colleagues. Still, that a quarter of employees think their organisations *need* internal social media is not insubstantial, so it seems it already has an important role.
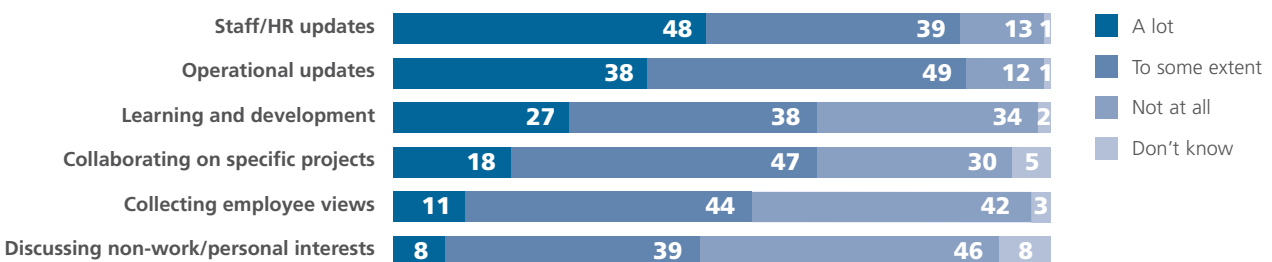
'A quarter of employees think their organisations need internal social media. This is not insubstantial.'

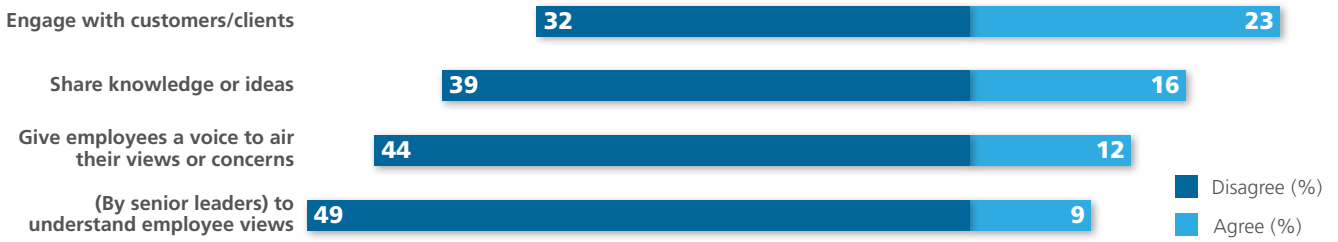**Figure 8: Does your organisation have an internal social media platform?**

26%	61%	13%
Yes	No	Don't know
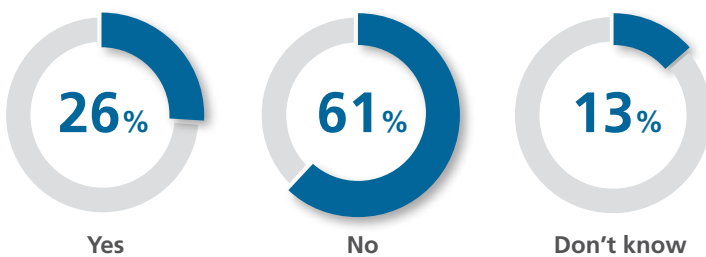
Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Figure 9: How much is your internal social media platform used for the following? (%)

	A lot	To some extent	Not at all	Don't know
Staff/HR updates	48	39	13	1
Operational updates	38	49	12	1
Learning and development	27	38	34	2
Collaborating on specific projects	18	47	30	5
Collecting employee views	11	44	42	3
Discussing non-work/personal interests	8	39	46	8

Base (HR survey): Respondents whose organisations have internal social media (n=338)

Figure 10

Our organisation makes good use of social media to... (%)

	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)
Engage with customers/clients	32	23
Share knowledge or ideas	39	16
Give employees a voice to air their views or concerns	44	12
(By senior leaders) to understand employee views	49	9

Our organisation needs... (%)

	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)
An external profile on social media	21	31
In-house social media for colleagues to communicate	34	24

Base: UK employees (n=2,109)
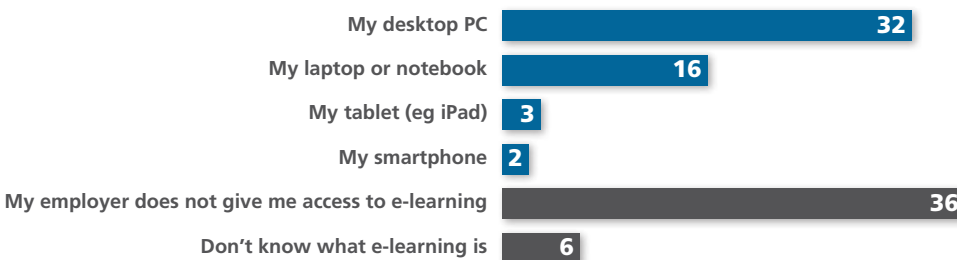
Learning and development

Overall, two in five employees (42%) reported that they have access to e-learning (learning resources available to access or download from the Internet). Of these, the clear majority can access it through their desktop computer and many through their laptop, but very few employees have access to e-learning through smartphones or tablets.

Similarly, we specifically asked whether organisations make use of social media to provide learning and development, to which eight in ten employees indicated 'not at all'.[6]

However, as already shown in Figure 7, sharing knowledge with others and learning more about areas of interest ourselves are common reasons we engage with social media.

Thus, the main benefit of social media as a learning tool lies not in hosting formally designed tools and programmes, but supporting informal learning. Through building relationships with new people and joining communities of interest, social media can help us locate the expertise we are looking for or, indeed, lead us to stumble upon useful or interesting information we were not aware of.

Figure 11: Devices through which employeess are given access to e-learning (%)

My desktop PC	32
My laptop or notebook	16
My tablet (eg iPad)	3
My smartphone	2
My employer does not give me access to e-learning	36
Don't know what e-learning is	6

Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Figure 12: How much does your organisation use social media to provide learning and development? (%)

A lot	4
A little	17
Not at all	78

Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Job-hunting

One in seven UK employees has looked for a job and/or been approached about a job through social media. Of these, 34% have gone on to apply and, of these, 31% have accepted a job offer. While this amounts to just 2% of all employees, these figures still highlight that social media is a reasonably effective channel for job-hunting. You have a one in three chance of seeing a job through social media that you feel is worth applying for and a one in nine chance of finding a job this way.

