

2013 Fortune 500 Are Bullish on Social Media: Big Companies Get Excited About Google+, Instagram, Foursquare and Pinterest

Conducted By:

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Introduction

Fortune Magazine annually compiles a list of America's largest corporations, aptly named the "Fortune 500" (F500) given their size and wealth. Due to the hugely influential role that these companies play in the business world, studying their adoption and use of social media tools offers important insights into the future of commerce. These corporations provide a look at emergent social media trends among America's most successful companies.

Each May the list of the top 500 corporations is released in a special issue of Fortune Magazine. The F500 list includes publicly and privately held companies for which revenues are publicly available. For more information on the methodology used to select the F500 corporations, please visit <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/>.

In 2008, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research released one of the first studies on social media adoption among the F500 and has repeated that study every year since. The study has been expanded over the years to include the usage of the fastest growing social media platforms and tools (Instagram, Google+, Foursquare and Pinterest) as well as indicators of engagement (such as the number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers).

Our 2011 F500 study drew attention for the leveling off of blogging with only 23% hosting a public facing corporate blog. Since then, things have changed. In 2012, there was a leap forward and 28% hosted public facing blogs. That surge continues with our latest iteration showing 34% of these corporate giants creating and sharing content through blogs. Adoption of this mature social media tool by these great companies signals the return of the online in depth conversation, thought leadership and original content development that was popular a decade ago with early corporate adopters of blogging like IBM and Ford Motors.

Methodology

The following definition was used to locate 2013 F500 corporations with blogs: A company was counted as having a blog if they had *a public-facing corporate blog from the primary corporation with current posts*.

Due to the complexity of corporate legal structures in this group and no clear methodology on how subsidiaries have been located or analyzed by others, the research presented here continues to focus on the primary/listed corporation. While we acknowledge that mergers and acquisitions along with expansions have resulted in segments or subsidiaries with blogs, our focus has consistently been at the corporate level.

It is worth noting that there is evidence of usage of social media tools such as blogs inside these corporations. This research did not look at that subject, but instead focused on public-facing corporate blogs as a barometer of social media usage to engage the public.

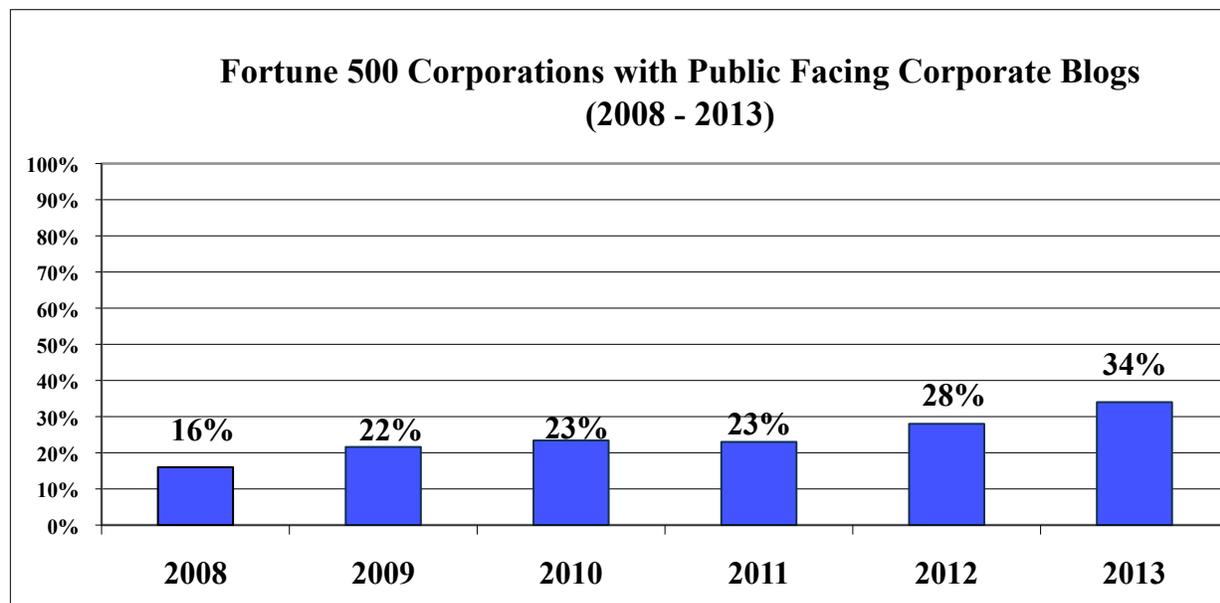
All corporations were analyzed using multiple steps. First, working from the published 2013 F500 list, all corporate home pages were examined for links to, or mention of, corporate blogs. If none were found, a search on the company’s site was conducted using the key word “blog.” Any links resulting from that search were followed and evaluated using the established criteria.

