



THE HODGES PARTNERSHIP

COVID-19 MARKETING & PR SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Report

Like most surveys, the research that follows represents a snapshot in time. As we collectively confront a daily “new normal,” all of us are doing our best to determine the way forward. And during such moments of uncertainty, it often is helpful to share our insights and perspectives with one another. It not only can be a means for validating shared experiences, but also a platform for learning from one another.

It is in that spirit that we undertook this survey of marketing and public relations professionals throughout Virginia. The answers of close to 150 marketers and PR pros to 14 questions are compiled in the pages to follow, and collectively and individually, they provide some insights into how our profession is dealing with the pandemic, or perhaps more to the point, how it is dealing with us. Not all of the responses are surprising, and upon reflection, perhaps few are, except perhaps the overwhelming extent to which there is so much commonality among us.

You will find that the report covers a lot of ground, while at the same time, begs for some even deeper digging. It reflects the overwhelming financial impact that the virus

has had on marketing, both internally and externally. The findings expose a lack of crisis preparedness across the board even as the virus has elevated the importance of public relations within organizations, especially the value of internal communications. Finally, the results uncover the broad uncertainty that exists among marketers for the path ahead – this year and beyond.

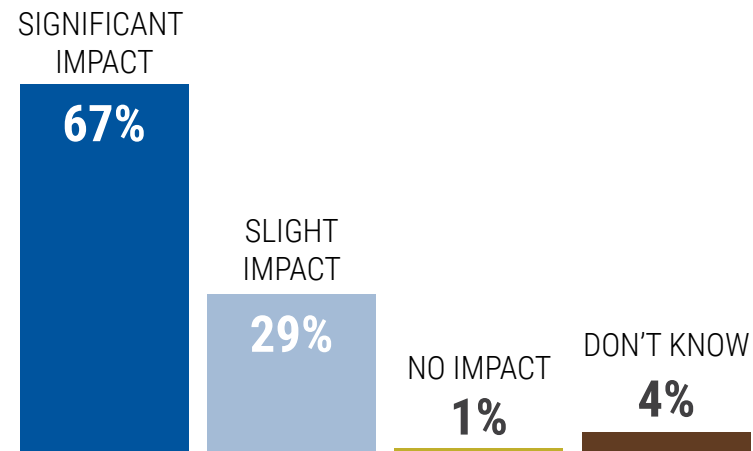
In reading this report, you may find yourself nodding along, confirming the findings through your own experiences. Or within your own organization, things may be at once worse or better. Whatever the case, we as a profession are continuing to move forward by relying on the foundations of our industry and the support for one another.



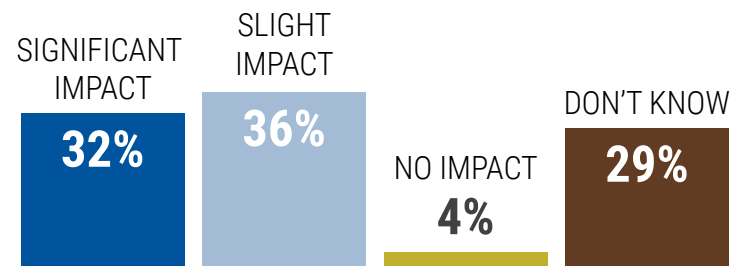
Virtually everyone has been impacted by COVID-19 in some way (we know, shocking). The real question was by how much. Two-thirds of our respondents (67%) said their strategies for the year have been impacted significantly, compared with 29% who said slightly impacted.

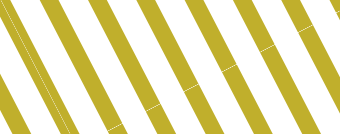
Next year is when things may open up. Most respondents (36%) actually foresee COVID-19 having only a slight impact, although the percentage of those who still see a significant impact wasn't that far off at 32%. Understandably, 29% still don't know what next year will bring.

TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, HOW MUCH OF AN EFFECT WILL COVID-19 HAVE ON YOUR PR/MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2020?



TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, HOW MUCH OF AN EFFECT WILL COVID-19 HAVE ON YOUR PR/MARKETING STRATEGIES BEYOND 2020?