There is growing discussion of the potential for social media to show, warts and all, what employees really think about their organisations.[7] Our survey confirms that job-seekers' decisions can be crucially influenced by employer brand as projected through social media. One in six employees has used a social media website to find out about an organisation they were considering working at. Of these, a third said it made a difference to their decision to apply and a fifth said it made a difference to their decision to accept an offer.
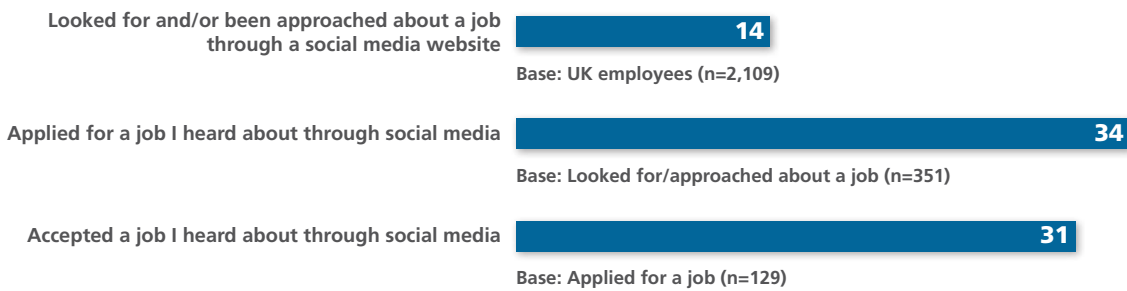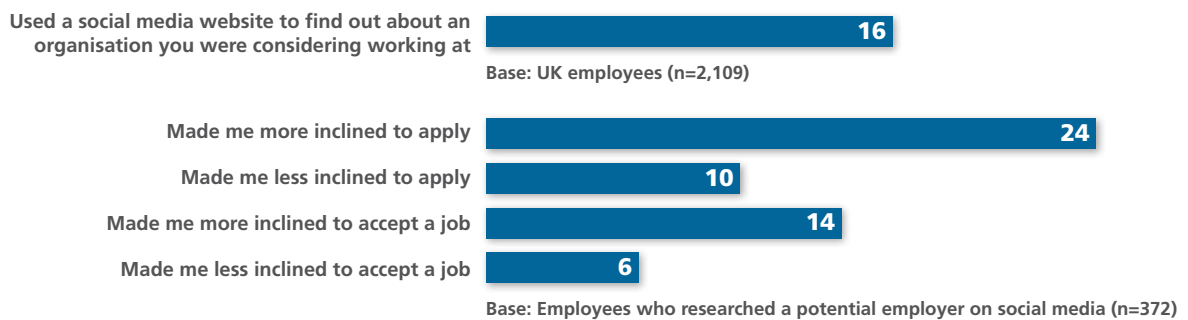
Figure 13: Job-hunting through social media (%)

Looked for and/or been approached about a job through a social media website — **14**
Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Applied for a job I heard about through social media — **34**
Base: Looked for/approached about a job (n=351)

Accepted a job I heard about through social media — **31**
Base: Applied for a job (n=129)

Figure 14: Job-hunting through social media (%)

Used a social media website to find out about an organisation you were considering working at — **16**
Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Made me more inclined to apply — **24**
Made me less inclined to apply — **10**
Made me more inclined to accept a job — **14**
Made me less inclined to accept a job — **6**
Base: Employees who researched a potential employer on social media (n=372)
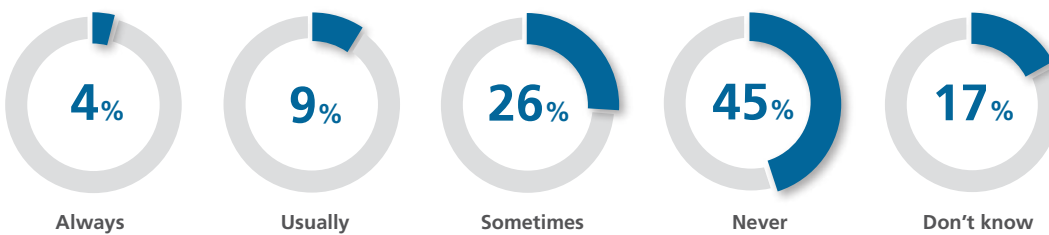
Recruitment and screening

How organisations use social media to develop their brand and recruit has been covered recently in the CIPD's *Resourcing and Talent Planning* survey and research published by Acas (Broughton et al 2013). The CIPD survey shows that over half of employers (54%) use social media in recruitment, although most of these don't have a dedicated strategy for this or fully understand how to maximise it.[8] It also shows that the most common uses of social media in recruitment are to attract candidates and build brand, but many also use it to keep in touch with future employees.

More can be seen in these two reports about the triggers, benefits and risks of using social media in the recruitment process. However, one area that remained under-researched was employers' use of social media to screen job candidates. Following the blacklisting scandal that was especially prevalent in the UK construction sector, there has been much discussion of what constitutes fair practice in pre-employment checking (CIPD 2013b). We thus undertook to investigate this in our social media and mobile technology survey.

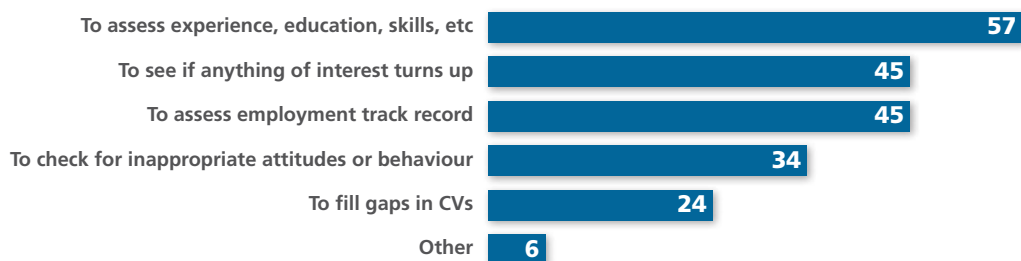**Figure 15: Does your organisation use social media to inform recruitment decisions?**

4%	9%	26%	45%	17%
Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Don't know

Base (HR survey): All respondents (n=590)

Do you inform candidates that you use social media to screen?

14%	12%	25%	29%	21%
Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Don't know
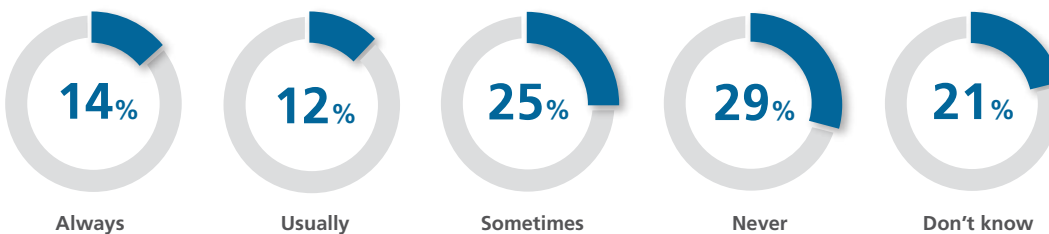
Base (HR survey): Organisation uses social media to screen in recruitment (n=222)

Figure 16: Why does your organisation use social media to screen in recruitment? (%)

	%
To assess experience, education, skills, etc	57
To see if anything of interest turns up	45
To assess employment track record	45
To check for inappropriate attitudes or behaviour	34
To fill gaps in CVs	24
Other	6

Base (HR survey): Organisation uses social media to screen in recruitment (n=229)

Nearly two in five respondents to our HR survey (38%) said their organisations look at job candidates' online activity or profiles to inform recruitment decisions,[9] but few make it a matter of course to always inform candidates of this.

Of the practitioners whose organisations used social media to screen job candidates, just 8% said they had rejected candidates as a result in the last year.[10] Although a large chunk (34%) did not know, it seems that in the clear majority of cases, it would not make much difference to recruitment decisions if organisations did not screen in this way.

We also asked about the reasons these candidates had been rejected. Our findings are tentative, due to the low numbers of respondents to this question, but the most common reason was inappropriate conduct or comments (12 responses), poor fit with organisational culture (7), gaps or inconsistencies in career details (5) and poor fit with job specification (4).

This is interesting, as recent research by Stoughton et al (2013) suggests the insights one can gain from 'bad' online behaviour into job candidates' personalities are limited: while badmouthing on social media may point to a lack of conscientiousness and agreeableness, talking about substance abuse won't reliably tell us anything except perhaps that the person is an extrovert, which will not be relevant for most jobs.

'Of the practitioners whose organisations used social media to screen job candidates, just 8% said they had rejected candidates as a result in the last year.'

