



# The digital manager's agenda 2016

## Customers, measurement and content

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# How to ‘customer-ise’ your website

## Hot topics in 2016

In January 2016 Bowen Craggs & Co ran an online survey of the digital managers in its Web Effectiveness Network (from some of the largest, most recognizable organizations in the world), revealing their top issues, priorities and challenges for the year ahead. We received 49 responses, mainly from Europe and North America, across a range of sectors.

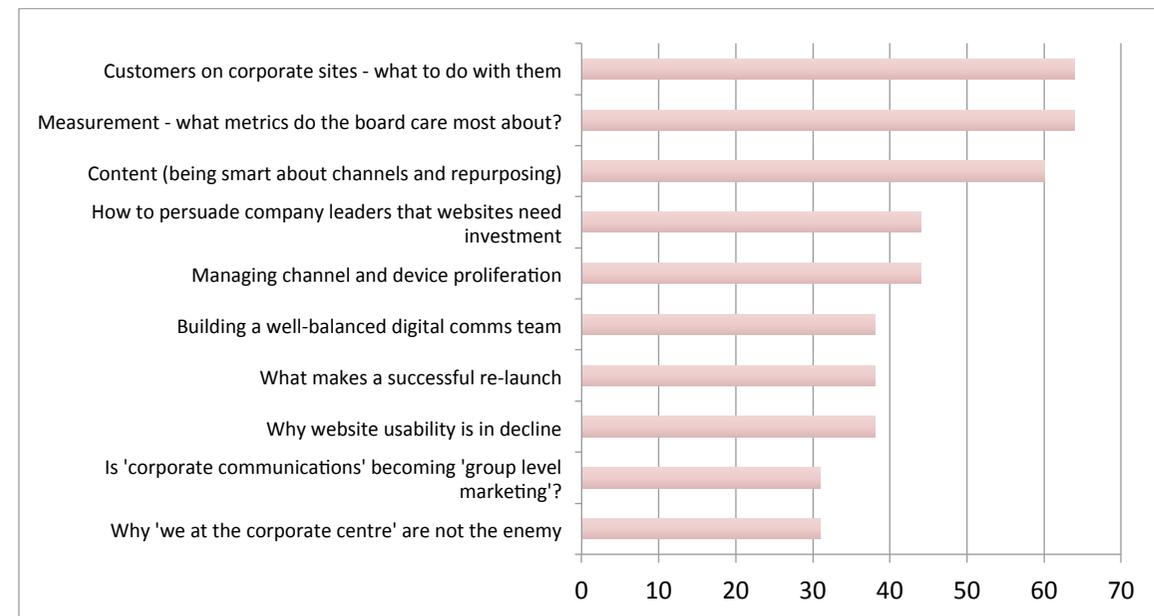
## One word sums up the digital manager’s agenda in 2016 – customers.

Three customer-related findings in our 2016 online survey stand out:

- ‘Customers on corporate websites – what to do with them’ will be digital managers’ biggest interest for the year ahead, tied with ‘measurement’ and just ahead of second-place ‘content’ (see Chart 1)
- Customers (and potential customers) are expected to be the most important external audience group for corporate websites, for the second year running (see Chart 2).
- Digital managers say that ‘customers on corporate websites’ also will be at the top of their boss’s communications agenda, tied with ‘persuading leadership for investment’ (see Chart 3).

### Chart 1: Your most important issues in 2016

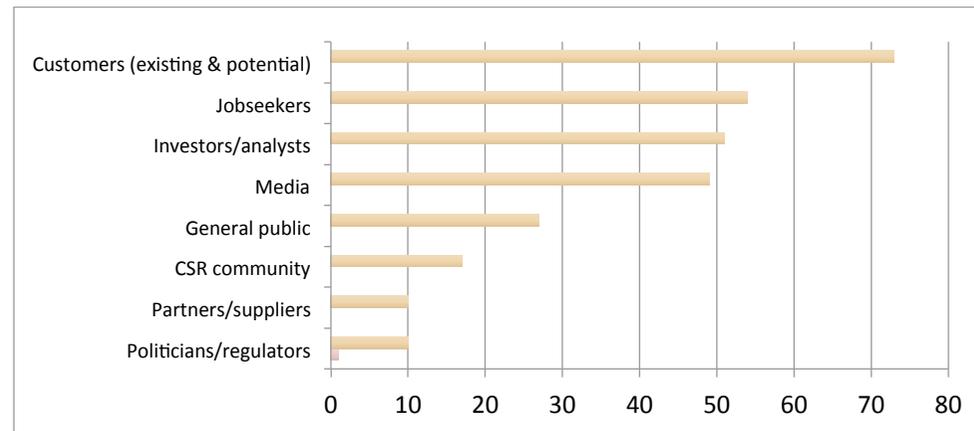
Please indicate how interested you are in the following digital communications topics (% very interested)