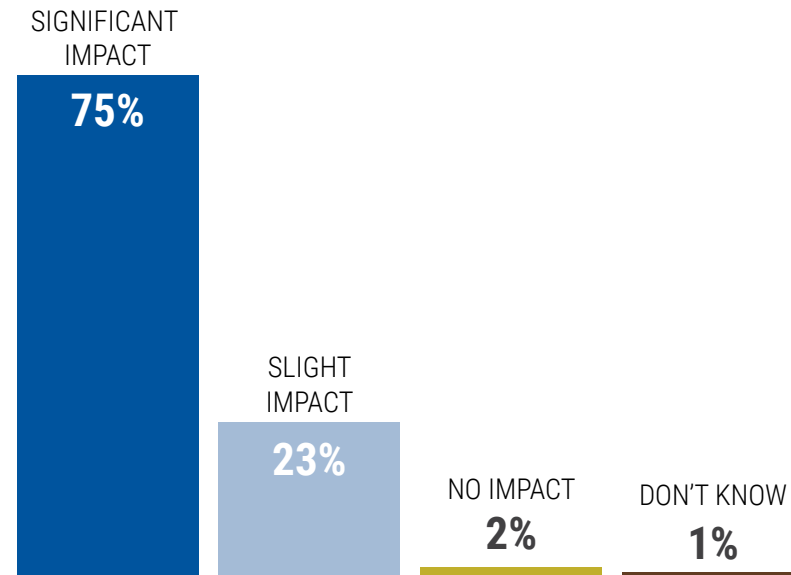


What's arguably the No. 1 rule in PR and marketing? Know. Your. Audience.

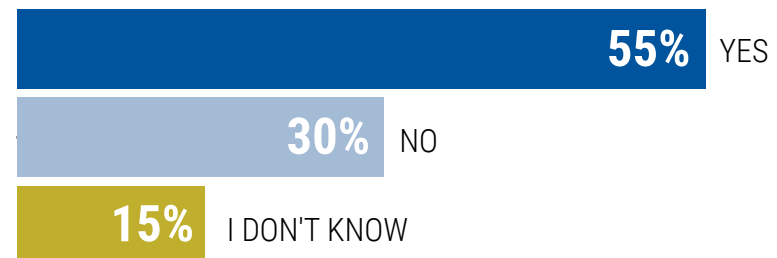
Well, that's a little tricky these days in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Three in four organizations (75%) believe COVID-19 has had a significant impact on their key stakeholders' primary needs and concerns. Among nonprofit and governmental agencies, this was even higher, with 89% and 90% noting this, respectively.

COVID-19 also has exposed some potential weaknesses in how organizations respond to the crisis. Two in five respondents (41%) confessed to not having a crisis plan in place at the advent of the pandemic, while another 21 percent indicated that they did not know whether or not a crisis plan existed within their organization.

TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT HAS COVID-19 HAD ON YOUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS' (E.G., CUSTOMERS, DONORS, ETC.) PRIMARY NEEDS AND CONCERNS, AS IT RELATES TO YOUR ORGANIZATION?



DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE A CRISIS PLAN THAT HELPED INFORM YOUR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