If no blogs were located on the home page or through a site search, other search engines were used. Both Google and Technorati (a leading blog-focused search engine) were employed to check for corporate blogs using key words that included the primary/listed company name and the word “blog.” This proved to be an effective method since additional blogs were located. A search of other sites gathering information on the F500 was also reviewed for any mention of blogs in that group.

The same methodology was used to locate corporate Twitter accounts and Facebook pages. In each case the appropriate sites for each platform was utilized. As in last year’s study, the number of corporate YouTube and Pinterest accounts was studied. The same methodology was employed as described above for blogs, Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, Google+, Foursquare and Instagram were added for the first time this year and treated in the same way.

1a. Corporate Blogs

In 2013, 171 companies (34%) had corporate blogs showing the largest increase in use of this tool since the 2008 study of the F500. These include two of the top five corporations (WalMart and Exxon), leaving the other three (Chevron, Phillips 66 and Berkshire Hathaway) without a public-facing blog.



1b. Corporate Blogs by Industry

The 171 corporations with blogs come from 58 of the 75 industries represented in the 2013 F500. A partial list is presented below showing those industries with the greatest presence in the F500. The percent of corporations blogging varies by industry. As might be expected, companies in the Telecommunications industry have 53% of their companies blogging. Specialty Retail has 46% of their companies with corporate blogs. In contrast, only two (13%) companies in the Motor Vehicles and Parts industry blog. Industries with no blogs include Tobacco, Pharmaceuticals and Toys and Sporting Goods.

Corporate Blogs by Industry	Number of Companies w/blogs	Percent
Telecommunications	9/17	53%
Specialty Retailers	10/22	46%
Food Consumer Products	5/15	33%
Utilities: Gas and Electric	6/23	26%
Aerospace and Defense	3/12	25%
Commercial Banks	4/18	22%
Chemicals	3/15	20%
Insurance: Property and Casualty (Stock)	2/10	20%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	2/15	13%

1c. Corporate Blogs by Rank

Since our first study in 2008, we have documented that rank influences adoption of blogging in the F500. Those corporations ranked in the top 200, out blogged those in the bottom 200. This continues to hold with 47% of all F500 blogs coming from the top 200 corporations and 36% coming from those ranked 300-500 on the list. With nearly half of all F500 blogs coming from the top 200 corporations, rank continues to be a factor in the use of this tool.

1d. Level of Interaction on Corporate Blogs

All blogs were examined to determine the level of interactivity the blog allowed. This was done by looking at the blog to see if comments were accepted, if RSS feeds or email subscriptions were available and checking the date of the last post to determine how current it was. In 2013, 79% of the F500 blogs are kept current, take comments, have RSS feeds and take subscriptions.

These blogs are kept current with frequent posts on a range of topics. It appears that those companies that have made the decision to blog have utilized the tool well. There is frequent posting, on-going discussion and the ability to follow the conversation easily through RSS or email subscriptions. While there are more blogs this year, this level of engagement has been typical. Those companies that choose to blog, use the tool effectively.

2. Comparison with the Inc. 500

In the past, the F500 companies were blogging at a lower rate than other business groups, specifically the Inc. 500. The Inc. 500 list is composed of the fastest-growing, private companies in the US, while the F500 is based on total revenue (not growth) and may include public and private companies. The Inc. 500 list is published in a special issue of Inc. Magazine in September of each year.

In 2012, 44% of the Inc. 500 had corporate blogs while the 2012 F500 had 28%. With 34% of the F500 companies hosting corporate blogs in 2013, that gap may be closing. It is particularly interesting to see a jump of 6% in blogging for the wealthiest companies while the most recent group of the fastest growing companies increased their adoption of blogging by 7%.

