

## Research Spotlight

September 2017

“Social Media Adoption in Business-to-Business: IT and Industrial Companies Compared”  
By Celine Veldeman, Ellen Van Praet, and Peter Merchant

*International Journal of Business Communication*, 2017, 54(3), 283- 305

### Research Question

How do Belgian business-to-business (B2B) companies perceive and react to social media?

### Methods

The researchers surveyed 92 Belgian companies about their social attitudes and activities. They also conducted in-depth followup interviews with 11 of the companies.

### Key Findings

- 42% of the companies were experimenting with social media without a specific social media strategy or action plan
- 41% of IT companies (software, web services) were developing social media strategies
- Only 27% of industrial companies (construction, engineering services) were developing social media strategies
- Most companies deem social media a good tool for a) cultivating brand awareness, b) sharing a company image, and c) recruiting
- “... deciding how to use social media in the right way to achieve set goals is considered to be very hard” (p. 293)

### Advice for the Field

- **Recognize that a customer’s, employee’s, and potential employee’s expectations about a firm’s social media presence is highly influenced by the dynamics of the industry sector**
- **Avoid treating social media as a “stand-alone” communicative endeavor divorced from other essential organizational tasks**
- **Acknowledge the difficulty of crafting a useful social media strategy and encourage experimentation**

### Researcher Approved Summary

Pending

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