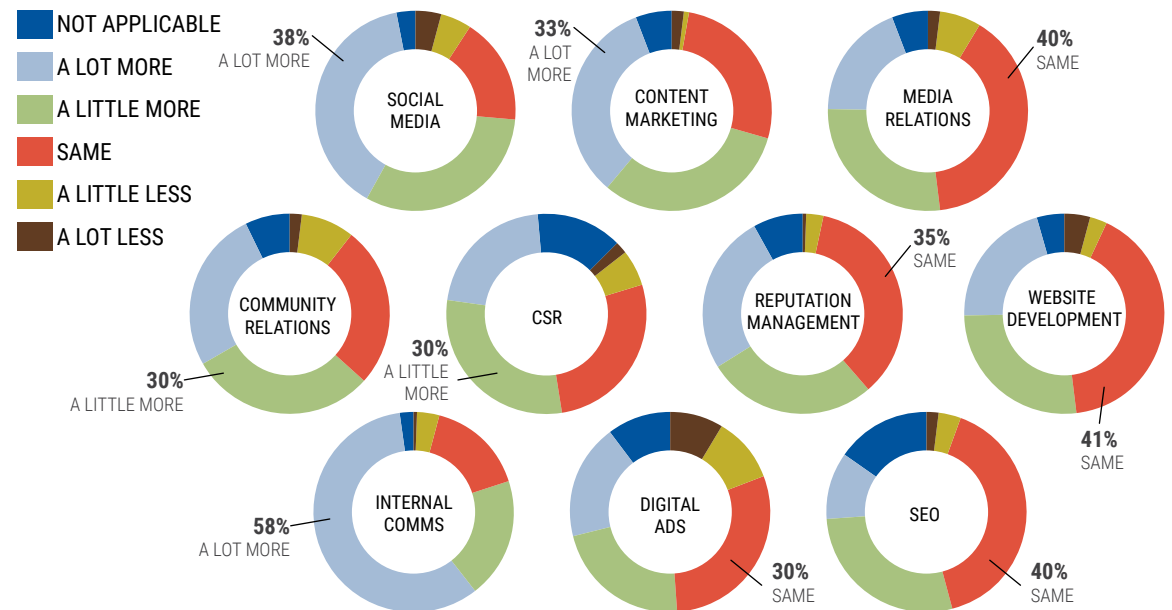


The financial fallout from COVID-19 has been swift and devastating. Seemingly overnight, many businesses found their entire business model temporarily inoperable. As can be expected, this is affecting budgets of most PR and marketing departments. Nearly two-thirds of respondents shared they've either seen their budget reduced (45%) or expect it will be reduced (20%).

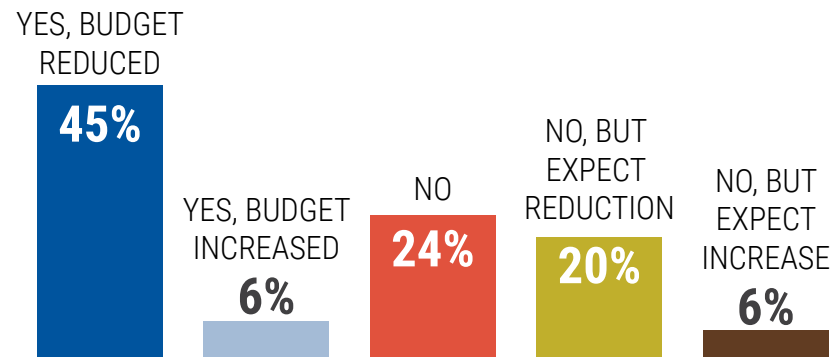
Lower budgets though don't necessarily mean less work. When asked if they expect to do more, less or the same of common PR and marketing tactics (e.g., social media, media relations), very few indicated that they see these efforts slowing down. In fact, many expect to increase these tactics in the coming months.

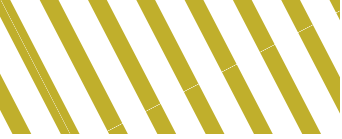
Of those listed, most respondents indicated they expect to do "a lot more" of social media (38%), content marketing (33%) and internal communications (58%) – which isn't surprising given the challenges and opportunities many are seeing as a result of the pandemic. In-person communications, whether it be for networking, new business or updating staff, simply isn't feasible for the short term – and potentially long term for some industries.

DO YOU EXPECT TO DO MORE OR LESS OF THE FOLLOWING PR/MARKETING TACTICS AS A RESULT OF COVID-19?



HAS THE COVID-19 CRISIS IMPACTED YOUR PR/MARKETING BUDGET?





The past few months may have been stressful, unprecedented and altogether bonkers, but our industry hasn't forgotten the importance of keeping those who matter informed. The average answer for how respondents' organizations have responded to both external and internal stakeholders was 4. Impressive

This ability to stay focused hasn't been lost on leadership. Sixty-three percent of respondents believe their leadership values PR and marketing more than they did before the pandemic. A third (33%) haven't noticed any change in their leadership's perception of PR and marketing's value to the organization.

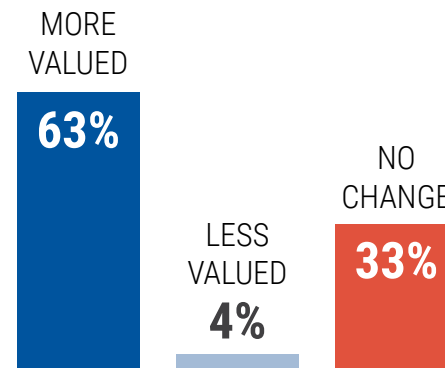
ON A SCALE FROM 1-5, HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS DONE IN COMMUNICATING TO YOUR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS SO FAR?



