



## The Social Media at Work Report





### **Welcome to the latest Social Media at Work Survey.**

This is the sixth edition of our report and much has changed since we started looking at food business social media policies and usage in 2012.

Whilst there is still a worrying number of food businesses without a social media policy, there has been a significant rise in those which do monitor their online presence. This reflects the immense growth of social media usage, and its increasing importance, as a communications tool.

However, the key development since our last survey has been the growing mistrust of social media, following accusations that some platforms have been selling users' personal data for commercial gain.

How sustained this reaction will be and its effect on social media usage has yet to be seen.

But, the issue of trust has been a 'wake-up' call for many users, and it is also an issue that food businesses need to carefully reflect upon as it presents potential legal and reputational issues.

Once again, this year's survey and report is co-produced by Roythornes Solicitors, recognised experts for the food industry and Pelican Communications, a marketing and communications consultancy that specialises in the food retail and foodservice sectors.

We would like to thank the many organisations and businesses who have taken the time to complete our latest social media at work survey.



**When our Social Media at Work Survey first launched in 2012, the media was filled with horror stories of 'tweets that should not have been tweeted' and posts that would undoubtedly bring down large corporations.**

It's probably fair to say that the social media environment has somewhat matured since then as businesses have learned to tolerate mishaps. As new entrants to the market have emerged, a lot of businesses have a more light-hearted approach – a good example would be the work experience student who went viral when he manned Southern Rail's twitter feed for a week. This 'acceptance' of social media as part of our everyday lives however should not cause us to let down our guard and, as responsible employers, we should be aware of the potential damage that can be caused to corporate reputations in the press of a button.

A third of our respondents still do not have a social media policy. A properly drafted and communicated social media policy should be part of any business' suite of staff policies and all staff, whether they use social media professionally or not, should be made aware of its key points. Remember, damaging messages will not always come from corporate accounts and if you employ hundreds of people you potentially have hundreds of possible danger points. The value of a policy of this nature should not be underestimated and could save businesses the cost of negative coverage if a disgruntled member of staff chooses to 'let loose'.

A large increase in the use of LinkedIn shows how it is growing as a business development channel; whilst a sharp decline in businesses using Facebook perhaps mirrors the trend of certain sectors of the population moving away

from it and on to other channels. Or could it be a sign of businesses becoming more wary of how their data is used in light of the recent Cambridge Analytica scandal?

The fact that 94% of our sample monitored their online presence in some way (up from 66% when we first started the survey) shows the increased awareness of organisations to the power of social media and, just as importantly, the need to be aware of what is being said about them on it. It may be that over the years businesses have learned the hard way about the true reputational impact of social media. Or perhaps it's simply relative to the part social media activity plays in our daily lives?



In some ways it's surprising that customer services are not more prominent in monitoring social media channels. With its viral potential, many consumers turn first to social media when they have a gripe about service standards and it's vital that businesses have their finger on the pulse and respond quickly to these issues. A problem resolved immediately can give a positive message whilst one ignored or escalated can damage reputations. Customer services need to be at the forefront of monitoring channels as in many cases it's where their customers are talking about them. This is perhaps more lacking within B2B firms rather than B2C which have advanced in their customer services efforts massively over the last few years.

With more businesses handing over their accounts to PR and other agencies, it's important for them to make sure the agency understands their social media policy. Our survey seemed to indicate that this was not the case. As far as the end customer is concerned the social feed is coming direct from the business and it's for this reason that agencies must know of and adhere to their clients' social media policies to retain authenticity.

The research also shows that over half of businesses allow staff to bring their own devices into work and use them for work purposes, yet have no controls over them. Whilst this is indicative of a more flexible approach to

working, it opens the business to real risk without control. If the business doesn't specify (and verify) levels of password protection on these devices, together with measures to protect against viruses, these machines could be an open door into their otherwise secure systems. A properly drafted 'Own Devices' policy should be adopted to minimise such risk.



**When we started surveying food businesses about their social media policies back in 2012, there were 1 million Facebook users.**

Fast forward six years and this has more than doubled. At the start of this year there were 2.13 billion monthly active Facebook users.

On average, 1.4 billion people log onto Facebook daily, and the Facebook Like and Share buttons are viewed across almost 10 million websites daily.

Whilst these figures only relate to Mark Zuckerberg's in/famous platform (depending on your point of view) they illustrate the social media juggernaut that has changed the way most people and organisations communicate with their audiences, be it Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram or Whatsapp.