3a. Corporate Twitter Accounts

Three hundred eighty-seven (77%) of the F500 have corporate Twitter accounts with a tweet in the past thirty days. This represents a 4% increase since last year. Eight of the top 10 companies (WalMart, Exxon, Chevron, Phillips 66, Apple, General Motors, General Electric and Ford Motors) consistently post on their Twitter accounts. Berkshire Hathaway and Valero Energy do not tweet.

Five of the 2013 F500 companies had Twitter accounts with no activity on them. These include: CF Industry Holdings, Joy Global, Laboratory Corp. of America, O'Reilly Automotive and Omnicare.

3b. Corporate Twitter Accounts by Industry

The 387 corporations with corporate Twitter accounts come from 72 of the 75 industries represented in the F500. A partial list is presented below showing those industries with the greatest presence on Twitter in the F500. The percent of corporations with Twitter accounts varies by industry. The Commercial Bank industry has 94% and the Food Consumer Products industry has 93% of their companies on Twitter. Companies in the Specialty Retail industry have 91% of their companies on Twitter. Other industries listed have half or more of their companies using this platform.

Corporate Twitter Accounts by Industry	Number of Companies w/Twitter Accounts	Percent
Commercial Banks	17/18	94%
Food Consumer Products	13/15	93%
Specialty Retailers	20/22	91%
Chemicals	13/15	87%
Telecommunications	14/17	82%
Utilities: Gas and Electric	18/23	73%
Aerospace and Defense	8/12	67%
Insurance: Property and Casualty (Stock)	9/17	53%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	8/15	53%

3c. Corporate Twitter Accounts by Rank

Rank appears to be an influence for the use of Twitter by the F500. Eight of the top 10 companies have corporate Twitter accounts. Forty-three percent of the Twitter accounts belong to the companies in the top 200 on the list, while 36% come from those ranked in the bottom 200. Those ranked higher in the 2013 F500 are more likely to adopt Twitter than their lower ranked counterparts, following the same pattern as blogging.

3d. Corporate Twitter Followers

Ironically it is the popular Facebook, new to the F500, that has the highest number of followers on Twitter, followed by Google, Starbucks, Whole Foods Market, Walt Disney, JetBlue Airways and Southwest Airlines.

Corporation	2013 Twitter Followers
Facebook	8,629,741
Google	5,965,743
Starbucks	3,813,472
Whole Foods Market	3,381,926
Walt Disney	1,757,871
JetBlue Airways	1,732,293
Southwest Airlines	1,500,140

4a. Corporate Facebook Pages

Three hundred forty-eight (70%) of the F500 are now on Facebook. This represents a 4% increase since last year. Nine of the top 10 companies (WalMart, Chevron, Phillips 66, Berkshire Hathaway, Apple, General Motors, General Electric, Valero Energy and Ford Motors) have Facebook pages. Exxon does not.

4b. Corporate Facebook Pages by Industry

The 348 corporations with corporate Facebook pages come from 72 of the 75 industries represented in the F500. A partial list is presented showing those industries with the greatest presence in the F500. The percent of corporations with Facebook pages varies by industry. Companies in the Specialty Retail industry have 96% of their companies on Facebook. The Telecommunications industry has 88% with corporate Facebook pages. Other industries listed have half or more of their companies using it while the Utilities industry has 44% and the Motor Vehicles and Parts industry has 40%.

Corporate Facebook Pages by Industry	Number of Companies w/Facebook Pages	Percent
Specialty Retailers	21/22	96%
Telecommunications	15/17	88%
Aerospace and Defense	10/12	83%
Commercial Banks	14/18	78%
Chemicals	11/15	73%
Food Consumer Products	11/15	73%
Insurance: Property and Casualty (Stock)	11/17	65%
Utilities: Gas and Electric	10/23	44%
Motor Vehicles and Parts	6/15	40%

Last year one hundred fifteen companies (23%) had neither a Twitter account nor a Facebook presence. This year that number has dropped to eighty-four companies (17%).

4c. Corporate Facebook Pages by Rank

Facebook pages among the F500 follow the same pattern of adoption by rank as Twitter and blogging. Forty-one percent of the top 200 have a corporate Facebook page while 38% of the bottom 200 use this tool. Rank clearly impacts social media adoption.