3 Who's using social and digital technology?

'Among 18–24-year-olds, 42% of employees use social media for work to some extent and three in ten (28%) do so at least weekly.'

Key figures

While 26% of employees overall use social media for work, this is true for:
- 42% of 18–24-year-olds
- 53% of senior leaders
- 38% of voluntary sector employees
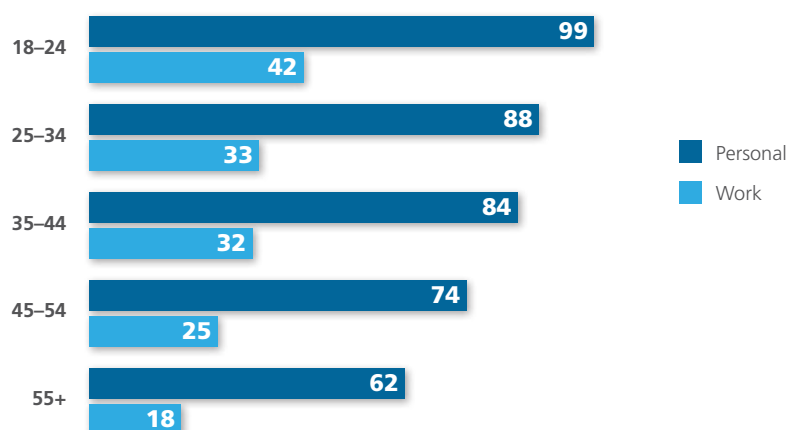- 32% of employees in micro organisations.

Generational differences

Unsurprisingly, our survey supports the idea that the younger generation of 'digital natives' are faster adopters of social media for both work and personal uses. Among 18–24-year-olds, 42% of employees use social media for work to some extent and three in ten (28%) do so at least weekly.

Younger employees clearly lay more store by social media in general and this holds true for its role in the world of work. The 18–24 age group is more likely to agree that social media helps them be effective in their job (19% compared with 13% overall) and influential in their organisation (21% compared with 11%), that it aids collaboration both within the organisation (25% compared with 15%) and outside it (39% compared with 30%), and that it makes it easier to get the right information to the right people (51% compared with 28%).

Figure 17: Use social media (%)

18–24: Personal 99, Work 42
25–34: Personal 88, Work 33
35–44: Personal 84, Work 32
45–54: Personal 74, Work 25
55+: Personal 62, Work 18

Legend: Personal, Work

Base: UK employees (n=183 for 18–24; 328 for 25–34; 453 for 35–44; 514 for 45–54; 631 for 55+)

However, younger users tend to be more socially and less professionally focused in how they use social media. They use social media more to communicate with colleagues (51% compared with 39%) and chat with people in real time (67% compared with 43%) and slightly less to communicate with professional contacts outside the organisation (17% compared with 23%). They are also slightly less likely to distinguish between personal and professional (52% compared with 58% on average).

Indeed, the heaviest users of LinkedIn, the biggest professional networking site, are 25–34-year-olds, a third of whom (33%) use this platform, compared with 27% overall and just 24% of 18–24-year-olds.

In other areas, too, there is an absence of the predictable trend that younger generations are more active on social media. There is no clear overall trend for which age groups most often blog online, comment on forums or share interesting or useful information through social media.

For mobile technology, the story is also slightly different. The most common users of laptops, smartphones and tablets are the 25–44 age group, 68% of whom use at least one of these for work (compared with 56% of 18–24-year-olds and 58% of the 45+ age group).

Seniority and social media use

We found a clear relationship between professional social media use and seniority. Over half of senior leaders use social media for work, compared with a third of managers and a fifth of non-managers.

Much of this difference is due to the professional networking senior leaders do outside the organisation and specifically through LinkedIn. Half of senior leaders who use social media (52%) use this platform, compared with 36% of other managers and 20% of non-managers. Senior leaders are also more likely to comment on forums (41% compared with 33% and 29%) and post blogs or articles (27% compared with 18% and 22%). They are less likely to chat, share personal experiences or photos, read other people's material and discuss aspects of their work they would not otherwise discuss (48% compared with 58% and 59%).

Managers are more likely to develop meaningful new connections through social media (44% of senior leaders who use social media, 39% managers and 31% non-managers) and to have used social media to look for a job (17% senior leaders and 15% managers, compared with 8% of non-managers).

The overall picture is that senior leaders see greater potential in

'There is no clear trend for which age groups most often blog, comment on forums or share information through social media.'

Figure 18: Work-related social media use by seniority (%)

Senior leader	53
Manager	33
Non-manager	21
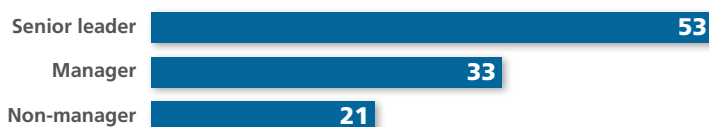
Base: Senior leaders (n=233); Managers (n=688); Non-managers (n=763)

social media to build professional networks, are more often social media 'publishers' (and less often 'lurkers') and are more externally focused. Professional networking is still a common reason for more junior employees to use social media, but they do seem to be less professionally focused (for example, spending more time sharing personal experiences or photos).

As for using social media inside the organisation to engage with colleagues, it is mid-ranking managers who do this most (44% compared with 35% of senior leaders and 36% of non-managers). It seems that senior leaders have not taken on board the argument that social media is an important leadership tool,

helping them be visible to their employees, gain trust and focus employees on strategy (Miller 2012).

Gender differences
There are no clear differences in the overall proportion of men and women using social media for work, although slightly more women use it for personal use (79% compared with 72% for men).

Clearer differences can be seen in how we use social media. In line with these last figures on LinkedIn, men are more likely to use social media to communicate with professional contacts outside the organisation, build their professional networks and look for jobs. However, women are more

likely to use social media to build the profile of their organisations or generate revenue for the organisation.

In line with market research, we find gender differences in the different platforms used. Platforms women use more often include Facebook (used by 90% of women compared with 79% for men), Instagram (10% compared with 4%) and Pinterest (10% compared with 4%). Platforms that men use more include LinkedIn (34% of men compared with 20% of women) and YouTube (37% compared with 28%).

Men more commonly use some form of mobile digital device for work (68% compared with 55% of women).

Figure 19: Work-related social media use by gender (%)

Base: Employees who use social media for work (n=334 men; 283 women) except * UK employees (n=827 men; 815 women)

Organisational differences in the use of social media

Sectoral differences

Employees based in the voluntary sector appear to use social media for work more than those in the private and public sectors. Our findings here are tentative, due to the low number of voluntary sector respondents (n=129), but this difference may be driven by the cost-effective and collaborative opportunities social media provides to promote one's work. Voluntary sector employees are more likely to use social media to build their organisations' profiles (52% compared with 25% overall) and keep in touch with people in other organisations (46% compared with 38% overall).

It is interesting that we find only small differences between public and private use of social media, especially given the greater restrictions in the public sector (only 19% of employees having free access to social media, compared with 34% in the private sector). While there are some differences – for example, the online jobs market seems more active in the private sector – there are no differences in many areas, such as using social media to engage with customers.

Number of employees

Across different sizes of organisation there is no consistent trend in how much social media is used, although employees in micro organisations (fewer than ten employees) are more likely to use it than those in large organisations (32% compared with 24%).