You only have to look at how President Trump has transformed Twitter from a short messaging app, into a tool of international diplomacy, which can set the agenda for traditional news organisations.

Back in 2012, most of the commentary was positive: social media platforms were a force for good, helping people communicate quickly and easily, sharing content that would educate, entertain and generally improve our lives.

The 'mood music' is now radically different, following the revelations that Facebook, Google and a range of other platforms have been used to influence elections and monitor our daily lives to a level of detail many of us find deeply worrying.

How businesses, especially food businesses, adapt to this changing social media landscape is a key question for marketing and communications professionals.

As expected, our survey shows that in most cases, social media remains the responsibility of marketing departments, often supported by an external PR agency. Marketing takes the lead in generating and monitoring content. Marketing teams need to decide, in-light of growing concern about social media, is it business as usual or do they make fundamental changes to the way they communicate online?

Food is at the very core of the social media debate. A study (published by Social Media Monthly) found 75% of consumers have used



Facebook to decide on which restaurant to eat at. More and more people share pictures of what they're eating on social media or search sites for recipes.

But will consumers continue to trust food brands that promote themselves via platforms they feel they can no longer trust? Is the audience access worth the potential reputational damage?

Pub chain JD Wetherspoon decided that it wasn't when it closed down its social media accounts in April. Despite having 44,000 Twitter followers and more than 100,000 Facebook followers, chief executive Tim Martin said he was making a stand against "the addictive nature of social media", describing the medium as a "waste of time" for him and his 900 outlets.

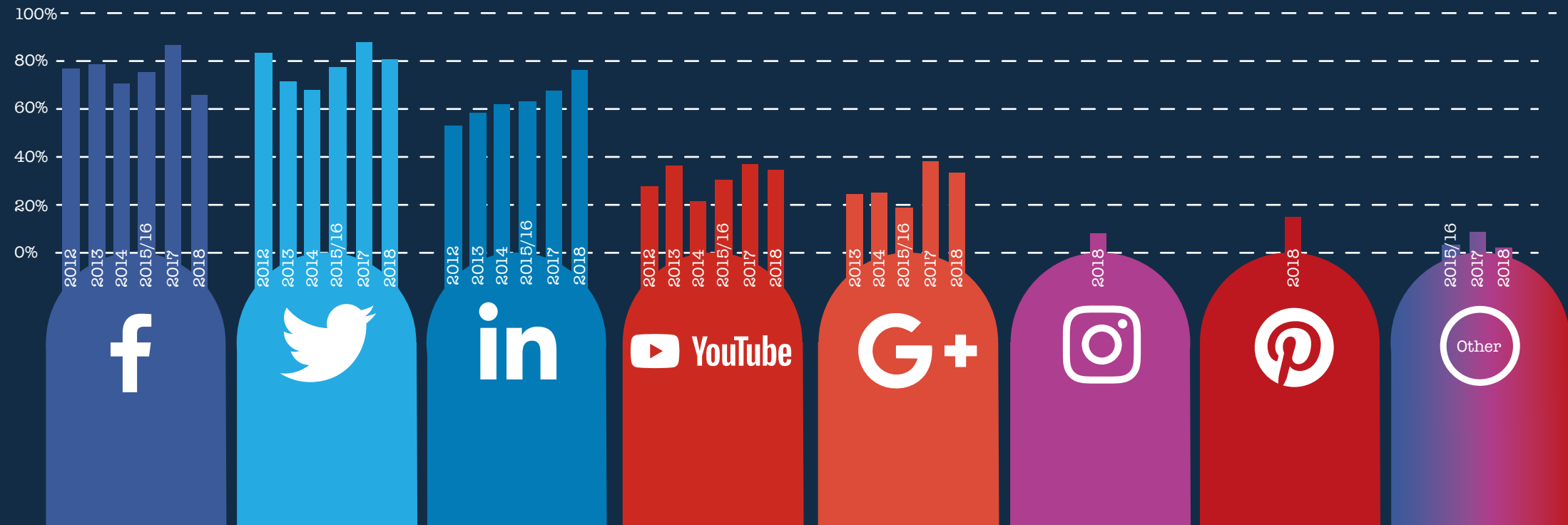
Different businesses will react differently, but a key tool in deciding the way forward is ensuring you have a social media policy in place. Interestingly only two in three of our respondents say they have such a policy. This is down from a peak of 74% in 2015/16. Even allowing for the difference in the sample of companies responding, this leaves a worrying number of food businesses exposed.

