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# The Rise of the Digital C-Suite

How Executives Locate and Filter Business Information  
Google/Forbes Insights  
U.S., 2009

# What we learned in this study

- **Shifting Generations:**
  - The C-suite increasingly has a digital mindset
- **Search and the C-Suite:**
  - The C-suite searches for information themselves
  - The majority conduct 6+ business-related searches each workday
- **Emerging Media:**
  - Video is emerging as a valid way to reach the C-suite
  - Execs under 40 use blogs, RSS, Twitter and mobile devices

# Objective and Methodology: The Digital C-Suite

## Objective

Google and Forbes Insights sought to determine how the C-suite and top-level executives look for business-related information.

## Methodology

- Survey of 354 executives at U.S. companies, **sales of \$1 billion+**
- 47% C-level executives, including CEO (18%), CFO (12%), CIO, CMO and other C-level titles
- 53% were senior level titles including SVP, VP, Director
- Functions included IT (32%), finance (18%), business operations (14%), corporate management (13%), sales/marketing (12%)
- One-on-one interviews conducted with 15 top-level execs

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## Shifting Generations

# Generational shift transforms C-Suite mentality



## Generation Wang

- Age 50+
- Entered job market prior to 1980
- Came of business age with a terminal, not a PC
- Digital immigrants: speak digital but think analog



## Generation PC

- Age 40-50
- Careers coincide with emergence of personal computing
- DIY mentality driven by word processors, spreadsheets, etc.
- Digital settlers: first to send email, build websites, use search

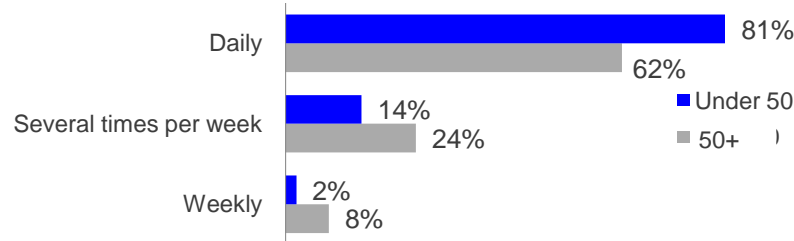


## Generation Netscape

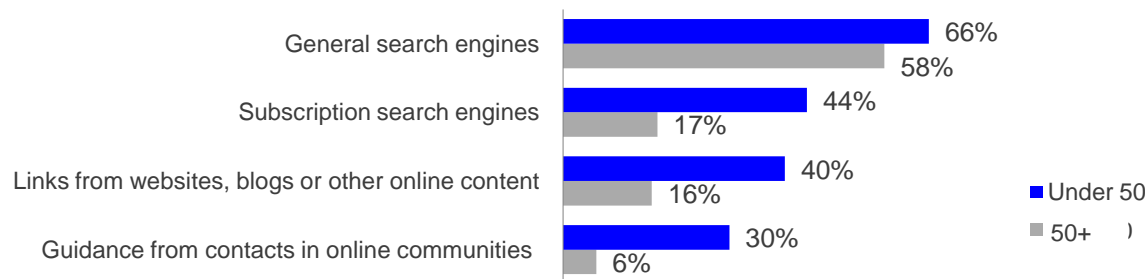
- Under 40
- Careers began with growth of the Internet
- Don't know an office without email or home pages
- Most willing to take advantage of Web-centric tools and emerging tech

# The C-Suite is undergoing a generational shift

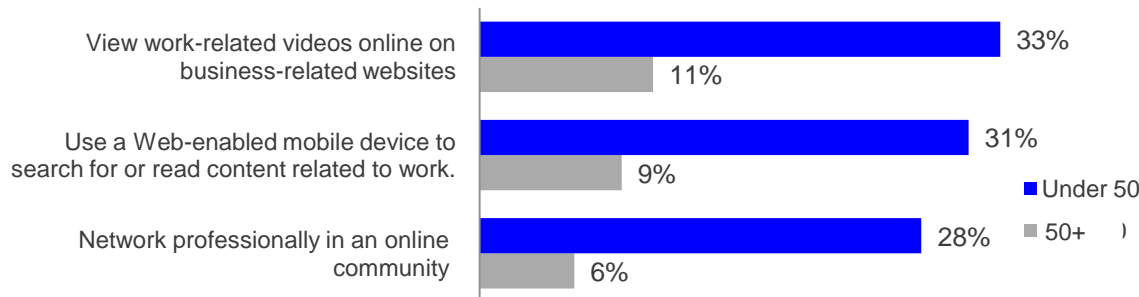
Having come of age in the PC-era, these executives...



...access the Internet more frequently<sup>1</sup>



...see the value of a range of Internet tools<sup>2</sup>



...access information in a variety of different ways<sup>3</sup>

Source: Forbes Insights, "The Rise of the Digital C-Suite: How Executives Locate and Filter Business Information" Report, June 2009