This can be explained by the fact that social media is driven more by external communications than internal and the particular reliance on external relationships in micro organisations. Indeed, across SMEs (fewer than 250 employees), we find that social media is more often used to promote the organisation (34% compared with 18% in large organisations).

On the other hand, the larger the organisation, the more likely it is to have an internal social media platform. Among large organisations (250 or more employees), 38% of employees reported having some sort of enterprise social networks, compared with 17% of medium and 9% of small organisations. This makes intuitive sense, as social media helps us find people with similar interests or outlooks when we wouldn't usually come across them. Clearly, the smaller the

organisation, the more likely we are to feel we already know and can adequately communicate with everyone we need to.

Strategic priorities

Through our HR survey, we looked at what organisational factors are related to the presence of internal social media.[11] The findings are not what we anticipated, in that organisations with internal social media are no more likely to place strategic priorities on innovation, employee well-being, exploiting new technology or refocusing business direction. The only strategic priorities that are positively related to the presence of internal social media are talent management and increasing global presence (correspondingly, a focus on domestic markets is negatively related).

Dispersion of the workforce

Turning to a more specific business case, some organisations have been seen to use internal social media to facilitate communications across geographically dispersed workforces, such as transport workers or consultants working off-site (Gifford 2013). Thus, our HR survey asked respondents what proportions of their workforces were based on a single site, two or three sites, or more.

Our analysis showed no correlation between the number of sites on which employees are based and the presence of internal social media. Thus, while some dispersed workforces have benefited from internal social media, it is not the most relevant factor for most organisations.

Figure 20: Work-related social media use by sector (%)

Sector	%
Public sector	23
Private sector	27
Voluntary sector	38

Base: Employees who use social media for work (n=1,447 public; 510 private; 129 voluntary)

Figure 21: Work-related social media use by organisation size (%)

Organisation size	%
Large organisation	24
Medium organisation	30
Small organisation	26
Micro organisation	32
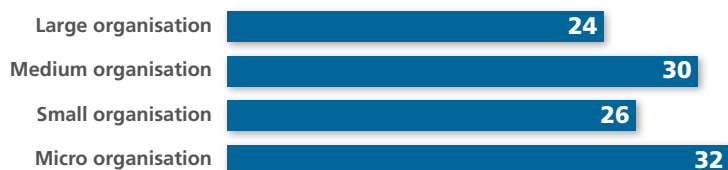
Base: Employees who use social media for work (n=1,202 large; 339 medium; 276 small; 231 micro)

4 How do employers manage social and digital technology?

Key figures

- 50% of employees have access to social media at work.
- 74% of employees say their organisations have a social media policy.
- 29% of employers have disciplined or dismissed an employee for misuse of social media in the last year.
- Only 24% of employees can connect their own smartphone to their organisation's IT network.

Much has been written about the risks presented by social media for libel and damage to organisations' reputations. The risks were already heightened with email, which made it easier to unthinkingly send confidential information and offensive material or comments and, especially because of its permanence, for these to be forwarded with damaging consequences.

These risks have increased yet again with social media. The norms of its use encourage candid, in-the-moment conversations in which banter can be common. And the mechanics mean that vast numbers of unintended recipients can be reached very quickly. The fallout from this has been seen most vividly by the Lord McAlpine Twitter fiasco, in which it was wrongly intimated he was the subject of sex abuse accusations and which has led to Sally Bercow, Alan Davies and a number of other high-profile individuals with hefty legal costs and/or £15,000 fines. In an organisational setting, HMV recently faced the embarrassing situation of its announcements of redundancies being 'live tweeted' by an employee who managed its official Twitter account.

The social norms of how we use platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are still being shaped and it will be interesting to see how we view our present time in years to come. Will we look back at our current selves as behaving rashly with powerful communication tools we were not adept enough to handle?

Case law is also developing. It has now been established that, although social media activity is often instantaneous and conversational, its more permanent content can be the subject of the more serious libel law, as well as slander (Terry 2013). Other examples of case law include the following (Rees 2013):

- *Smith v Trafford Housing Trust* (2012) demonstrated that employers cannot necessarily discipline an employee for using social media to express views that fall foul of their equal opportunities policies.
- *Otomewo v The Carphone Warehouse* (2012) established that an employer can be exposed to vicarious liability if an employee uses social media to harass or defame a colleague in work time or using employer-owned devices.

- *Whitmar Publications Ltd v Gamage* (2013) established that, although LinkedIn's terms and conditions state that accounts are owned by the registered individuals, an employer can have a right to access an account managed on its behalf by an employee.
- *Flexman v BG Group* (2012) found that an employee was constructively dismissed for being disciplined for his use of LinkedIn, which included posting a CV and indicating that he was 'interested in career opportunities'.

What is clear throughout such cases is that employers are much less vulnerable when they have clear policies on what online behaviour is expected from employees who use social media (Broughton et al 2011). How many organisations actually heed this advice and how much access do organisations give employees to social media?

Employee access to social media

Half of employees (50%) have free or restricted access to social media in their organisations. As mentioned in Section 2, given that only 26% of employees use social media for work, this suggests that a lack of access is not holding back

the advance of social technology. By far the main way that access to social media is restricted is by blocking certain types of website, although restricting access to certain devices or certain times is not uncommon.

In our HR survey, we asked respondents whose organisations did restrict or ban social media what reasons were given for this. The most common concern was IT security, cited by two-thirds of respondents. Close behind this was concern about employee
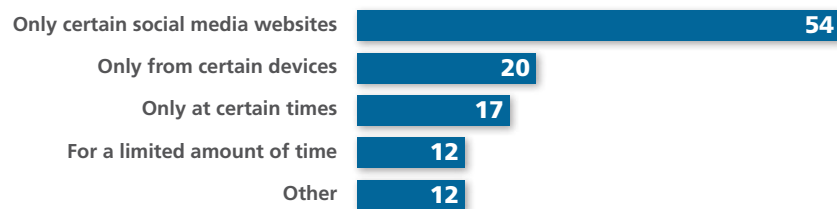
productivity (for example time-wasting), which points either to a lack of trust or a view that social media is superfluous for employees' jobs. Risk to brand reputation was a fairly common reason, but far less so, being cited by just three in ten respondents.

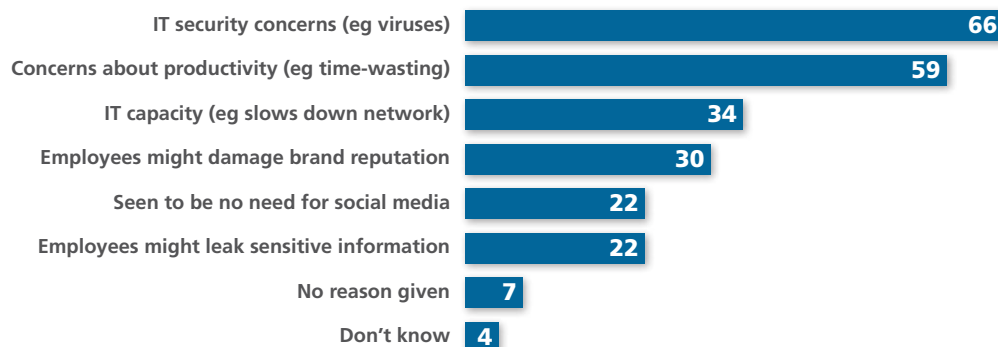**Figure 22: Can you access social media websites through your organisation's IT systems?**