At the same time, the number of companies monitoring social media use by their staff has fallen from 38% to 27%: a six-year low. This indicates that respondents may be reacting to changing attitudes towards social media and privacy. And some companies may be concerned about employees reacting badly to the idea they are being monitored by 'the boss'.

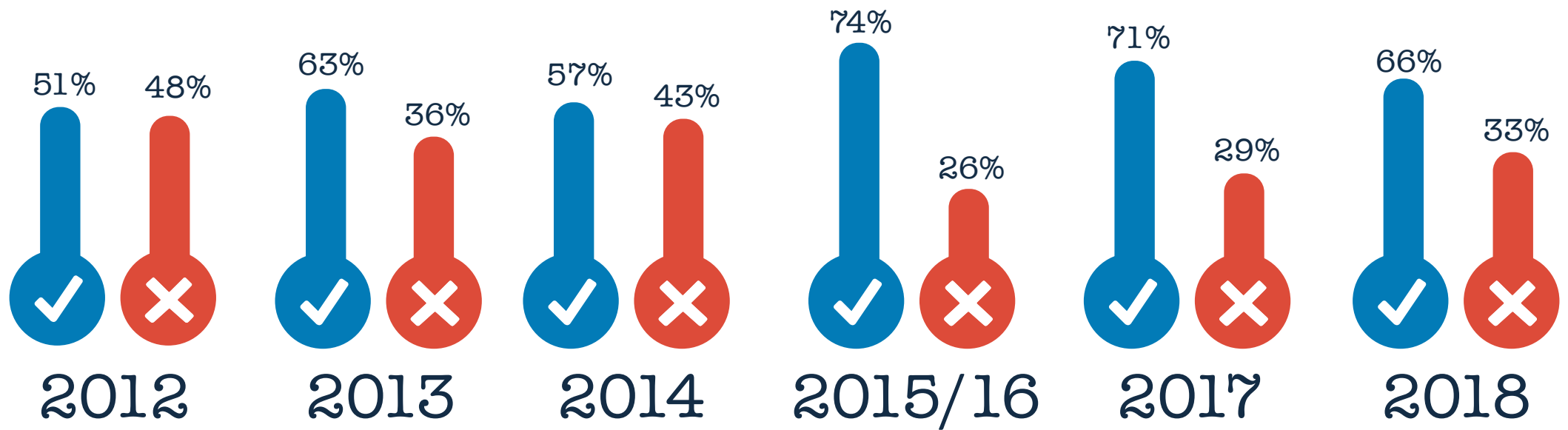
Whichever way food companies decide to respond to the changing social media landscape, whilst they remain online their reputation will be linked to that of the social media platforms they choose to use.

We'll have to wait for the results on next year's survey to see how many firms have opted out of social media or have radically changed their online behaviour.