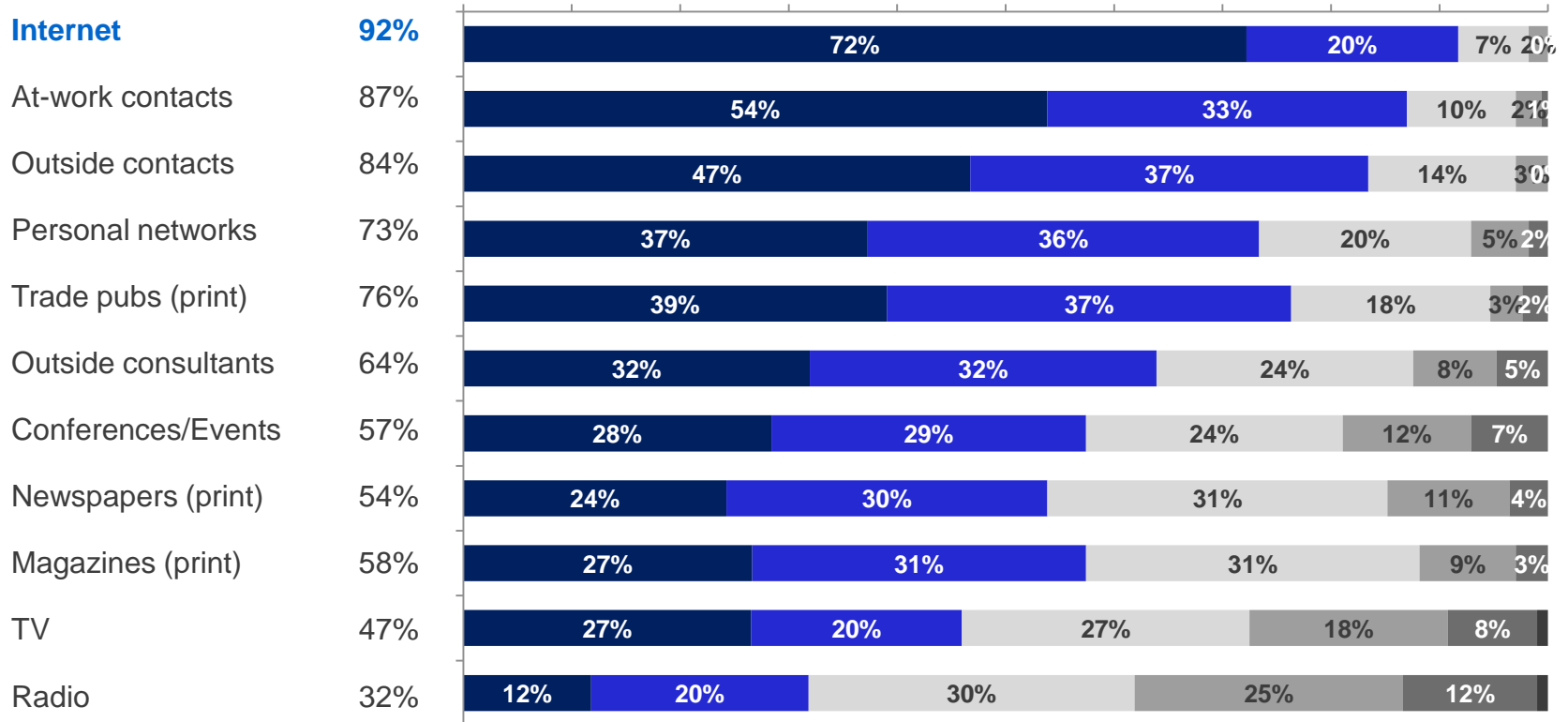
1. (How often do you access the Internet for business intelligence?)

2. (Percent that rate tools a 5 on a 5-point value scale)

3. (percent that cite daily use of an online tool)

# The C-suite finds the Internet most valuable

Percent who found these resources **very valuable** or **valuable** (top 2 box score):

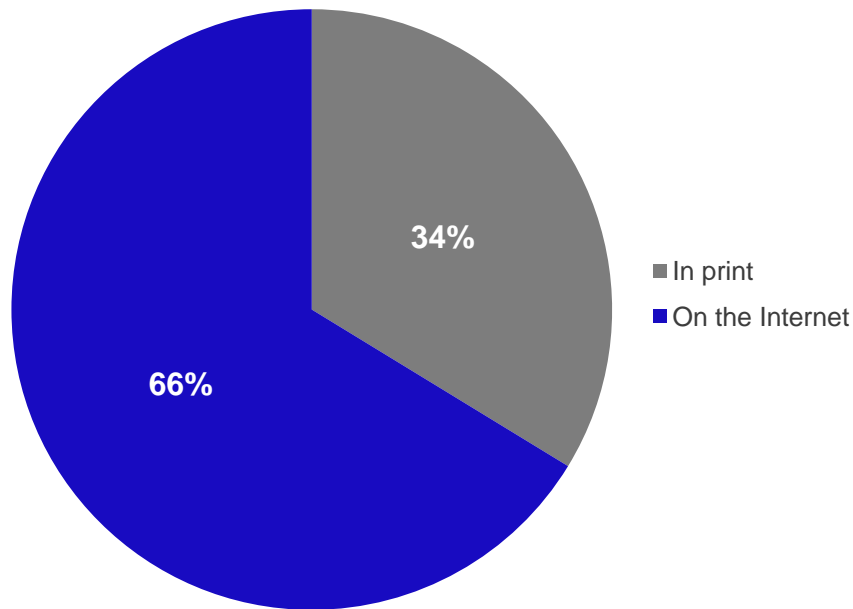


Q. What is the value of the following media and information sources regarding their value in helping you learn more about a business topic or issue that is critical to your job? Please rate them on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is very valuable and 1 is not at all valuable.



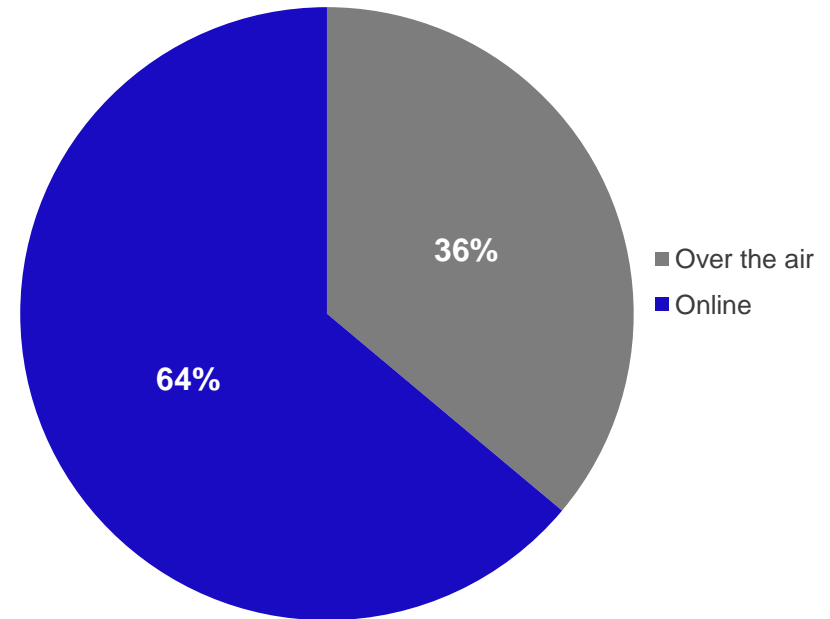
# The C-suite prefers the Internet for work information

## Traditional Print vs. Websites



Q. When it comes to “traditional print media” (i.e., newspapers, trade publications, magazines, newsletters), which of the following formats do you read most frequently during working hours?

