VISTA SOCIAL RESEARCH

How Agencies Run Social Media, 2027 Report

What 12k Vista Social accounts show about how agencies and in-house teams staff, plan, approve and publish social media, and which industries' brands agencies run

Accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026. Published November 24, 2026.

https://vistasocial.com/research/how-agencies-run-social-media/

Key findings

Vista Social data from a sample of 12k accounts, agencies and in-house teams among them, running 100k brand profiles that published 12 million feed posts over 51 weeks, November 2025 to October 2026. Every figure is the median across accounts, or a share of accounts.

74%

Agencies run **74%** of the apparel and fashion retail profiles in our data, the largest share of any industry, followed by construction and grocery; publishing and education are the most often run in-house.

02

42 hours

Agencies that use approvals wait **42** hours from submitting a post to its final approval, against 16 hours for in-house teams.

03

3.9 days

Agencies plan further ahead than in-house teams: the typical agency creates a post **3.9** days before it goes out, against 2.9 days for in-house teams, and 29% of agency posts are created more than a week ahead, against 20%.

04

35%

The gap holds at every size above 5 profiles: agencies running 51 or more profiles create **35%** of their posts more than a week ahead, against 19% for in-house teams of the same size.

05

37%

37% of agencies that use approvals had a client approve or reject a post through Vista Social, against 6% of in-house teams.

06

41%

Approvals become common only at scale: **41%** of agencies with 51 or more profiles send posts through approval, against 2% of agencies with 1 to 5 profiles.

07

1%

Rejections are rare: the typical agency rejects **1%** of the posts it reviews, and the typical in-house team rejects none.

08

20

At the same size, agencies run about twice as many brands: **20** brands for an agency with 51 or more profiles, against 10 for an in-house team of that size.

09

1.5

Agency-run profiles post slightly less often: a median of **1.5** feed posts a week per profile, against 1.8 for in-house teams, and less in 11 of the 19 industries we measured.

10

50%

50% of agencies with 51 or more profiles share a calendar with clients, and 15% email scheduled reports to people outside the agency.

About this report

Agencies run social media for most of the brands they work with, but almost everything published about how they work comes from surveys of what agencies say they do. This report measures what 12k Vista Social accounts actually did over a year: how many brands and profiles each team runs, how many people do the work, how often they publish, how far ahead they plan, how approvals go, and how they work with clients.

It compares two groups. **Agencies** are accounts that told us at signup they are an agency, plus accounts that run 5 or more separate brands and didn't describe themselves as a multi-location business or an enterprise. **In-house teams** are accounts that told us they are a small or medium business, a multi-location business or an enterprise. Agencies are bigger on average, so most findings are also given for accounts of the same size.

No figure describes a single customer. A number is published only when it rests on at least 10 Vista Social accounts, and industry figures on at least 50 brand profiles from at least 10 accounts.

Terms used in this report

> **Account:** one Vista Social workspace, used by one agency or one in-house team.

> **Brand profile:** one account on one network, such as a company's Instagram account or its LinkedIn page.

> **Brand (profile group):** a set of profiles grouped together in Vista Social, usually one client or one brand.

> **Team member:** a person with access to the account. For agencies, this can include client logins.

> **Size:** the number of brand profiles an account runs: 1 to 5, 6 to 15, 16 to 50, or 51 or more.

> **Lead time:** days from creating a post in Vista Social to publishing it.

> **Uses approvals:** sent at least 10 posts through an approval step in Vista Social in the year.

> **Time to approval:** hours from submitting a post for approval to its final approval.

> **Client approval:** a person outside the team approved or rejected a post through a shared calendar or link.

How big the operation is

Table 1.1 Size, brands and team, agencies and in-house teams

	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
Accounts	**3k**	6k
Brand profiles	**9**	4
Networks	**4**	3
Brands (profile groups)	**3**	0
Accounts running 5 or more brands	**44%**	2%
Team members	**2**	2
Brand profiles per team member	**3.5**	2.3

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

The typical agency runs 9 brand profiles across 4 networks, more than twice as many as the typical in-house team, with the same 2 people. One in ten agencies runs 34 or more profiles, 13 or more brands, or has 8 or more people on the account.

By size:

Table 1.2 Brands and team, by size

SIZE	AGENCIES			IN-HOUSE TEAMS		
	BRANDS	TEAM MEMBERS	PROFILES PER TEAM MEMBER	BRANDS	TEAM MEMBERS	PROFILES PER TEAM MEMBER
1 to 5 profiles	0	1	1.3	0	1	1.7
6 to 15 profiles	3	2	4.7	1	2	4.0
16 to 50 profiles	8	4	6.3	3	3	7.3
51 or more profiles	20	9	8.3	10	7	9.1

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

At the same size, agencies and in-house teams staff about alike: 3 to 4 people for 16 to 50 profiles, and 7 to 9 for 51 or more. The difference is what the profiles belong to. An agency with 16 to 50 profiles runs 8 brands, against 3 for an in-house team of that size, and an agency with 51 or more profiles runs 20, against 10.

How much they publish

Every feed post counts here, whether it was published through Vista Social or directly on the network.