4d. Corporate Facebook Fans

Coca-Cola dominated for the past two years but for 2013 Facebook, new to the F500 list, has the most Facebook fans. Coca-Cola followed with 66,875,169 fans. Walt Disney, Starbucks, WalMart and Target all have more than 20,000,000 fans.

Corporation	2013 Facebook Fans
Facebook	92,271,077
Coca-Cola	66,875,169
Walt Disney	44,183,582
Starbucks	34,547,696
WalMart	29,090,933
Target	21,854,546

5. New 2013 Corporations

Eighteen companies are new to the Fortune 500 list. They are listed below with their 2012 rank in the Fortune 1000.

Industry	Corporation	2013 Rank	2012 Rank	Change in Rank
Securities	KKR	277	854	+577
Telecommunications	Level 3 Communications	398	541	+143
Telecommunications	Windstream	414	544	+130
Utilities: Gas and Electric	Northeast Utilities	402	527	+125
Engineering, Construction	Quanta Services	397	513	+116
Internet Services and Retailing	Facebook	482	598	+116
Construction and Farm Machinery	Joy Global	446	535	+89
Pharmaceuticals	Actavis	432	515	+83
Internet Services and Retailing	Priceline.com	473	539	+66
Wholesalers: Food and Grocery	United Natural Foods	474	520	+46
Real Estate	Simon Property Group	497	543	+46
Wholesalers: Food and Grocery	Andersons	472	517	+45
Trucking, Truck Leasing	J.B. Hunt Transport Services	486	521	+35
Airlines	JetBlue Airways	495	524	+29
Securities	Jones Financial	491	516	+25
Computer Software	CA	499	522	+23
Industry	Corporation	2013 Rank	2012 Rank	Change in Rank
Insurance: Property and Casualty (Stock)	American Financial Group	485	505	+20
Insurance: Property and Casualty (Stock)	Old Republic International	496	511	+15

6a. YouTube (Video sharing site)

Three hundred and forty-five (69%) corporate YouTube accounts were found in the 2013 F500. This is a 7% increase from last year. YouTube is as popular with the F500 as Facebook. Berkshire Hathaway is the only company ranked in the top 10 without its own YouTube channel.

6b. Pinterest (Pin board-style photo sharing and social networking site)

Pinterest has grown in membership since its public debut in 2010 and is showing up in the F500. In 2012, 11 (2%) F500 companies had Pinterest accounts. This year that number has grown to 45 companies or 9%. Half of the top 10 ranked companies have Pinterest boards including WalMart, Exxon Mobil, Apple, General Motors and Ford.

6c. Google+ (Multilingual social networking and identity service site)

One hundred and seventy-seven (35%) of the 2013 Fortune 500 have active Google+ accounts including WalMart, Phillips 66, Apple, General Motors, General Electric and Ford Motors. Additionally, 93 (19%) have Google+ corporate accounts that have not yet become active. This is the only platform studied where there were a significant number of open, but inactive accounts. It may be that corporations are still learning about Google+ or have not yet found the best use of this platform in their social media mix.