# Do you have a corporate presence on ...

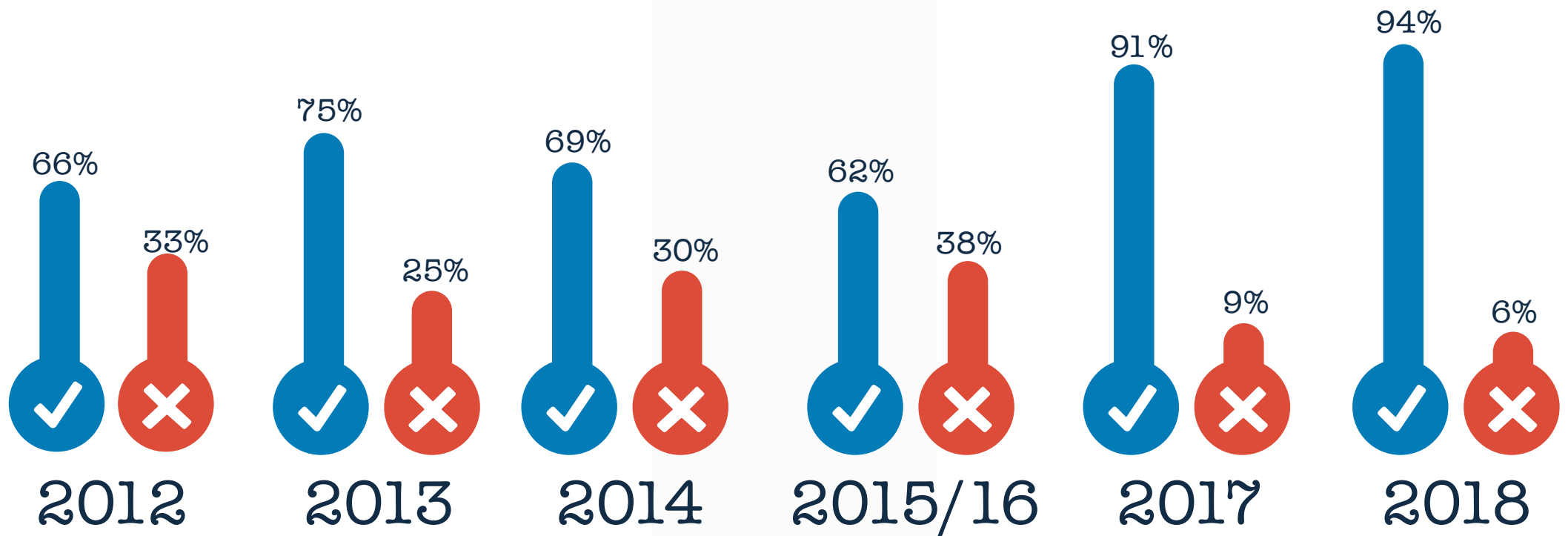


# Do you have a social media policy?