## TV and Radio vs. Video and Podcasts

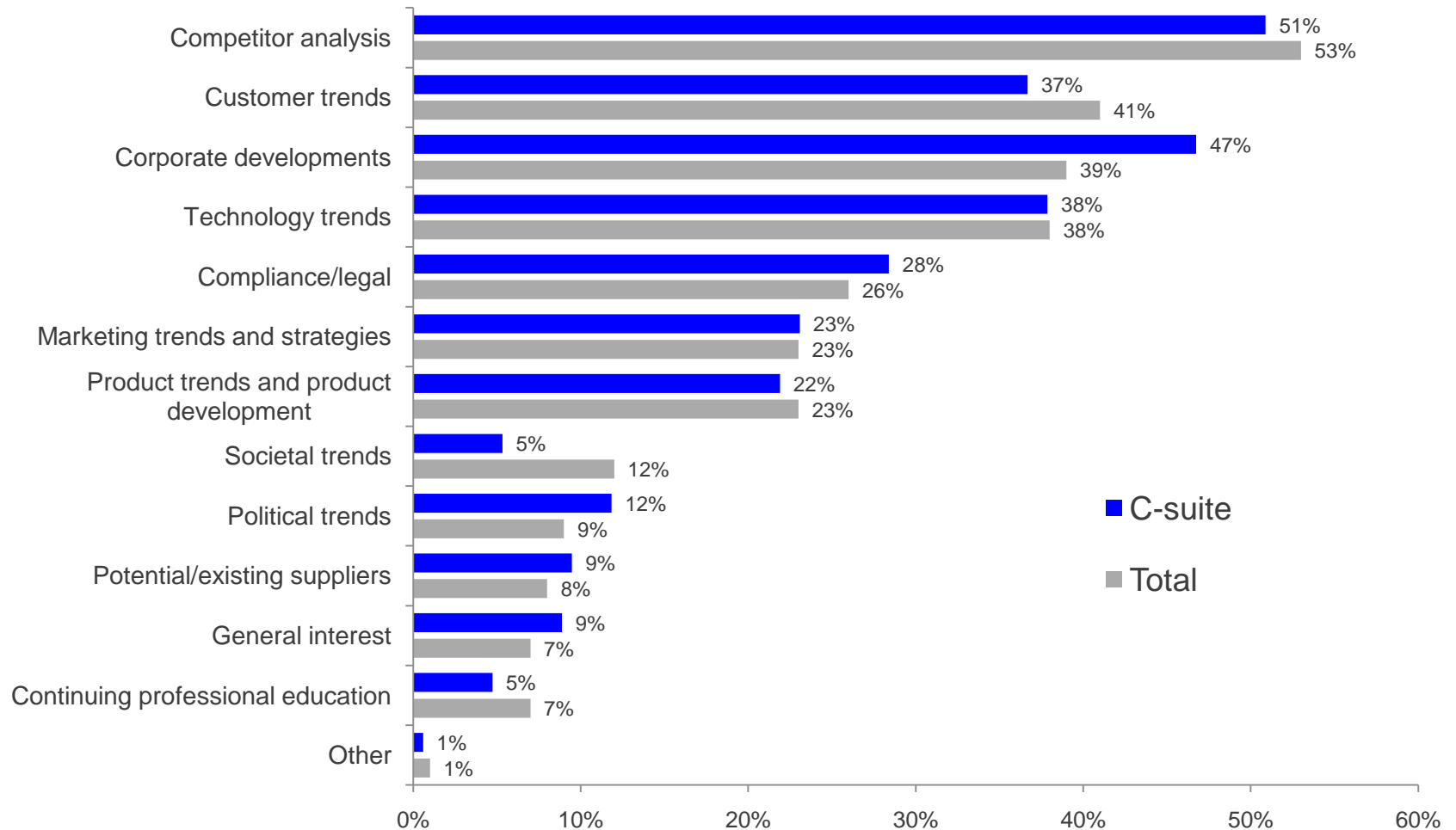


When it comes to “traditional broadcast media” (i.e., business television, cable news, radio), are you more likely to access them over the air or online during working hours?