Source: Bowen Craggs & Co, January 2016

### Chart 2: Your website's most important audiences

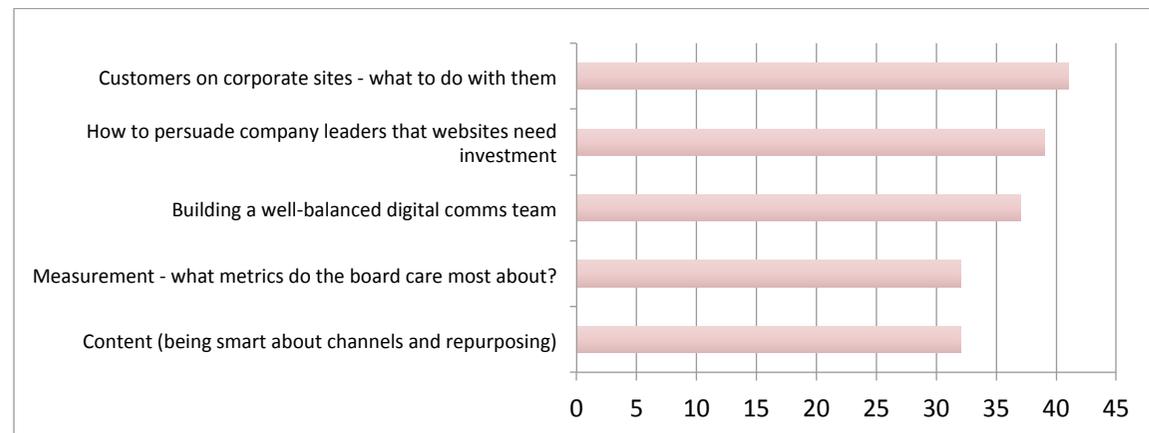
Please choose your most important three external audience groups in your online communications activities (% choosing audience among top three choices).



Source: Bowen Craggs & Co, January 2016

### Chart 3: Your boss's top priorities for online communications

Please choose the three topics you think your boss would be most interested in reading or hearing about (eg, in a commentary, webinar or conference session)? (% choosing the topic among top three)



Source: Bowen Craggs & Co, January 2016

## Customers and corporate websites: Free online resources from Bowen Craggs

*Customers, the new frontier*

*Should your corporate website be a marketing tool?*

*How should you communicate online with concerned consumers?*

## Read our weekly insight and analysis

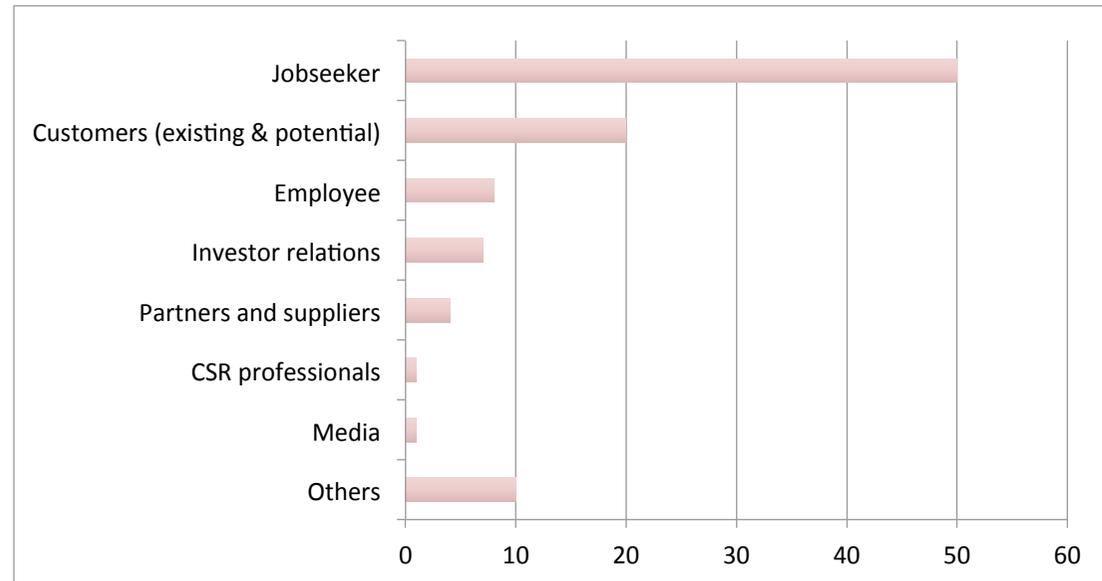
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## Customers on corporate sites: Bowen Craggs recommends...