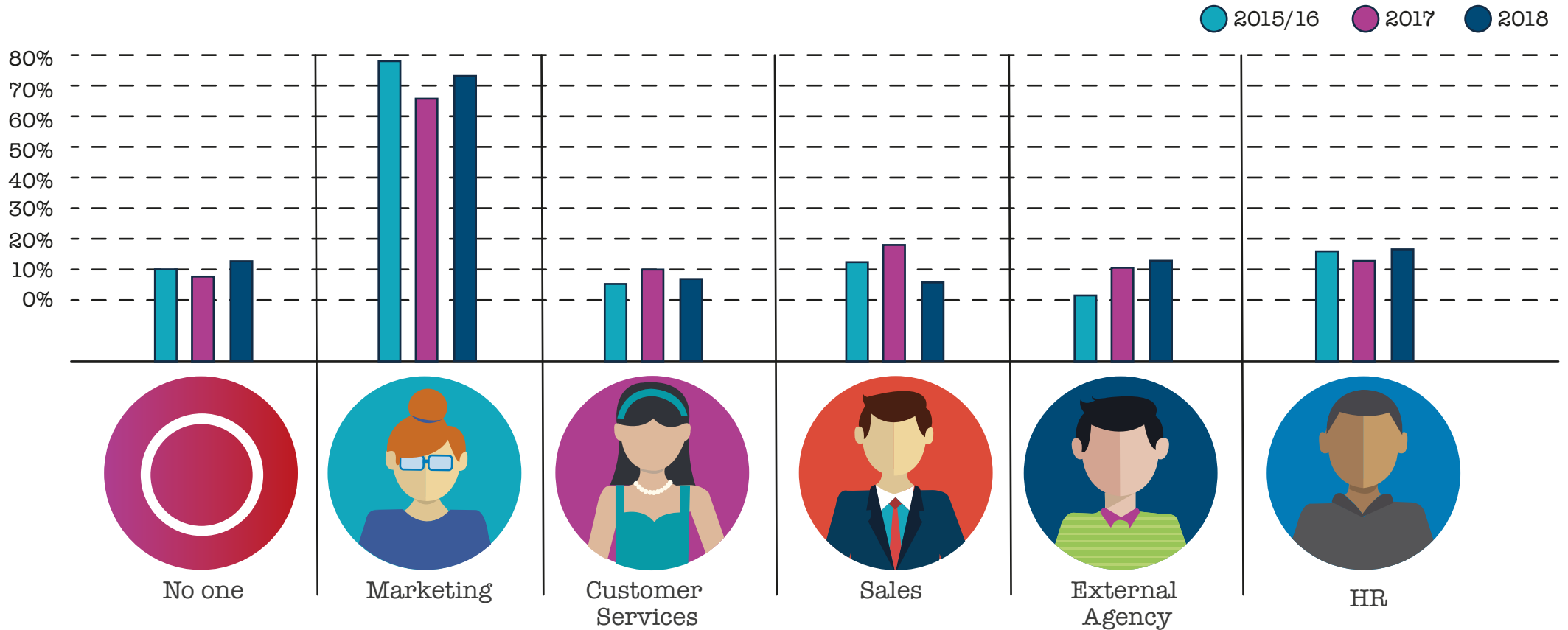




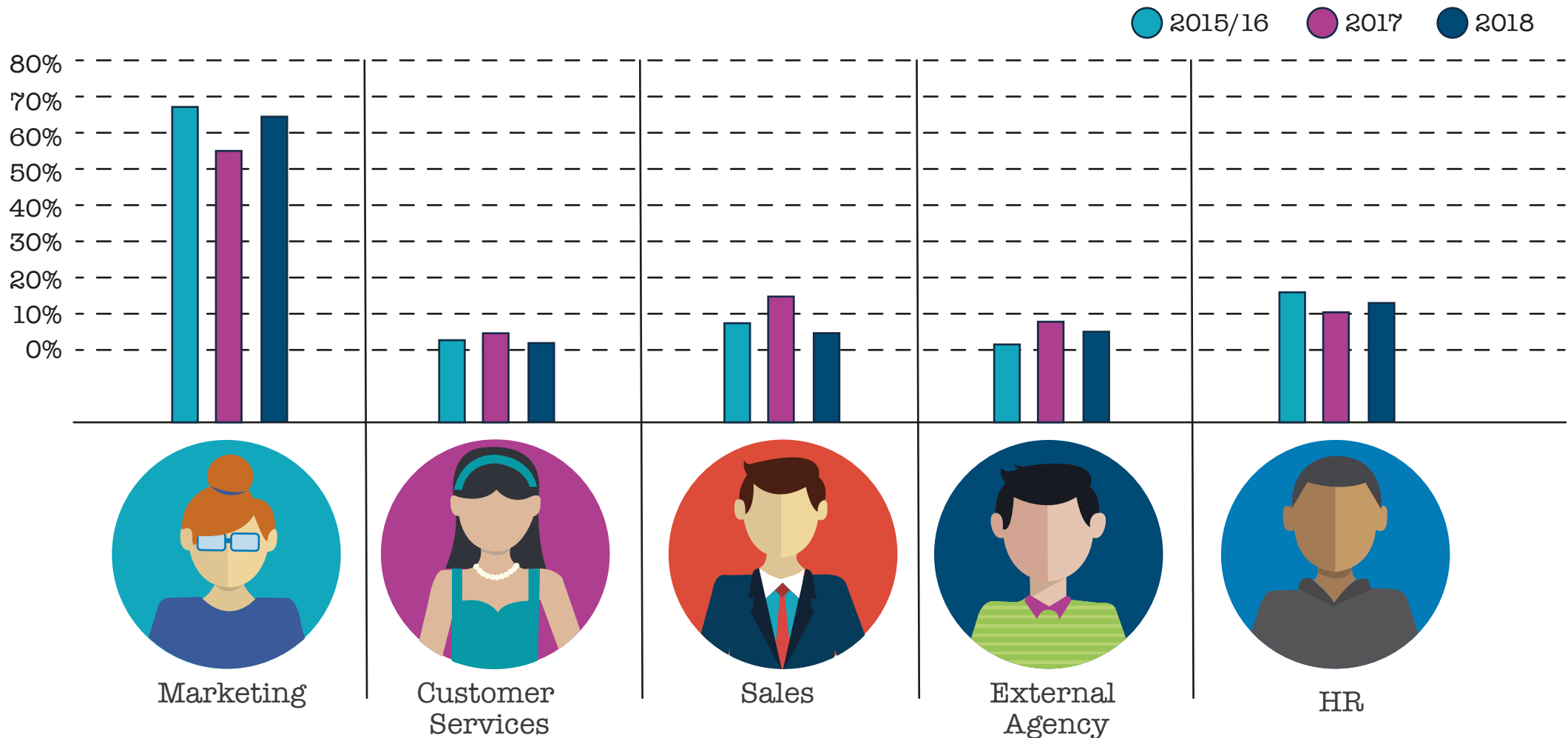
# Do you monitor your online presence?