32%	**18**%	**37**%	**14**%
Yes, without restrictions	Yes, but with restrictions	No, not at all	Don't know
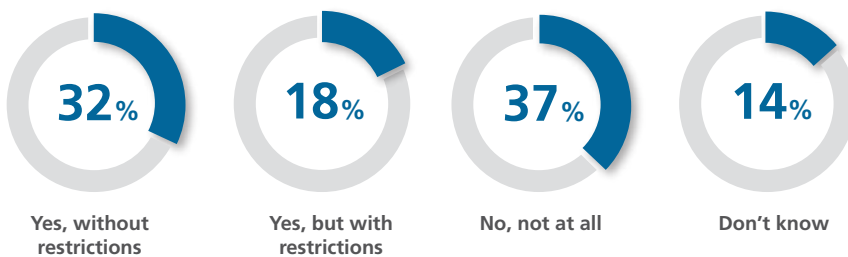
Base: UK employees (n=2,109)

Figure 23: How is your access to social media restricted at your place of work? (%)

Only certain social media websites	54
Only from certain devices	20
Only at certain times	17
For a limited amount of time	12
Other	12

Base: Employees with restricted access (n=415)

Figure 24: Why does your organisation restrict access to social media? (%)

IT security concerns (eg viruses)	66
Concerns about productivity (eg time-wasting)	59
IT capacity (eg slows down network)	34
Employees might damage brand reputation	30
Seen to be no need for social media	22
Employees might leak sensitive information	22
No reason given	7
Don't know	4

Base (HR survey): Respondents whose organisations restrict social media access (n=422)

Social media policies

In our HR survey, three-quarters of respondents (74%) said their organisations had a stated policy on social media. Of those who were familiar with this, the clear majority thought that it was 'fairly' (57%) or 'very' effective (16%).
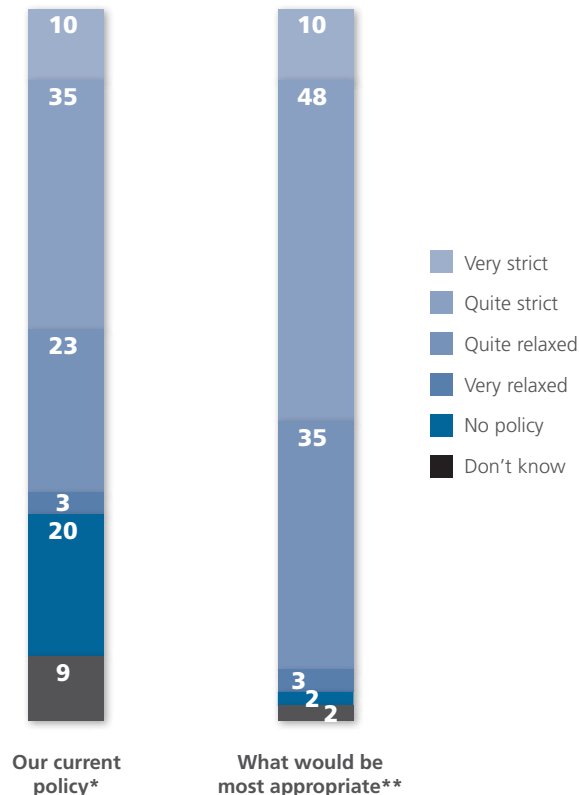
The survey suggests that the strictness of social media policies is broadly in line with how strict respondents think they should be, the main exception being that very few (just 2%) believe that no policy is appropriate.

Digging a bit deeper, we also asked respondents their views on how encouraging their organisations were of social media use for work, how clear their guidelines were and their own views on employees' use

of social media (Figure 26). The first of these is a mixed picture, although more organisations encourage employees to use social media for work than not. The general view is that employees can be trusted to use social media responsibly, yet at the same time it is typically thought that they nonetheless need monitoring.
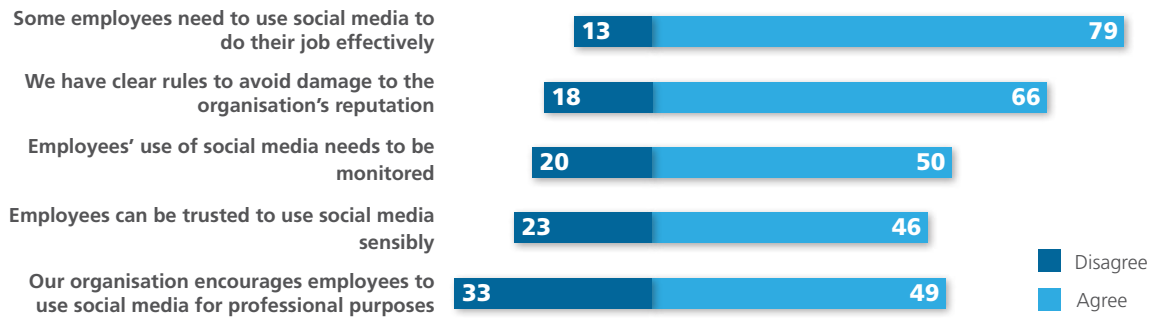
It is encouraging that two-thirds of respondents to the HR survey believe they set clear guidelines on how to use social media without damaging the organisation's reputation, although almost one in five (18%) disagreeing with this suggests there is ample room for mistakes to be made; employee views are less positive on this, with only half (50%) of respondents agreeing with this statement.

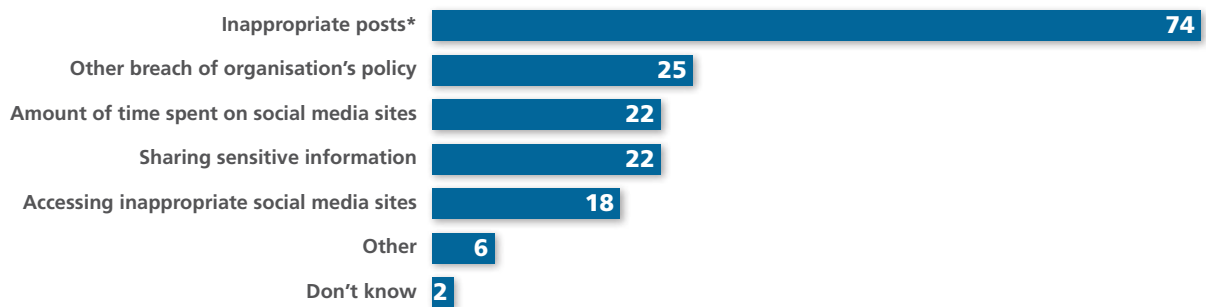**Figure 25: Strictness of your organisation's social media policy (%)**

Very strict
Quite strict
Quite relaxed
Very relaxed
No policy
Don't know

Our current policy*

What would be most appropriate**

Base (HR survey): All respondents (*n= 586; **n=589)

Figure 26: Views on social media policies (%)

	Disagree	Agree
Some employees need to use social media to do their job effectively	13	79
We have clear rules to avoid damage to the organisation's reputation	18	66
Employees' use of social media needs to be monitored	20	50
Employees can be trusted to use social media sensibly	23	46
Our organisation encourages employees to use social media for professional purposes	33	49

Base (HR survey): All organisations (n=589)

Figure 27: Reasons employees have been disciplined for social media use (%)

Inappropriate posts*	74
Other breach of organisation's policy	25
Amount of time spent on social media sites	22
Sharing sensitive information	22
Accessing inappropriate social media sites	18
Other	6
Don't know	2

Base (HR survey): Respondents whose organisations have disciplined or dismissed employees for social media use in the least year (n=173)

Note: all figures except * are indicative only, due to low cell counts

Indeed, three in ten respondents (29%) reported that their organisations had disciplined or dismissed employees for misuse of social media in the last year. As shown in Figure 27, by far the most common reason for this was that they had posted inappropriate comments, which was cited in three-quarters of cases. This highlights the importance of giving *clear* guidelines, as – unlike accessing inappropriate sites or limiting the amount of time spent on social media – inappropriate comments cannot be controlled automatically by IT settings.