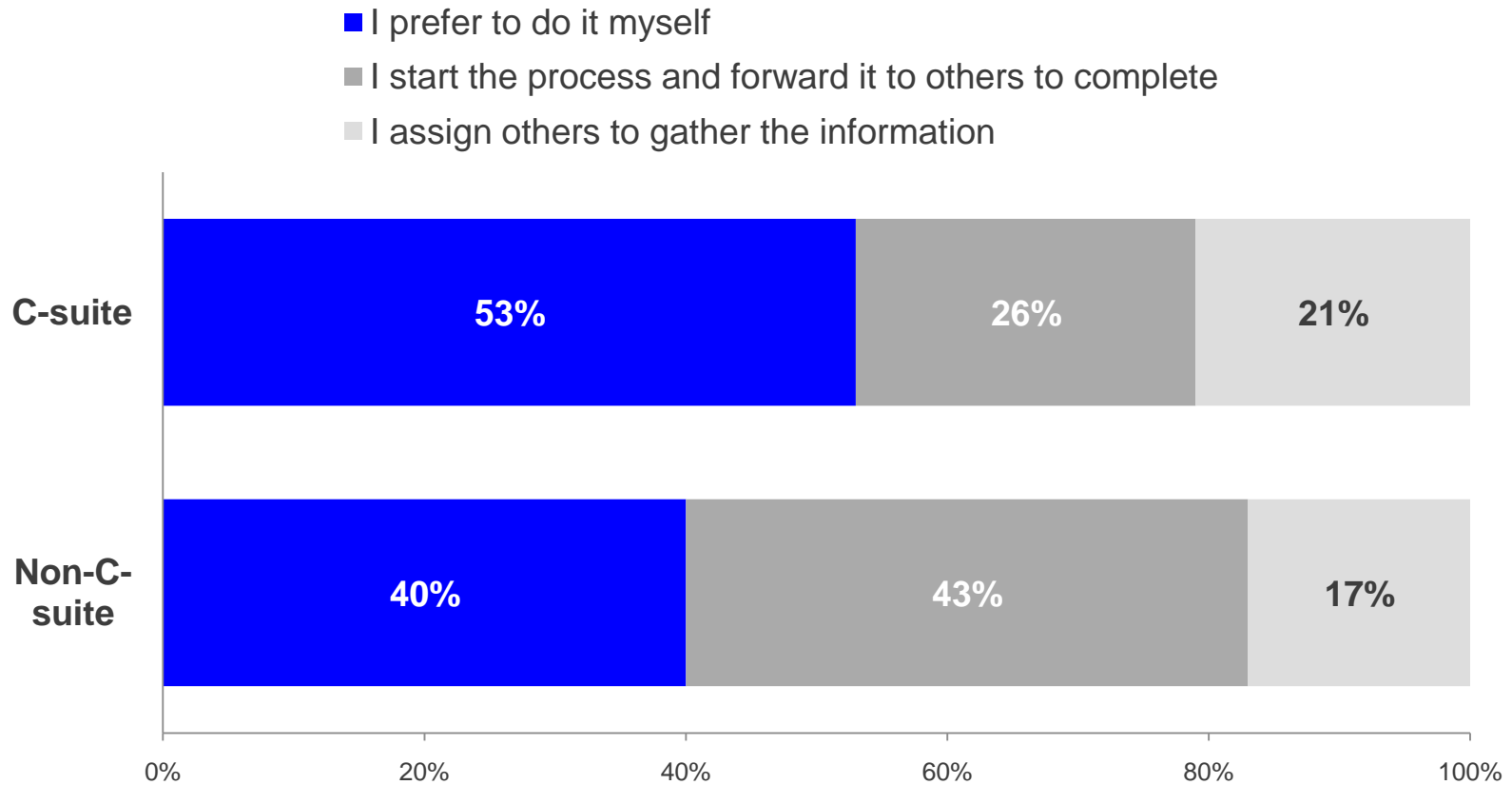
## The C-Suite and Search

# Types of information sought by execs



Q. Which types of information gathering/research are most critical to your role in your company?

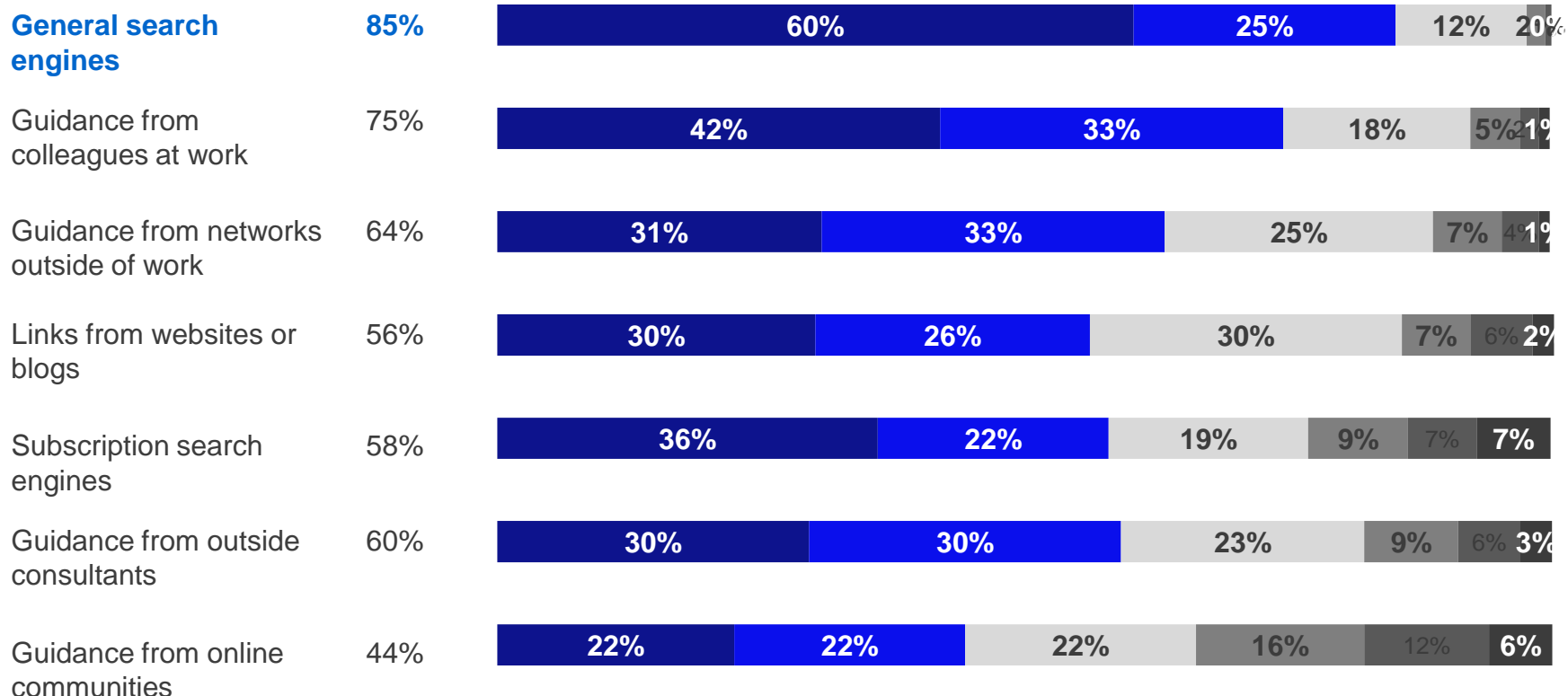
# The C-Suite conducts self-directed research