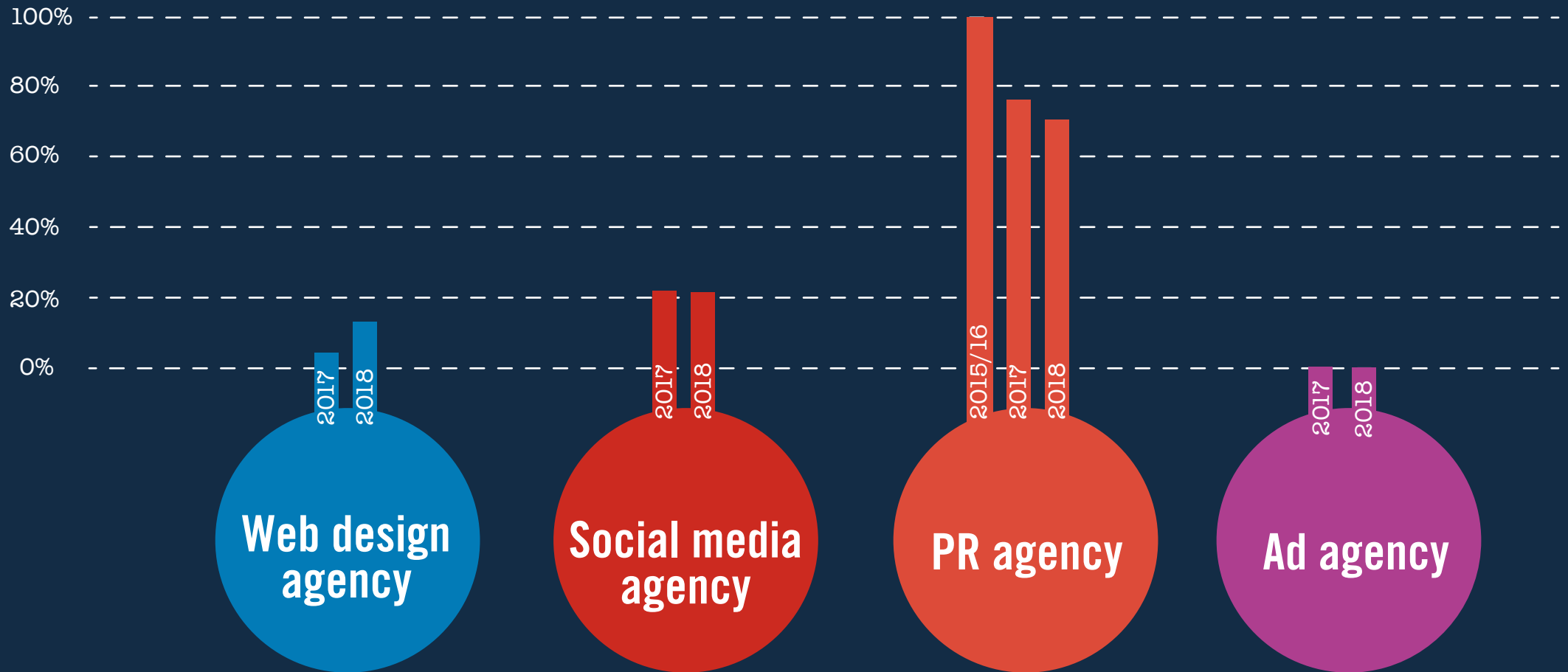
# Who monitors your social media presence?