'Three in five employees use a mobile device for work, and of these, notably more employees use their own devices than devices provided by their employers.'

Mobile digital devices

Finally, we asked about organisational policies and practices on mobile digital devices. As discussed in Section 1, three in five employees use a mobile device for work, and of these, notably more employees use their own devices than devices provided by their employers.

However, our HR survey showed that only one in four organisations allows their employees to connect their own smartphones (24%) or tablets (23%) to the organisation's IT network. Further, we found that only 10% of respondents worked in organisations that offered any employees cost-sharing schemes for mobile devices. Thus, as a whole, the practice of bring-your-own-device (BYOD) is not very well supported.

Figure 28: Which mobile devices can employees connect to your organisation's IT network? (%)
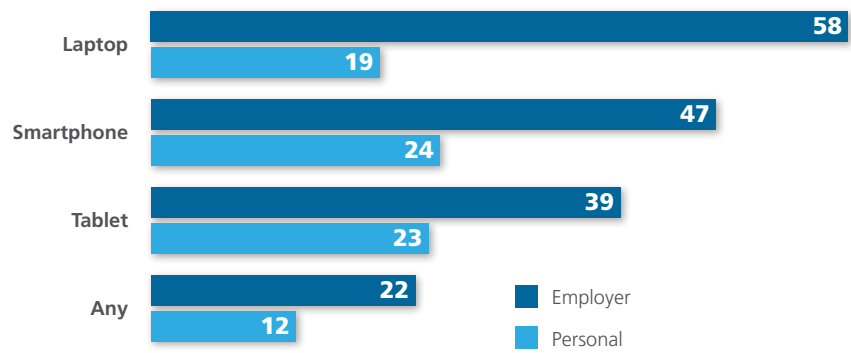
Base (HR survey): All respondents (n=684)

5 What difference does social technology make?

Key figures

- 53% of social media 'work users' find it gives meaningful connections with new people.
- 50% find that social media aids external collaboration.
- 49% believe that social media helps get the right information to the right people.
- 58% find that mobile devices help flexible working.
- 39% find that mobile devices make it harder to switch off from work.

It is difficult to get an accurate sense of the overall impact of social media. Even if we ask about the broad benefit of social media to the organisation, views vary substantially according to whether and how much they use social media. Almost half (47%) of employees who use social me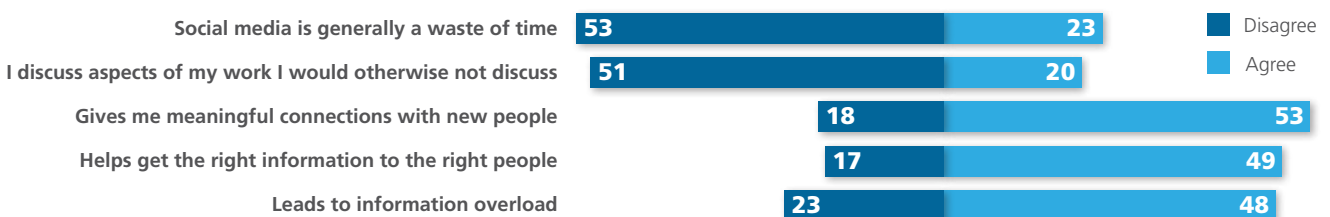dia for work on a daily basis see a great deal of benefit, but among non-users, who make up three-quarters of UK employees, the proportion is nearer 1 in 20 (6%).[12] Thus, while an overall judgement would be that social media has made little contribution to the world of work, this may change as more people interact with it.

Figure 29: Social media benefits my organisation a lot (%)

Daily users of social media for work	47
Weekly users	26
Less frequent users	22
Never use social media for work	6

Base: UK employees (n=162 daily; 189 weekly; 213 less often; 1,571 never)

Figure 30: General benefits and impacts of social media for work (%)

	Disagree	Agree
Social media is generally a waste of time	53	23
I discuss aspects of my work I would otherwise not discuss	51	20
Gives me meaningful connections with new people	18	53
Helps get the right information to the right people	17	49
Leads to information overload	23	48

Base: Employees who use social media for work (n=564)

'Social media is unlikely to displace email anytime soon, if indeed it ever does.'

We build a clearer picture when we look at different aspects of the value social media represents. As can be seen in Figure 30, the strong weight of opinion is that social media is not a waste of time. People don't generally get involved in *different* discussions than they would normally, but they do develop worthwhile relationships with new people. Criticisms that it is rarely more than worthless chatter hold little water for most of us.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the claims made of social media is that it increases the efficiency of information flows by helping get the right information to the right people. We find broad support for this, although almost as common is the view that it leads to information overload. This ambiguous picture suggests the technology, or our mastery of it, is not yet developed enough to make social media a very reliable communication tool. Social media is unlikely to displace email anytime soon, if indeed it ever does.

External collaboration
As discussed in Section 2, work-related activity on social media tends to focus on relationships external to our organisations. This is reflected in the tangible benefits we perceive, with widespread agreement that it aids collaboration between organisations but general disagreement that it supports internal collaboration.
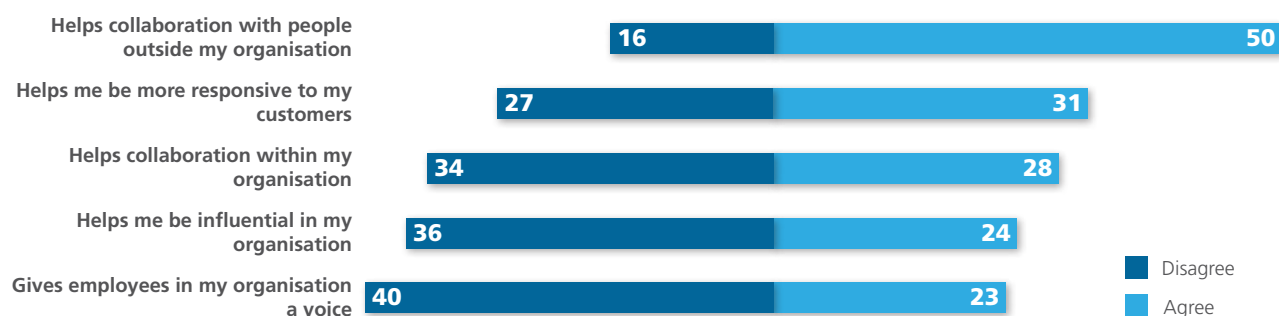
Nonetheless, our findings rebuff the criticism that social media is unfocused and does not lead to committed action or deliverables. Along with meeting new people and networking, external collaboration is the most common benefit seen from social media.

Employee voice
Moving on to a particular area of the internal workings of organisations, we find limited evidence that social media increases employee voice. At first sight, there appears to be a positive impact, in so far as managers seek employee views slightly more in organisations that have internal social media. This can be seen in Figure 32, which shows the proportions of employees who think managers in their organisations are 'good' or 'very good' at seeking the views of employees or employee representatives.

But beyond this, internal social media has yet to have much influence. When we look at how *responsive* managers are to employee suggestions or how open they are to *influence*, there is no difference according to whether organisations have internal social media. In essence, to date internal social media has given employees a slightly better platform to *express* their views on organisational or employment issues, but has not influenced the degree to which management is listening.