Q. What is your preferred style for gathering information for decision-making?

# Search is how the C-suite locates information

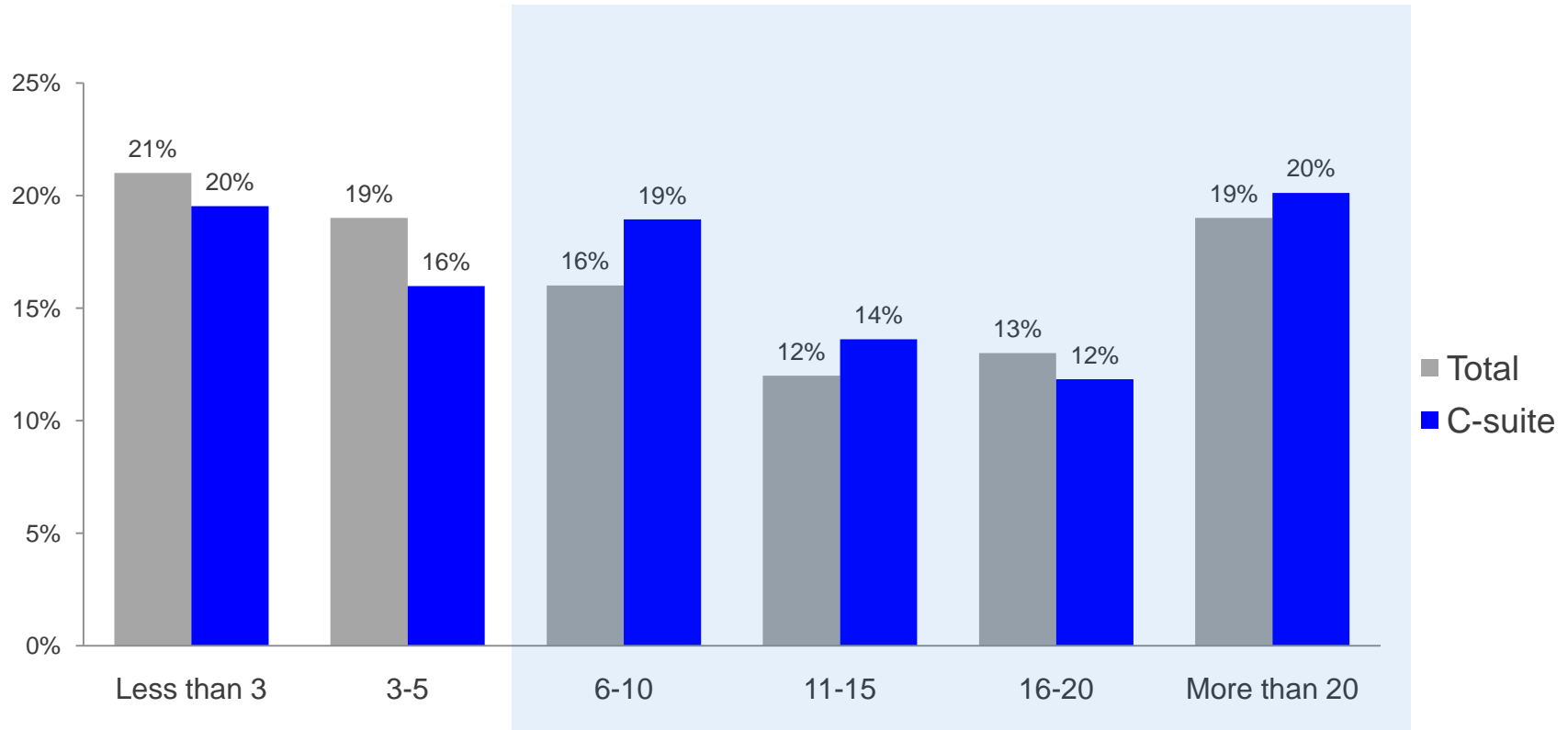
Percent who found these resources **very valuable** or **valuable** (top 2 box score):



Q. When it comes to locating business information you need for your job, how valuable are the following sources?  
Please rate them on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is very valuable and 1 is not at all valuable.