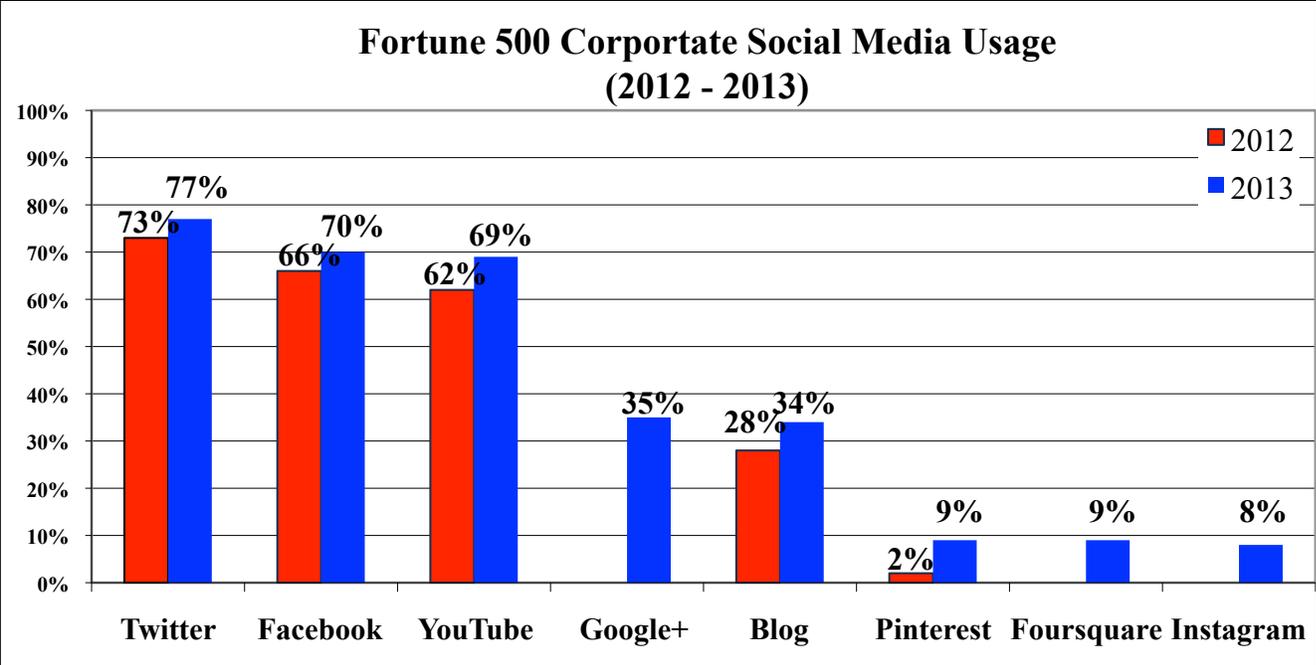
6d. Instagram (Photo-sharing and social networking site)

Instagram is owned by Facebook, a first time F500 company. Forty-four (9%) of the 2013 F500 have a corporate Instagram Account, although 1 is inactive. Ford Motors is the only top 10 company on Instagram. Other adopters include AT&T, Avon and Home Depot.

6e. Foursquare (Location-based social networking site)

Forty-four (9%) of the 2013 F500 have corporate Foursquare accounts for use on mobile devices. WalMart is the only top 10 company using Foursquare. Other adopters include Target, WalGreen and Lowe's.

Fifty-nine percent of the companies using social media link to their tools from their corporate homepages. All of the others require additional searching to locate these engagement tools.



Conclusion

The 2013 Fortune 500 have now fully embraced new communications tools that have taken so many other sectors by storm. In the past year, these business giants have increased their adoption of blogging by 6%, their use of Twitter for corporate communications by 4% and their use of Facebook pages by 4%. Sixty-nine percent of the 2013 F500 use YouTube, up from 7% last year.

This research was expanded to look at newer platforms including Google+, Foursquare and Instagram. Pinterest was included for the first time in 2012. In all cases, these giant corporations show an interest in experimenting with new tools. Only Google+ shows evidence of a significant number of open, but inactive, accounts. In every other case, there is current activity and vibrant engagement of their audiences. The use of blogging, after years of low and stagnant adoption has continued its steady move forward with over 1/3 now providing original content and using their blogs to promote causes, establish thought leadership and to better understand their target markets.

It is clear that these business titans are choosing from a myriad of new communications tools while continuing to adopt the more mature tool of blogging. These behemoths prefer Twitter to Facebook and are experimenting with new tools such as Google+, Foursquare and Instagram. This is a group that now seems comfortable and even excited with its newfound ability to engage its vendors, partners, customers and others in ways that could not have been imagined when most of their corporations began. Judging by the increased use of tools, fans and followers, they are making some very powerful new connections. It will be exciting to see how much more involved they become with their ever-expanding social media efforts by this time next year.

Bios

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Nora Ganim Barnes is a Chancellor Professor of Marketing and Director of the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Nora has worked as a consultant for many national and international firms. Working closely with businesses in the Northeast US, Nora and her students have provided marketing research assistance to hundreds of small businesses.

She has published articles in academic and professional journals and proceedings, has contributed chapters to books, and has been awarded numerous research grants. Her work has been covered online and in print by Business Week, the NY Times, Washington Post, CNN, Reuters, Wall Street Journal, Fox News and Computer World among others. She has been named Co-chair of Research by the Society for New Communications Research.

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