Figure 31: Impacts of social media within and external to the organisation (%)

	Disagree	Agree
Helps collaboration with people outside my organisation	16	50
Helps me be more responsive to my customers	27	31
Helps collaboration within my organisation	34	28
Helps me be influential in my organisation	36	24
Gives employees in my organisation a voice	40	23

Base: Employees who use social media for work (n=564)

Figure 32: Impact of internal social media on employee involvement in decision-making (%)

Managers seek the views of employees or their representatives (% positive rating)	45 / 39
Managers respond to suggestions from employees or representatives (% positive rating)	39 / 38
Managers allow employees or representatives to influence final decisions (% positive rating)	32 / 34

■ Internal social media platform*
■ No internal social media**

Base: UK employees (*n=617; **1,239)

Further analysis suggests that organisations benefit more from social media where their managers are more consultative. Among employees who rate their managers 'good' or 'very good' at asking for employee views, 55% say the organisation benefits a lot from social media, compared with 39% overall. This time, the difference carries through when one looks at how well managers respond to suggestions[13] and to some extent allowing employees or representatives to influence decisions.[14] While it is not conclusive, a reasonable interpretation is that implemented well, internal social media will meaningfully boost employee voice. This is in line with case study research that suggests the ability of social media to increase employee voice is largely dependent on other factors, notably the general state of employment relations and internal communications (Martin et al 2013).

In short, while there is some evidence for the view that social media gives employees voice without influence (see Gifford 2013), it is early days in the uptake of internal social media and it may yet prove to be a democratising force that contributes to organisational culture change.

What is clearer is that there is a real difference between merely having a platform to air one's views and genuine employee voice, which is present when leaders are minded to take those views on board and respond (Silverman et al 2013, Walker 2012). Implementing a social media platform is unlikely in and of itself to transform an organisation's culture and should be seen as a tool rather than a solution.

Social media as a leadership tool
Making good use of social media also correlates with other tangible benefits in employee relations. Employees who believe that their organisations benefit 'a lot' from social media are more likely to say that:[15]

- They have a very strong sense of their organisation's core purpose (51% compared with 34% overall) and are strongly motivated by that purpose (30% compared with 19%).
- They feel confident in their senior leaders (56% compared with 42% overall) and trust them (54% compared with 41%).
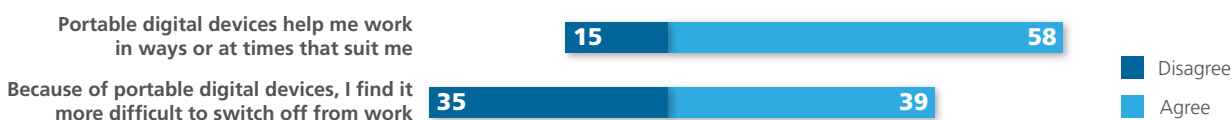
- They would feel confident to tell senior managers that there was a problem if they saw something wrong (68% compared with 59%).

Again, we need to be careful in interpreting these results, in particular as there may be intervening factors – for example, organisations that are better at communicating in general may be more likely to embrace social media. Further research will be needed to investigate these relationships more robustly.

Mobile devices: big pros, but still some cons
Finally, our survey shows that mobile technology has a mixed impact on our working lives. Specifically, we find strong agreement that devices such as smartphones and tablets give us more flexibility in how and when we work, but a number of us seem to struggle with this freedom, as it can make it more difficult to switch off from work and maintain a reasonable work–life balance. However, as can be seen in Figure 33, the pros generally outweigh the cons.

Figure 33: Impacts of mobile technology (%)

Portable digital devices help me work in ways or at times that suit me	15 / 58
Because of portable digital devices, I find it more difficult to switch off from work	35 / 39

■ Disagree
■ Agree

Base: Employees who use mobile technology for work (n=1,316)

Conclusions

'Overall, UK employees are clear that social media does not help us do our jobs more effectively or be more influential in our organisations.'

Social media and mobile technology are leading to changes in the world of work, but a 'social business' revolution has yet to happen. There may be pockets of organisations where such a transformation has occurred, but for most of us the tipping point has yet to be reached where social media reaches critical mass and it becomes easier to engage with it than be left out of the loop. Perhaps this should not surprise us. To date, the rapid rise of social media has largely been driven by its application to our personal lives. The world of work has yet to catch up.

The main reason we do not use social media more in our work does not seem to be a lack of access or lack of knowledge of how best to use it, but that we do not see its relevance. The strength of disagreement with some of our poll questions about the role of social media is startling. In general, the clear view among most UK employees is that social media does not help us do our jobs more effectively or be more influential inside our organisations. We also have a strong preference for keeping our personal and professional uses of social media separate.

Internal and external
When we do use social media for work, it tends to be noticeably more externally focused than internal to our organisations. Branding, customer engagement and recruitment are particular areas where social media is seen to be especially relevant. Earlier in 2013, we published a report that discussed social media's potential not only to give employee voice but to overtake the employee survey as

the employee insight tool of choice (Silverman et al 2013). Our survey shows that nationally, the UK is far from reaching this point.

To some degree, this may simply reflect that the claims made for social media – to empower employees and support collaboration, and so on – have been overstated. But equally, it may be that organisations and employees have yet to experience the full value of social media as an internal communication tool and their views will change in time.

This is not to say that social media will become a tool predominantly used for internal networking. On the contrary, one would always expect the greatest benefit of virtual networks to lie with people we don't already see face to face on a regular basis. But we might see the balance between external and internal uses of social media even up slightly, as the relevance of platforms such as Yammer becomes more obvious.

Impacts and benefits
In fact, our findings suggest that social media *can* be a central tool in fostering a more open, communicative and collaborative organisation, if it is used well. In a significant minority of cases, we find evidence that social media helps colleagues to share ideas, give employees a voice and, to a lesser extent, that senior leaders use it to understand employee views.

However, in and of itself, implementing an internal social media platform will only increase employee voice cosmetically, just as the introduction of any new

technology will not singlehandedly transform organisational culture. We should not expect too much from social technology. Indeed, Gannaway (2013) has argued that internal social media should not even be regarded as a tool, but rather a platform on which initiatives can be built.

Meaningful voice is more than simply giving employees a platform: they need to be heard. This is a lesson senior leaders would do well to heed. While they are making effective use of social media to engage with the outside business world, they generally fall behind their middle managers in using it to connect to employees and become more visible leaders.

The use of social media to support e-learning has not taken off in a major way. If we take a broader view and consider more informal forms of learning, it is evident that a major use and benefit of social media is to find out more about areas of interest and to share learning with others. But we are not quite 'there' yet.

Social media can aid the effective transfer of knowledge, but as it is currently used, it is a double-edged sword. It is seen to both help get the right information to the right people *and* to lead to information overload. Perhaps as we become more adept at using social media – not to mention more deliberate and effective in how we use it in conjunction with email – we will see greater benefit in the learning and development sphere. In particular, there is the question of how learning and development professionals use and harness social technology to support high-performance organisations. Further qualitative research on leading practice may help here.

The clearest benefit of social media is seen to be in giving meaningful connections with people we would otherwise not know and supporting collaboration. Currently this remains largely a question of networking outside our organisations, but as already stated, we can expect this balance to shift slightly in coming years.

Mobile technology and work–life balance

When we look at mobile technology, we find that this can be another double-edged sword. Smartphones, laptops and tablets do help us work more flexibly, in ways that fit in with our modern lifestyles. But the experience of many is that instead of freeing us up, mobile technology proves to be a device that enables work to infiltrate all corners of our lives, meaning we rarely switch off.