# The C-suite uses search more frequently than less senior execs

60% of C-suite executives conduct more than six work-related searches a day



Q. On average, how many work-related searches do you conduct with a search engine each workday?

# The Rest of the Media Mix Drives Search

*We asked the C-Suite:  
What prompts you to search  
for business information?*



**Word-of-Mouth  
from Colleagues**  
63%



**Television**  
50%



**Print**  
64%

**Radio**  
37%



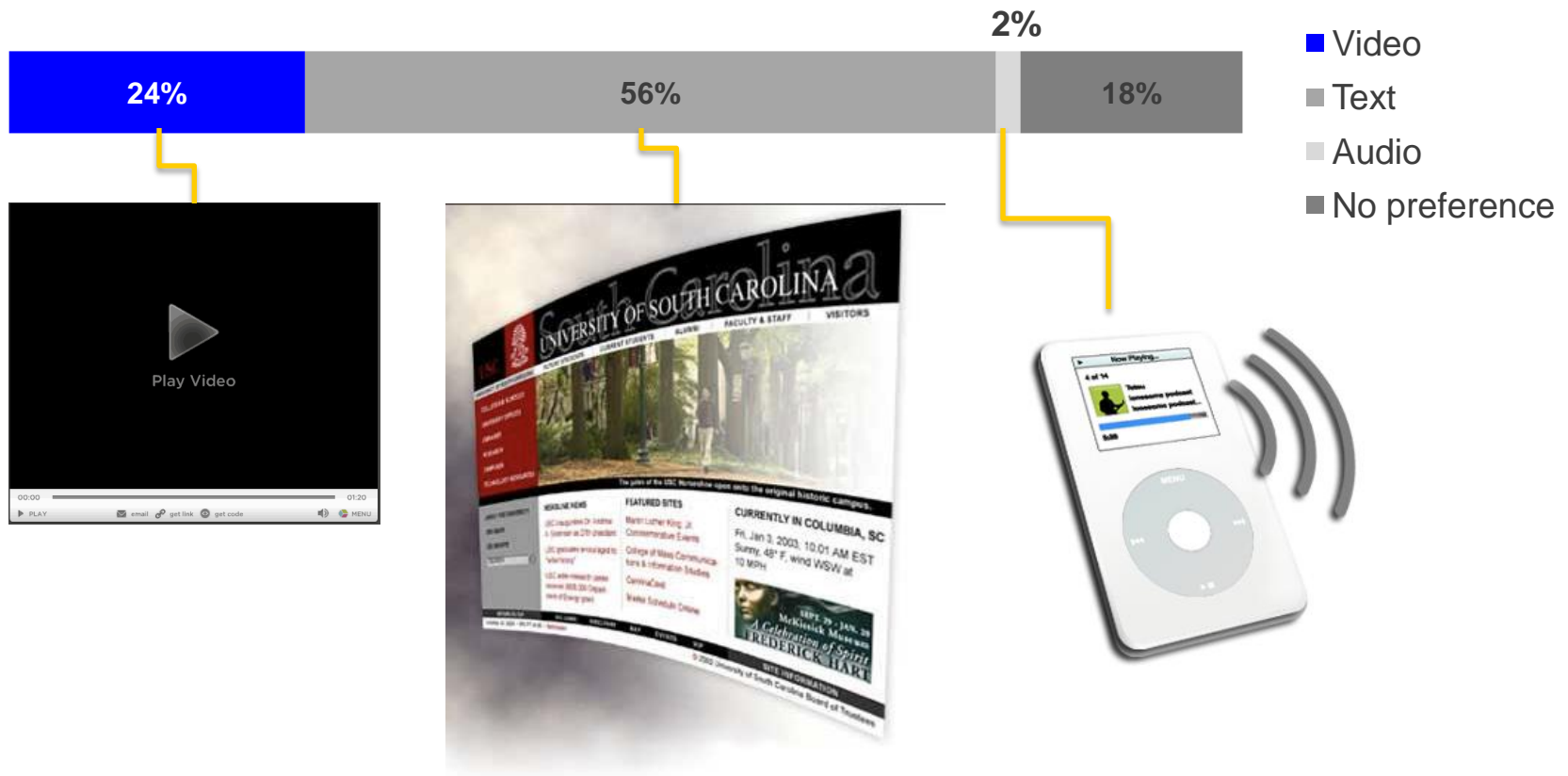


## The C-Suite and Emerging Media



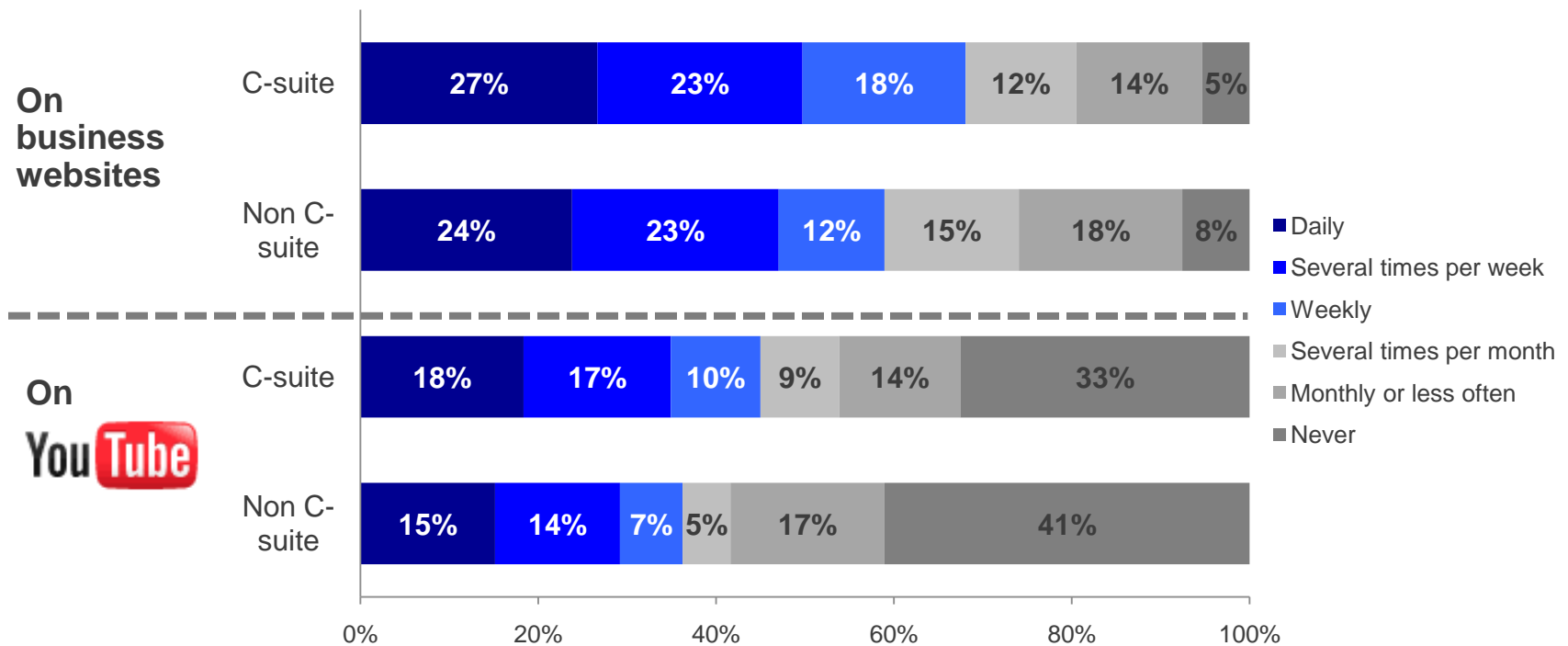
# The C-Suite Has Diverse Format Preferences

*Nearly 1 in 4 say they'd prefer to watch video content rather than read text*



Q. When it comes to reviewing the business information you need, what format do you most prefer?

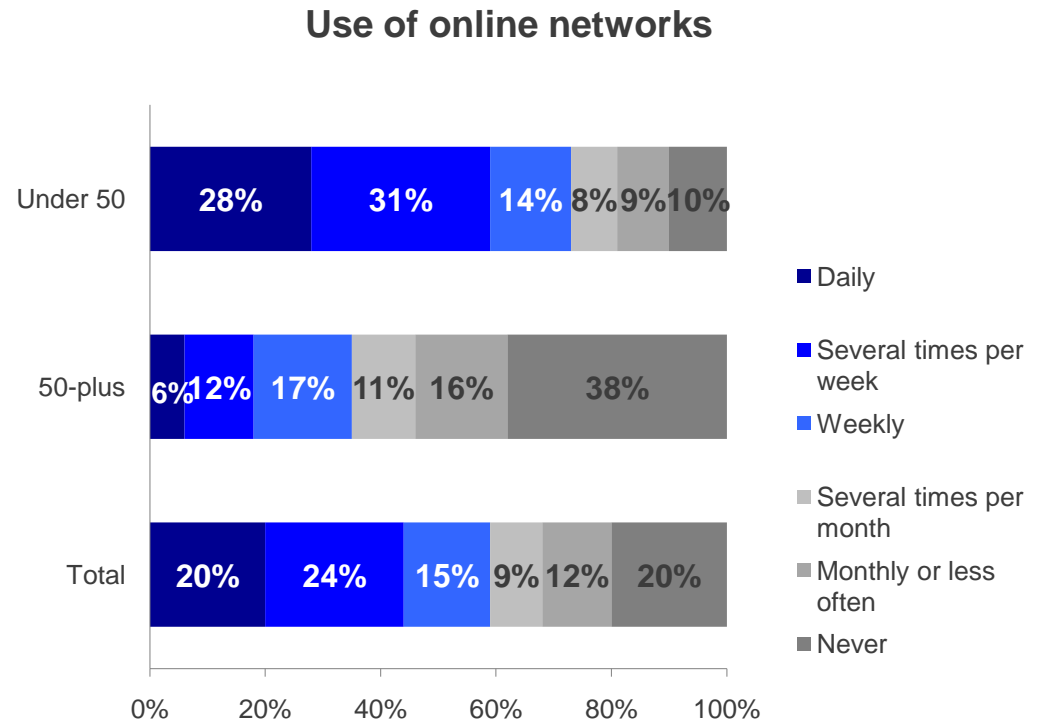
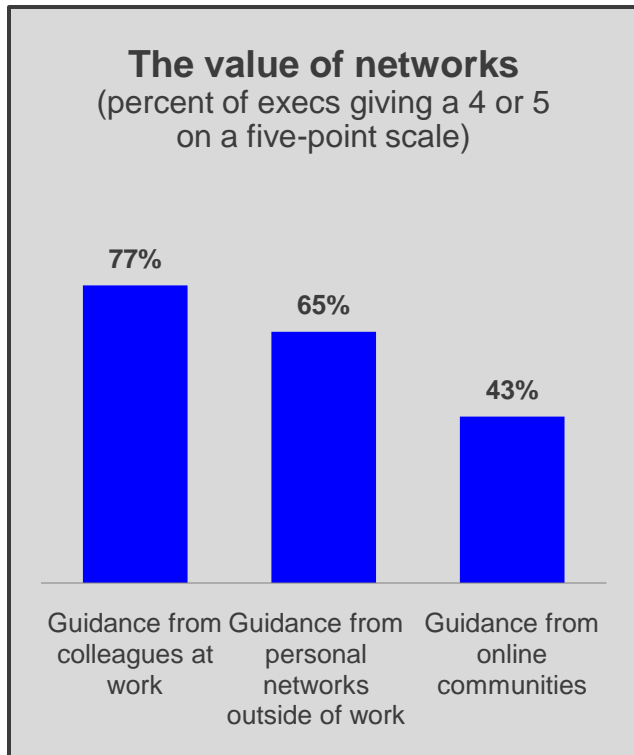
# 2 out of 3 C-Suite execs view work-related online video at least once a week