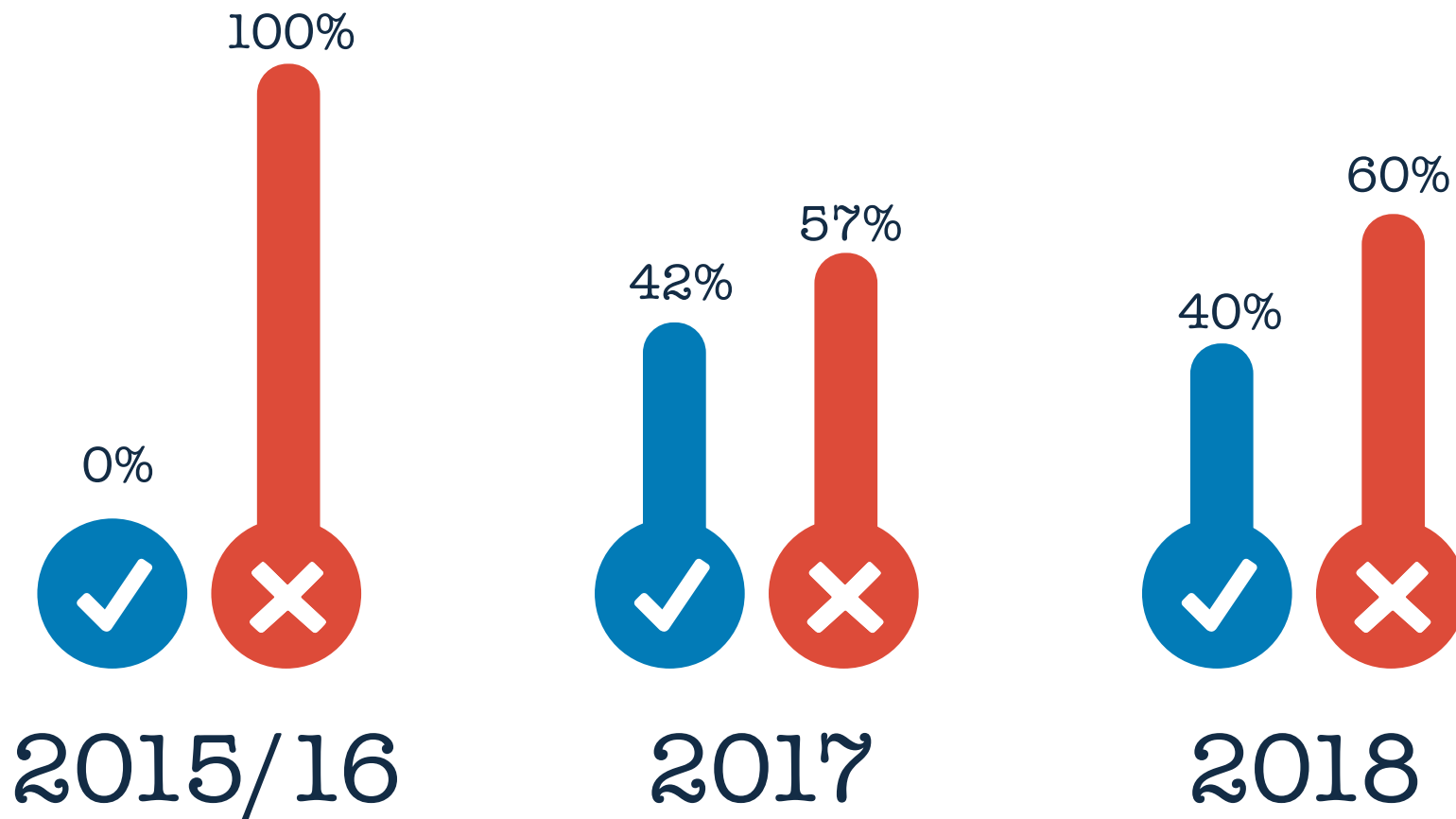
# Who is responsible for generating & managing your social media content?



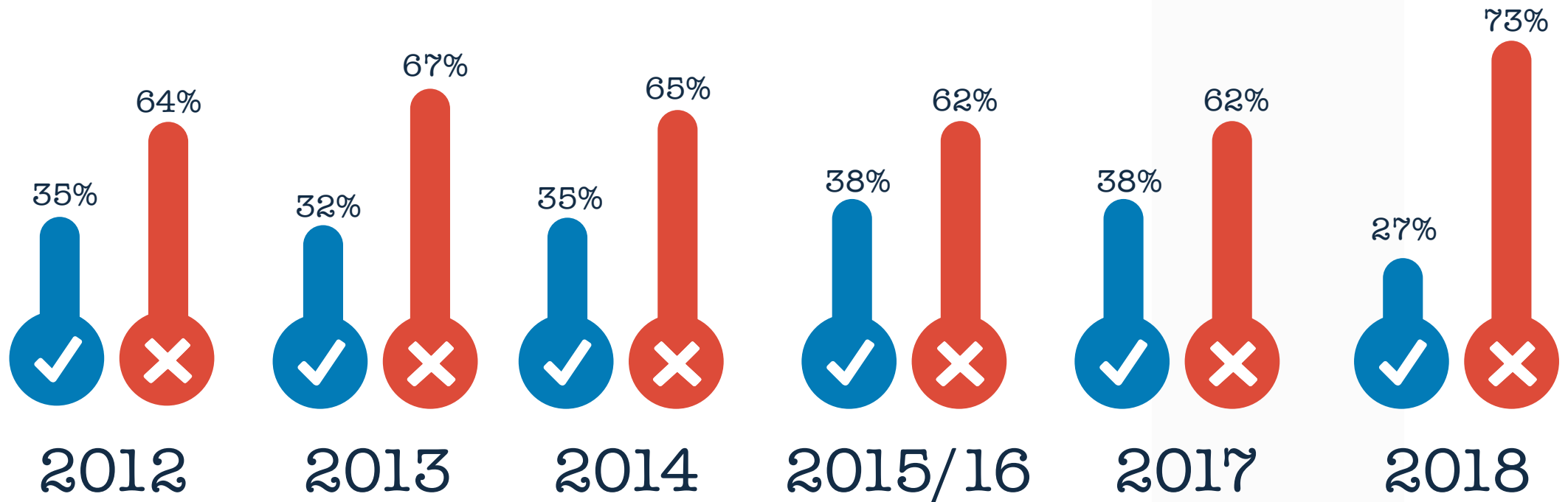
# What type of agency do you use to manage or monitor your social media:



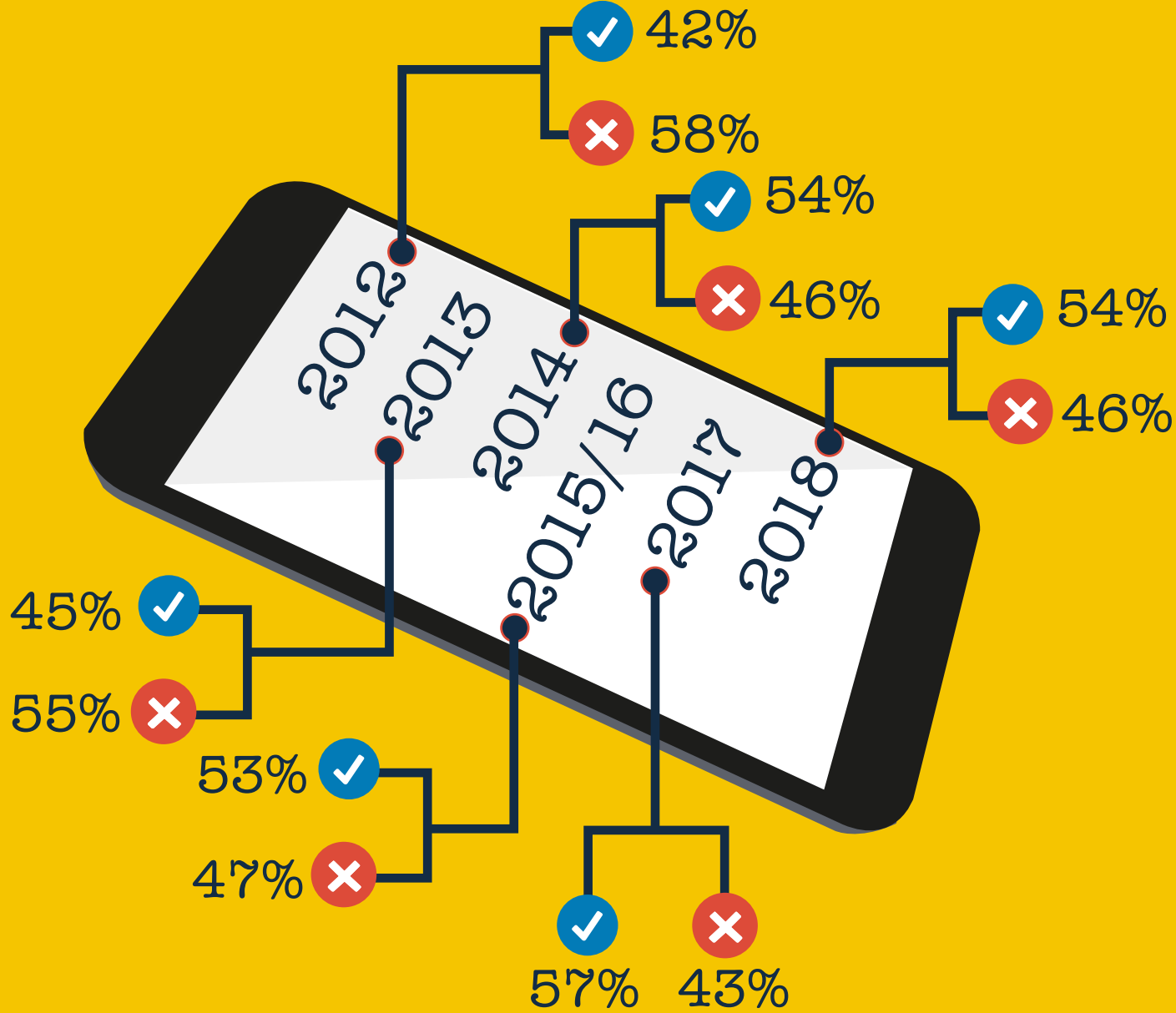
# Are the external agencies you use covered by your social media policy?



# Do you monitor employees' use of social media?



**Do you allow your staff to bring their own devices into work and use them for work purposes?**



If so, do you have restrictions on their use/data download etc?

