A Survey on Digital Advertising for Public Affairs 2016
Survey Methodology

In April 2016, the Public Affairs Council sent this survey to Council members with backgrounds in communications or digital advocacy. In addition, in June 2016, the survey was to 2016 Digital Media and Advocacy Conference attendees.

In total, 58 organizations participated, but only 44 of them have purchased digital ads in the last 12 months. This report analyzes only the data for those 44 organizations.

This report provides a statistical summary of answers to survey questions. The mean is an arithmetical average calculated by adding the figures in a set, then dividing the sum by the number of items in the set.
Key Takeaways

- **Overall public affairs practitioners think digital ads are an effective tool in their public affairs efforts, but future spending on these ads remains uncertain.** Nearly three-quarters of respondents found that digital advertising has helped their organization achieve its public affairs goals. And while 43 percent expect spending on ads to increase within their organization, 45 percent are unsure if their digital budget would increase in the future.

- **Facebook is the favorite tool for public affairs advertising — for now.** While Google is the leading digital advertising platform overall, within the policy and political community, Facebook continues to prove its value by being the platform used most often. Facebook is particularly helpful for associations looking to engage with key audiences that spend significant time scrolling through Facebook’s news feed.

- **The jury is still out for many organizations.** Many of the respondents expressed that their organizational leaders still want more independent data and metrics to show that digital advertising for public affairs and advocacy is effective.
Survey Analysis

What types of digital advertising have you purchased in the last 12 months?

- Facebook advertising or promoted posts: 86%
- Twitter advertising: 66%
- Google Display ads: 43%
- Search advertising (e.g., Google, Bing): 43%
- Digital news publication advertising or sponsored content (e.g., POLITICO, CNN, The Hill): 61%
- Music stream advertising (e.g., Pandora, Spotify): 14%
- Online display advertising (purchasing from an ad exchange across multiple websites): 43%

Additional responses include LinkedIn (2), Instagram and podcast advertising.

n = 44

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What is your annual digital advertising budget for public affairs?

**Associations**
- More than $150,000: 21%
- $50,000–$150,000: 14%
- $10,000–$50,000 a year: 18%
- Less than $10,000 a year: 11%
- None. We don't have a set budget: 36%

** Corporations**
- More than $150,000: 27%
- $50,000–$150,000: 13%
- $10,000–$50,000 a year: 20%
- Less than $10,000 a year: 20%
- None. We don't have a set budget: 20%

**Anticipated Future Digital Advertising Budgets**

- Increasing budget: 43%
- Not increasing budget: 12%
- Still determining future budget: 45%

n = 28
What metrics do you use to measure success?

**Associations**

- Impressions: 83%
- Clicks: 86%
- Action conversions: 45%
- Views: 76%
- Likes, retweets or shares: 69%
- Revenue raised: 10%

**Corporations**

- Impressions: 53%
- Clicks: 67%
- Action conversions: 80%
- Views: 60%
- Likes, retweets or shares: 80%
- Revenue raised: 33%

n = 29

n = 15
Has digital advertising been effective in helping your organization achieve its public affairs goals?

**Associations**
- Yes: 66%
- Unsure: 31%
- No: 3%
  
  *n = 29*

**Corporations**
- Yes: 93%
- No: 7%

  *n = 14*
What is your primary goal for using digital advertising?

- Increase awareness for an issue — 39%
- Persuade policymakers on a legislative or regulatory issue — 26%
- Gain grassroots supporters — 23%
- Employee, member or stakeholder engagement — 12%

n = 43
Is your digital ad content created internally or externally?

**Associations**
- External: 59%
- Internal: 41%
- n = 29

**Corporations**
- External: 29%
- Internal: 71%
- n = 14

Do you use a consultant to place your digital ads?

**Associations**
- No: 45%
- Yes: 55%
- n = 29

**Corporations**
- No: 79%
- Yes: 21%
- n = 14
Resources on Digital Advocacy & Public Affairs

For additional information, check out these Council resources:

• A Brief Guide to Key Digital Media Advertising Terms
• Four Big Trends in Digital Public Affairs and Advocacy
• Why LinkedIn Should Be Part of Your Association Engagement Strategy
• Top Association Examples of Using Twitter for Public Affairs, Government Relations and CSR
• Top Corporate Examples of Using Twitter for Public Affairs, Government Relations and CSR
• Members of the 114th United States Congress with a Snapchat Account
• Three Effective Ways to Use Storytelling for Public Affairs
Thank you to all who participated in this survey.

Have questions?
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