Q. How frequently do you view work-related video?

# Online social networks supplementing traditional channels

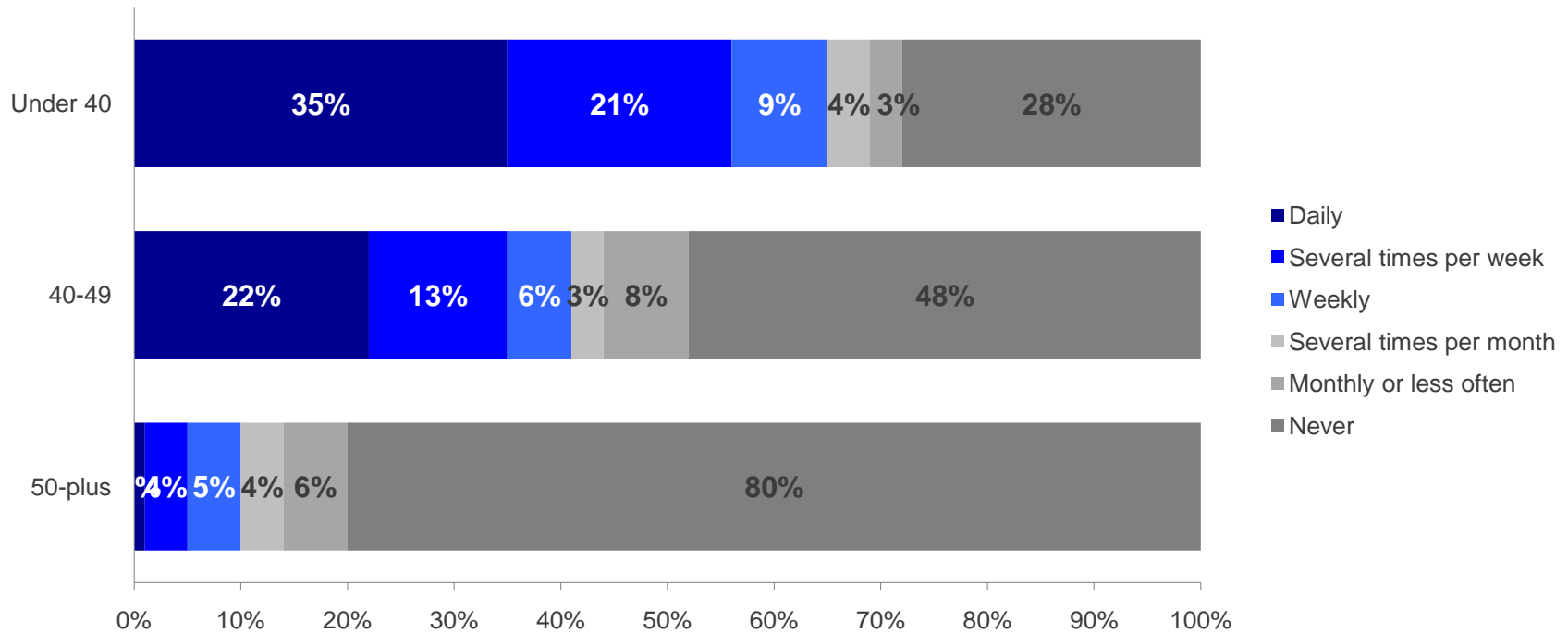
Participation is much stronger by executives under 50



Q. How frequently do you network professionally in an online community (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, online industry forums)?