We think digital managers (and their bosses) are right to place a high priority on customers in 2016 because they are a significant and growing audience for corporate websites. Bowen Craggs has data from thousands of visits across a range of corporate sites. The biggest visitor group is jobseekers, at 50 per cent. The next biggest is customers, potential customers and consumers, at 20 per cent.

**Chart 4: Types of visitors to corporate websites (aggregated percentages)**



*Source: Bowen Craggs & Co, January 2016*

Even companies that do not advertise their names as ‘brands’, and even those whose corporate websites are dry and investor-centric are finding customers arriving there in greater numbers. Significantly, we have also found that corporate sites tend to serve customer visitors poorly (as judged by ‘goal achievement’) when compared with professional audiences such as journalists or CSR professionals. Not surprisingly, we are advising more and more companies about what to do with their customer visitors, wanted or unwanted. As a starting point, we recommend:

## Understand which type of ‘customer’ website you have and act accordingly

We think there are four website ‘types’ when it comes to customers:

- *Sites that are already primarily customer tools*: this group includes IT companies and some banks. For them, the challenge is to make the ‘corporate’ content coherent, relevant and appropriate for customer visitors (eg, how environmentally friendly you are or how you treat suppliers).
- *Sites that have a mixed role*: examples are some of the top performers in the Bowen Craggs Index of Online

Excellence – Shell, Siemens, SAP. These provide a good service to all comers, but are getting more pressure from the top to use the corporate website to sell sell sell. Our message in this case is ‘be careful’. If marketing and selling is done well, why not, but thrusting selling messages at visitors risks alienating them, when they are visiting to form an impression about you.

- *Sites that could be selling, but are not:* examples include some energy companies that play their products right down. Even if there are good reasons for this, if customers are making their way to the dotcom, give them somewhere to go, even if it is another site.
- *Sites that do not/cannot sell products and services:* includes ‘house of brand’ companies like Unilever or pharmaceuticals that are not allowed to market directly. For these companies it is about thinking more broadly about ‘customer journeys’. On these sites, a customer journey can be about finding out if this is an organization they want to do business with: Are they ethical? How long have they been around? Are they competent?

### **Analyse how well your site delivers on three aspects of ‘converting’ customers**

Customers have always been an important audience for corporate online communications; and ‘serving customers’ has been a key metric in the Bowen Craggs Index of Online Excellence for years. We look at three primary aspects of serving customers online:

- *Customer journeys:* Is it easy to find information about products and services?
- *Customer decision-making:* Is the marketing material clear, engaging, informative and appropriate in tone?
- *Onward journeys and completion:* Where do visitors go if they are ready to buy, talk to someone or just stay in touch?

### **Avoid marketing language**

It is not enough to copy and paste the latest advertising or marketing campaign onto the website. The tone will jar. Customer visitors to corporate websites want information, not marketing. Use plain language, simple but informative visual elements, and an appropriate level of detail.

### **Do not alienate other important audience groups**

Customers may be visiting in greater numbers, but your other website audiences are just as important as they have ever been. Managing corporate websites is a delicate balance – if there is pressure to ‘convert’ more customers, make sure selling messages are not overwhelming subtler content for other audiences. Balance is key, and this is why the Bowen Craggs Index of Online Effectiveness measures how well online messages are serving five audiences – CSR professionals, investors, the media, jobseekers and customers. When done in a subtle way, the functions of selling, marketing and communicating should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

# Measurement and content

## Measurement and content: Free online resources from Bowen Craggs

### Measurement:

*How to make online metrics relevant for your boss*

*2016 Web Analytics Benchmark  
(Email Dan Drury for a free copy:  
[ddrury@bowencraggs.com](mailto:ddrury@bowencraggs.com))*

### Content:

*Fragmentation ahead: Creating, implementing and measuring your online content strategy  
(Email Dan Drury for a free copy:  
[ddrury@bowencraggs.com](mailto:ddrury@bowencraggs.com))*