Furthermore, there is a clear desire to define and limit our work and stop it encroaching on our personal lives. Employees generally make a clear separation between their personal and professional social networking, confirming case study research in the Australian ICT sector that finds this to be a boundary that employees actively manage (Rose 2013).

Obviously, this is not merely a problem of technology, as it relates to work pressure, employees' understanding of the employment deal, organisational culture and even our expectations of what an 'engaged' employee looks like. But, for the sake of a reasonable work–life balance, it must be hoped that we become better at delineating the boundaries of our work and using our mobile devices in a more considered way.

Individual and organisational differences

Understanding the younger generations is seen in many organisations as a strong argument for engaging with social technology (CIPD 2013a). As working lives are extended and we become a more age-diverse workforce, we cannot take for granted that older managers and leaders understand the next generation of recruits (Parry and Urwin 2009).

Our research confirms that there are currently age-related differences in views and behaviour on social media. However, while we find signs of a 'digital generation', the generational differences line only carries so far. We are to some extent a product of the age in which we grow up or enter the workforce, but we are not constrained by this.

Behaviour and preferences shift with personal priorities, so our use of social technology is likely to change with the stages of our career development (for example, young employees may start to use LinkedIn more to raise their profile as their career starts to take off). Equally, culture shifts across the board, eventually affecting everyone. Social technology is far from being the sole preserve of GenY and already platforms such as Twitter have grown enormously in popularity among older groups. We may see apparent generational differences in the use of social technology narrow over coming years.

Less predictable is that senior leaders are the most avid users of social media for work purposes. They use it more than middle managers and non-managerial employees, in particular to network and publish blogs and comments. This trend is understandable, however, as senior leaders tend more to rely on external networks to develop business opportunities (and find new posts), which our research shows is a main reason we use social media for work. As such, this finding highlights that we need to find the relevance of social media to our personal situations to make best use of it.

From an organisational point of view, too, finding the relevance of social media is important. Organisational characteristics related to social media include that it is used more in the voluntary sector, in particular for building organisational profile and networking externally. SMEs are also more likely to use social media to build organisational profile and, on the other hand, the larger the organisation, the more likely it is to have an internal social media platform.

However, we found no evidence of a link between how dispersed workforces are and whether internal social media platforms are used. But while this is clearly not the most salient factor at the moment, this could change. We are still witnessing the early adopters of enterprise social networks and it is likely that factors that currently differentiate these organisations, most notably a forward-thinking attitude to new technologies, overpower any relationship with specific business cases.

Guiding social networking to protect the organisation
While information overload and poor work–life balance are serious risks that warrant attention, the main risks we tend to think of in social media concern damaging comments, invasion of privacy and litigation.

The case for setting clear policies or guidelines on social media usage is strong, especially if employees are encouraged to use it as part of their jobs. Our research shows that employees generally appreciate this and do not expect absolute freedom. This is understandable, as faced with new territory (using social media for work) we tend to feel supported rather than constrained by guidance. Most

employees do not need learning support to get to grips with social technology, but clarity on what constitutes responsible online behaviour will always be helpful.

Clear policies are just as relevant for employers and HR professionals themselves. We find a mishmash of practices on using social media to screen in recruitment, which can often amount to an untargeted 'fishing' exercise. When one considers the potential scope for discrimination claims arising from online screening (CIPD 2013c, Broughton et al 2013, Rees 2013), it seems that this is a potentially risky practice with – as our survey suggests – relatively very little impact. If it is a practice employers want to pursue, they should protect themselves and the fairness of the recruitment process with clear guidance consistently and transparently applied.

Is 'social' the future?
The relative lack of interest in using social media for work can be taken in two ways: employees have yet to understand its value, or the advocates have overestimated its value. So is 'social business' a case of 'horses for courses' or the inevitable future to which we will all eventually conform?

On the one hand, most people will only use social media in their working lives and organisations if they find the relevance of it to their situation. And we must also take seriously the great majority of employees who see no relevance of it to their jobs. As Perry Timms, social media and engagement adviser at the CIPD, puts it, *'Just because "social" works for freelancers, start-ups and social enterprises doesn't mean everyone else is a luddite.'*

On the other hand, social media is a flexible tool and it is likely to spread as people develop a better understanding of its capability. Further, when one looks at how much the youngest generation of employees are already using social media, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it will, as standard, become a far bigger part of work.

At current levels, claims made by social media advocates who predicted widespread transformation appear exaggerated. Equally, social media can clearly be pertinent to and beneficial for our work. Limiting misconceptions, such as that Twitter is irrelevant if you don't want to know what people have had for their breakfast, can be expected to wane.

Next steps
In the next phase of this research, we will conduct case studies that look at leading practice in the organisational use of social technology. We hope this will shed more light on how social technology can have a noticeable impact when it is used as a key part of the business. This could include areas we have not covered in this survey, such as how HR uses data analytics available on social media activity.

It will be interesting to see how transferrable the lessons are from these cases and how much the relevance of social media differs with business environments. It will also be interesting to see, through further survey work, how much the overall picture for the UK compares with other countries and how it changes over the next few years. Watch this space; it's changing fast.

Endnotes

[1] See www.defaulttopublic.net

[2] In some areas (for example, the use of social media to provide learning platforms) there are clear discrepancies between the two data sets. In general, because of its more robust sampling, we take the employee survey to be more representative of the UK as a whole.

[3] This is less than what daily users spend on social media for personal use (38% less than 30 minutes and 26% over an hour).

[4] Reading other people's material is not only the activity that most of us undertake on social media, it is also by far what we spend most time doing: 60% of employees ranked it as their most frequent activity.

[5] This difference is confirmed by those on the impacts of social media, which show it contributes much more to external collaboration than internal (see Figure 31).

[6] This figure drops to 62% among employees whose have access to internal social media, with 28% saying their organisations provide leaning and development through social 'to some extent' and 10% 'a lot'. However, this is still some way off the more positive responses we received in the HR survey (see Figure 9). It is difficult to say what the main reason for this discrepancy is. It could be due to a lack of knowledge among employees of what learning platforms are available, but it is also likely that the opt-in sampling method used in the HR survey attracted respondents whose organisations were more active users of social media. As mentioned above, for its more robust sampling, we take the employee survey to be more representative of the UK as a whole.

[7] The emergence of sites such as Glassdoor.com has particularly contributed to this.

[8] This is slightly more than the Acas survey, which found that 36% of employers make some use of social media in recruitment and a further 8% make extensive use.

[9] This is broadly in line with the Acas research (Broughton et al 2013), which found that 34% of employers use social media to *'undertake screening/background checks/obtain information on candidates as part of the application process'*.

[10] These are indicative findings only. Percentages are not accurate due to low cell count.

[11] This analysis was based on correlations in the HR survey between the presence of internal social media and various strategic priorities.

[12] Views on the benefit of social media to oneself are in line with these views on the benefit to the organisation.

[13] Among employees who rate managers in their organisation as 'good' or 'very good' at responding to employee suggestions, 52% say their organisation benefits from social media, compared with 38% overall.

[14] Among employees who rate managers in their organisation as 'good' or 'very good' at allowing employees to influence decisions, 46% say their organisation benefits from social media, compared with 42% overall.

[15] As with our findings on employee voice, the emphasis here is on managing social media in a way that benefits the organisation. When we simply look at whether organisations have internal social media platforms, all the below relationships disappear.

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