# Younger executives embrace Web 2.0

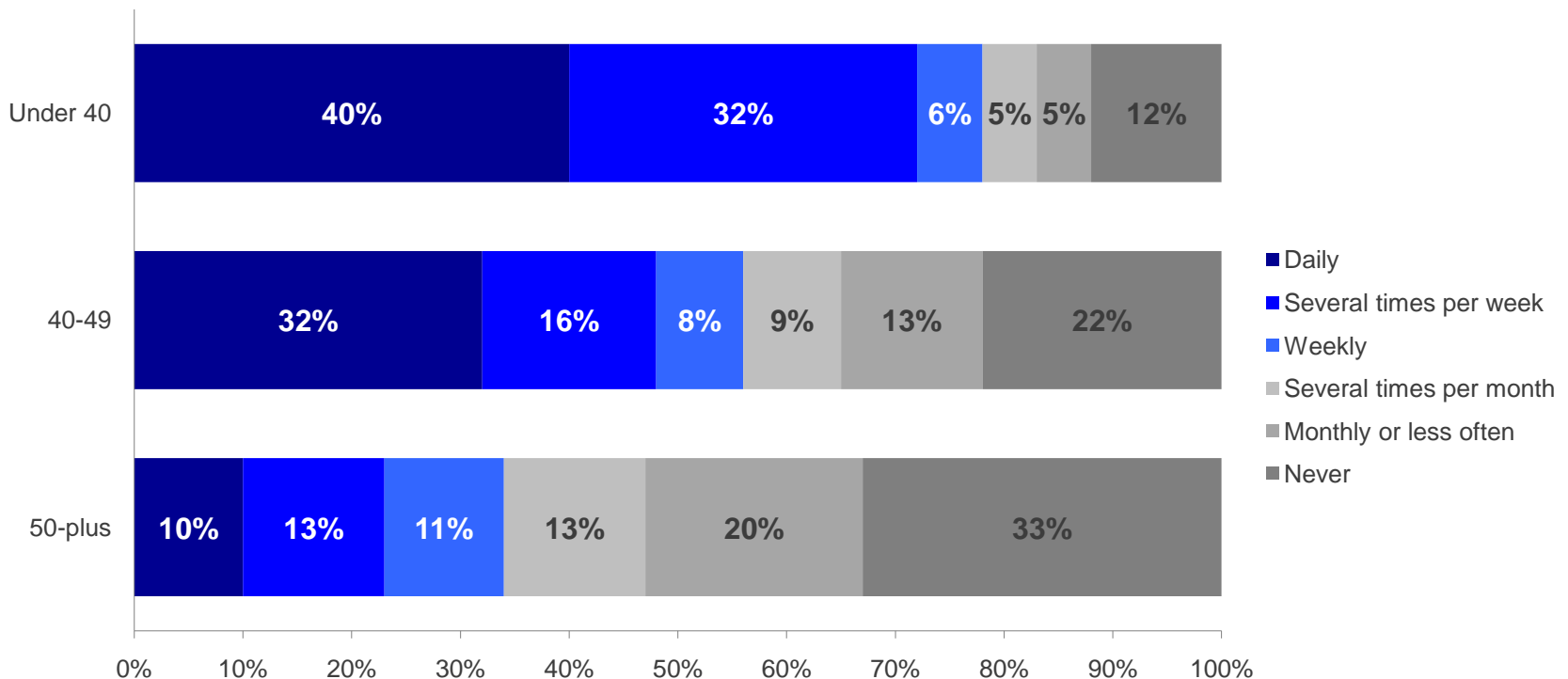
Executives under 40 are most likely to maintain a work-related blog



Q. How frequently do you do each of the following for work-related reasons?

# Younger executives embrace Web 2.0

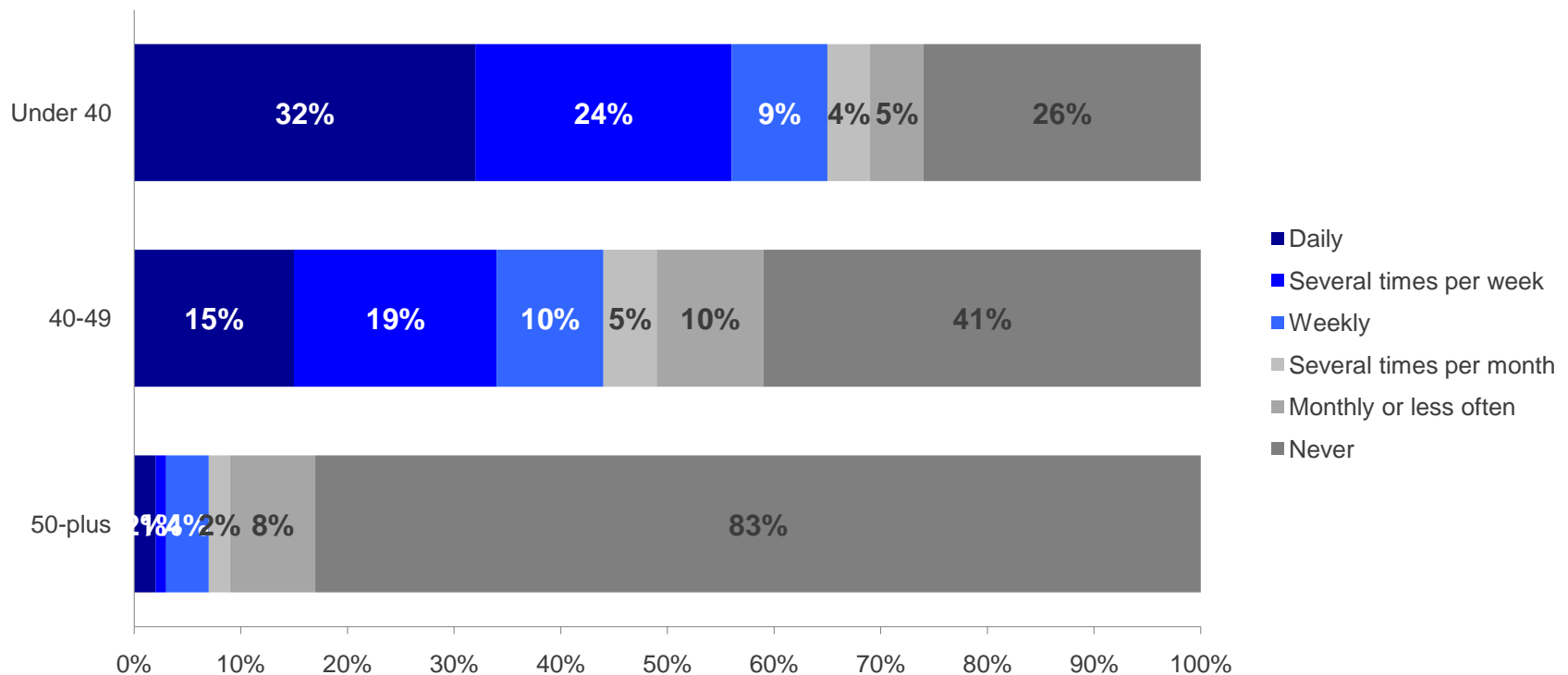
Execs under 40 are most likely to read business-related content via an RSS feed



Q. How frequently do you do each of the following for work-related reasons?

# Younger executives embrace Web 2.0

Execs under 40 are most likely to contribute or read micro-feeds via Twitter



Q. How frequently do you do each of the following for work-related reasons?

# Core lessons from this study

- **The C-suite has a digital mindset** and finds the Internet to be the most valuable resource for locating business-related information
- **Over-50 execs** use the Internet to augment traditional information-gathering methods
- **Executives under 50** are becoming the dominant force in the C-suite; the Internet, and search in particular, is fundamental to their decision-making
- **Under-40 executives** are comfortable across emerging media and social networks; these a part of their daily work life and how they connect to others for business

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