*Why you should not be content with 'content'*

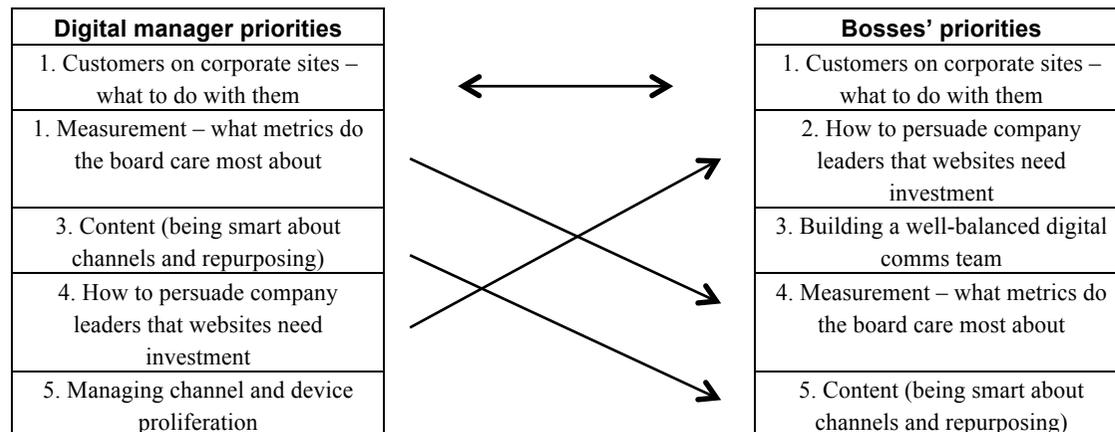
*Where to channel your content*

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Measurement and content also feature highly on the list of digital managers' priorities for 2016. 'Measurement: what metrics to the board care most about' tied with 'customers on corporate websites' as the biggest issue for digital managers in 2016 (see Chart 1). 'Content (being smart about channels and repurposing)' was the second biggest concern. Measurement and content are also relatively high on bosses' lists of concerns, placing fourth and fifth respectively (see Chart 3). Arguably, measurement is also a core part of the second biggest priority for bosses, 'How to persuade company bosses that websites are important and need investment'.

**Chart 5: Ranking the issues for 2016 – top 5 issues for digital managers v. your bosses**



Source: Bowen Craggs & Co, January 2016

## Measurement and content: Bowen Craggs recommends...

These two issues are perennial 'hot topics' for digital managers – because they are difficult to get right, but also because best practice advances so quickly.

### Measurement recommendations

#### Define performance measures that are linked to business objectives

Off-the-shelf analytics that are not linked to real-world business goals will have no meaning for senior leaders – they will just be a set of figures for page views or bounce rates, with no context. For example, the metric for page views in the website's private shareholder section might be irrelevant, unless used in the context of a strategic initiative to use

the website to help increase the number of private shareholders. This applies to social media metrics too. Crude – often misleading – measures such as the sheer number of Facebook ‘likes’ or Twitter followers are being treated with increasing caution. Web managers are asking: ‘what measures are truly relevant to my business and its objectives?’ – and tracking these instead.

**‘Key’ performance measures should have at least three features:**

- Relate to business goals
- Have a substantive impact on success
- Can be influenced by the organization’s actions within a set timeframe

**Genuine key performance indicators should be reported in a format that people outside the digital department – including bosses – can understand.**

Keep in mind that commonly used techniques for analysing and visualising trends can be misleading (or dull). There are more sophisticated statistical techniques and deeper ways to analyse online data. (For more detail on some of these techniques, email Dan Drury for a copy of the presentation, ‘The trouble with K in KPI’: [ddrury@bowencraggs.com](mailto:ddrury@bowencraggs.com)).

***Content recommendations***

**Govern the corporate website and online channels together**

We think the corporate website and corporate-level social media channels should be governed together because they are all part of the same communications effort. Top performers in our Index of Online Effectiveness, such as BASF and Novo Nordisk, do this especially well.

**To cope with channel and device proliferation, create a content strategy**

Some companies call this a ‘channel strategy’. No matter what you call it, your company needs an agreed plan for how to communicate corporate messages to which audiences on which channels. This should not be a rigid set of rules, but a working document that evolves as your company’s online communications priorities change.

**Do not look at ‘social media’ as one entity**

Delineate the purpose of each channel for your organization. For example, some social media channels, such as YouTube, are actually publishing platforms. Some, like Twitter, are distribution channels. Facebook is arguably both.