ON A SCALE FROM 1-5, HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS DONE IN COMMUNICATING TO YOUR INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS SO FAR?



IN YOUR OPINION, HAS THE COVID-19 CRISIS CHANGED YOUR LEADERSHIP'S VIEW OF PR AND MARKETING?





WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS FACED AS A RESULT OF COVID-19?

Timing is tricky. Finding the right tone is also challenging.

Providing timely information during a state of constant change.

Businesses are freezing spend or cutting their marketing budgets which impacts us.

Lead generation and business development (both of which heavily relied on in person networking).

Getting to market with a compassionate message. Creating and managing COVID-related assets with little to no budget (due to the effects of COVID).

Budget cuts, potential furloughs and layoffs. Every move is looked at as if through a microscope. Every decision has the possibility of becoming a major PR issue.

Working remotely and staying socially distant severely impacts our ability to collect content (videography and photography).

Balancing public health and safety with business needs.



IN YOUR OPINION, HAS THE COVID-19 CRISIS CREATED ANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

We accelerated technology launches, streamlined service options, and drove acceptance of the value created when we allow employees to work remote.

Many of my clients have pushed into social media, created new websites, and nurtured relationships with their constituents in many ways.

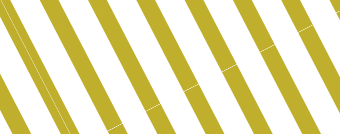
We have learned how capable we are to serve our customers virtually, and in some ways, provide more convenient access to our services for our customers.

Opportunities to leverage the scale of our organization.

It has provided an opportunity to be more mission-focused.

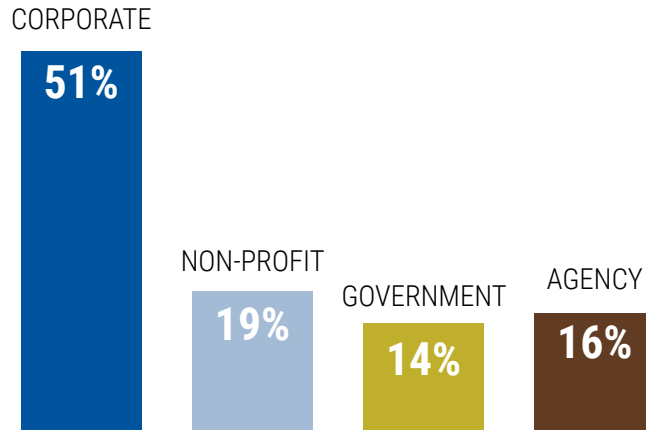
Enabled the company to innovate and roll out new customer experiences much faster than historically we would have, because there's no option in this environment.

We can work from home. Better work life balance opportunities, lower office costs on horizon.

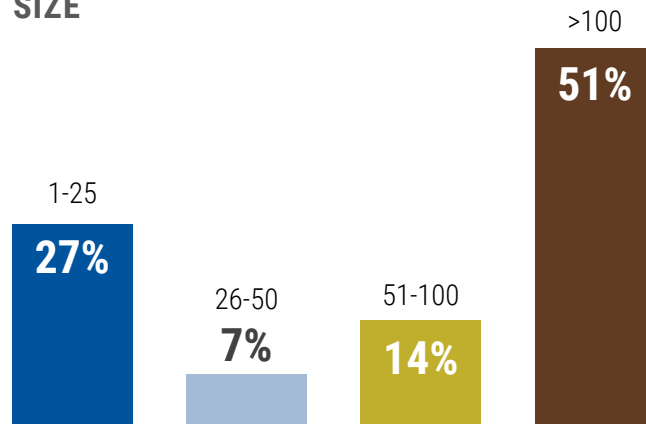


RESPONDENT DETAILS

ORGANIZATION TYPE



SIZE



NEXT STEPS

This survey was conducted as a way for those of us in marketing and public relations to share our collective experiences. There can be comfort in knowing other professionals in the field are sharing the same challenges, but there also is learning in discovering that your experiences have been far different from others.

So, let's keep the conversation going. We would love to hear your reactions to these findings and would be interested in hearing about how you have been handling these unsettling times. And, of course, if we can help you work through any of this, we'd be happy to discuss that as well.

Please email us at info@hodgespart.com. Thanks for your interest. Stay safe.

The Hodges Team