**Appoint an editor overseeing all online channels**

If the website and social media are all part of the same publishing effort, then we think it is essential that the whole estate has an editor, someone who is responsible for deciding what goes where, in addition to overseeing quality control. The editor plays a manager role – ensuring the content strategy is being executed appropriately; and a gatekeeper role – determining whether content is interesting and appropriate for the audience before it goes online.

# Your ‘biggest challenge in 2016’

## Your biggest challenges, in your own words

*‘Get measurement going...’*

*‘Doing real business online (e-commerce)’*

*‘Aligning content strategy – measuring and defining good KPIs’*

*‘Building our team as a digital centre of excellence’*

*‘The re-launch of the company corporate website’*

*‘Launching and maintaining a global network of sites and other digital channels’*

*‘Design modernisation and going responsive’*

*‘Keep growing on social media and keep improving our web estate with reduced budgets’*

*‘Getting our site ready for our IPO’*

*‘Strengthen the responsive website and more integration of social media’*

*‘Getting a challenging list of projects done with fewer resources, while planning a full relaunch for 2017’*

*‘Constantly improving on a smaller budget’*

*‘Figuring out how to let all channels work together and how each one can make the other one stronger’*

In an open-ended question, we asked respondents to state ‘in one sentence’ their biggest challenge for 2016. Of the 33 people who responded, 27 mentioned one of four challenges: a relaunch or redesign (7); digital strategy or governance (7); content and channel strategy (7) and resources, budgets or ‘doing more with less’ (6).

Specific responses included:

- ‘Digital transformation in our organization’
- ‘To launch a new website in a financially challenged company’
- ‘Achieving understanding at board level to invest in digital’

## Your challenges in 2016: Bowen Craggs recommends...

Stay in touch with us – we will be publishing new research, launching new services and holding new events throughout the year ahead:

### The new and improved ‘Index of Online Excellence’

For the first time, we are ranking the world’s 25 best corporate online estates, and also for the first time, rank the best companies in the world in individual categories such as ‘serving jobseekers’ and ‘serving investors’.

### An enhanced and updated Web Effectiveness Database

Our subscriber database is growing, now with best practice from the world’s 200 largest companies, and powerful new search tools. Subscribers can find specific, clearly presented examples of best practice (best use of a Flickr library, best history timeline, best deep-level navigation, etc) more quickly and accurately.

### Web Effectiveness Conference 2016

Taking place in Copenhagen on June 15-16, explore the agenda here: <http://www.webeffectivenessconference.com/>.

### Web Effectiveness Network meetings throughout the year

Look out for our member-hosted meetings, exact dates to be determined: <http://www.bowencraggs.com/Events-networking/Network-group>

For more information, contact Dan Drury: [ddrury@bowencraggs.com](mailto:ddrury@bowencraggs.com) or +44 2071 937554

# About Bowen Craggs

**We review.**

**We measure.**

**We advise.**

**To make your website and social media channels better for your business and your customers.**

**Visit our website [www.bowencraggs.com](http://www.bowencraggs.com) for practical advice and deep analysis for online communications professionals.**

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office: +44 2071 937554  
[linkedin.com/in/dandrury](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dandrury)

**What we do**

We are experts in global online corporate communications. We help you improve the effectiveness of your websites, mobile and social channels.

You can rely on the independence of our advice because we do not build websites. What we do is help you to improve your effectiveness with clear strategy, expert benchmarking, market research, analytics, best practice and content strategy.

Our research – gathered over 10 years and used by more than 50 of the Fortune Global 500 – can help you find and maintain the right course. Every year we publish the Bowen Craggs Index of Online Excellence, which is established as the most credible ranking of large corporate websites, and provides a deep database of best practice.

**Further resources**

Bowen Craggs is unique: we specialise in group-level digital communications. Here are three ways you can benefit from our knowledge and expertise:

*Access research that will improve your online strategy*

The world's deepest analysis of corporate online estates. Constant audience research across all stakeholder groups. A trusted and growing global knowledge-sharing network. These are the cornerstones of our research reports and bespoke consultancy.

*Explore the world's most powerful resource for global web managers*

Receive an exclusive pass to the Web Effectiveness Database – the engine for the Bowen Craggs Index. Email [ddrury@bowencraggs.com](mailto:ddrury@bowencraggs.com) for your free login to this searchable wealth of information.

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