Table 2.1 Posting pace, agencies and in-house teams

	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
Posts per profile per week	**1.5**	1.8
Posts per team member per week	**5.3**	4.2
Share of posts published through Vista Social	**53%**	51%

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

By size:

Table 2.2 Posting pace, by size

SIZE	AGENCIES		IN-HOUSE TEAMS	
	POSTS PER PROFILE PER WEEK	POSTS PER TEAM MEMBER PER WEEK	POSTS PER PROFILE PER WEEK	POSTS PER TEAM MEMBER PER WEEK
1 to 5 profiles	1.5	2.7	1.9	3.0
6 to 15 profiles	1.2	4.4	1.7	5.3
16 to 50 profiles	1.6	7.8	1.4	7.0
51 or more profiles	1.8	11.0	2.2	14.6

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

Each person publishes more as the operation grows, at agencies and in-house teams alike, from about 3 posts a week at 1 to 5 profiles to 11 to 15 at 51 or more. Agency team members publish 5.3 posts a week against 4.2 overall, but that gap comes from agencies being bigger. At the same size, there is no consistent difference.

Each agency-run profile posts slightly less often than an in-house one, 1.5 posts a week against 1.8, and less at every size except 16 to 50 profiles. Agencies spread their time across more brands.

How far ahead they plan

Lead time uses posts published through Vista Social, since posts made directly on a network have no creation time.

FIGURE 1

Planning and approvals at agencies and in-house teams, by size

DAYS AHEAD

All sizes: agencies 3.9 days, in-house teams 2.9 days

SIZE	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
1 to 5 profiles	4.3	3.7
6 to 15 profiles	3.7	2.6
16 to 50 profiles	3.8	2.0
51 or more profiles	5.4	3.4

Days from creating a post to publishing it, median across accounts, by size (brand profiles on the account). Posts published through Vista Social, November 2025 to October 2026. Source: Vista Social Research.

MORE THAN A WEEK AHEAD

All sizes: agencies 29%, in-house teams 20%

SIZE	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
1 to 5 profiles	30%	26%
6 to 15 profiles	25%	17%
16 to 50 profiles	29%	16%
51 or more profiles	35%	19%

Share of posts created more than a week before they were published, median across accounts, by size (brand profiles on the account). Posts published through Vista Social, November 2025 to October 2026. Source: Vista Social Research.

HOURS TO APPROVAL

All sizes: agencies 42 hours, in-house teams 16 hours

SIZE	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
1 to 5 profiles	18	20
6 to 15 profiles	40	14
16 to 50 profiles	44	3
51 or more profiles	44	-

Hours from submitting a post to its final approval, median across accounts that use approvals, by size (brand profiles on the account). A dash means too few accounts to publish. Posts published through Vista Social, November 2025 to October 2026. Source: Vista Social Research.

USE APPROVALS

All sizes: agencies 11%, in-house teams 5%

SIZE	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
1 to 5 profiles	2%	2%
6 to 15 profiles	9%	7%
16 to 50 profiles	21%	12%
51 or more profiles	41%	18%

Share of accounts that sent at least 10 posts through approval in the year, by size (brand profiles on the account). Posts published through Vista Social, November 2025 to October 2026. Source: Vista Social Research.

Agencies In-house teams

Vista Social Research

vistasocial.com/research/how-agencies-run-social-media

Table 3.1 Lead time, agencies and in-house teams

	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
Days from creating a post to publishing it	**3.9**	2.9
Posts created more than a week ahead	**29%**	20%

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

By size:

Table 3.2 Lead time, by size

SIZE	AGENCIES		IN-HOUSE TEAMS	
	LEAD TIME (DAYS)	MORE THAN A WEEK AHEAD	LEAD TIME (DAYS)	MORE THAN A WEEK AHEAD
1 to 5 profiles	4.3	30%	3.7	26%
6 to 15 profiles	3.7	25%	2.6	17%
16 to 50 profiles	3.8	29%	2.0	16%
51 or more profiles	5.4	35%	3.4	19%

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

Small agencies and small in-house teams plan about the same, about 4 days ahead. From 6 profiles up, agencies plan further ahead at every size. The widest gap is at 16 to 50 profiles, where agencies create posts 3.8 days ahead and in-house teams 2.0 days. The biggest agencies plan furthest of all: 5.4 days ahead, with 35% of posts created more than a week out.

How approvals go

Approvals use posts published through Vista Social. The time and rejection figures cover accounts that use approvals.

Table 4.1 Approvals, agencies and in-house teams

	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
Accounts that use approvals	**11%**	5%
Share of their posts that go through approval	**35%**	51%
Hours from submission to final approval	**42**	16
Posts rejected	**1%**	0%
Posts approved at more than one step	**2%**	1%
Accounts where a client approved or rejected a post	**37%**	6%

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

By size:

Table 4.2 Approvals, by size

SIZE	AGENCIES			IN-HOUSE TEAMS		
	USE APPROVALS	HOURS TO APPROVAL	CLIENT APPROVED OR REJECTED	USE APPROVALS	HOURS TO APPROVAL	CLIENT APPROVED OR REJECTED
1 to 5 profiles	2%	18	22%	2%	20	1%
6 to 15 profiles	9%	40	34%	7%	14	6%
16 to 50 profiles	21%	44	37%	12%	3	12%
51 or more profiles	41%	44	43%	18%	-	-

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

Most accounts don't use approvals at all: 89% of agencies and 95% of in-house teams sent fewer than 10 posts through approval in the year. Approvals become common only as agencies grow, from 2% of agencies with 1 to 5 profiles to 41% with 51 or more.

Agencies that use approvals wait longer for them: 42 hours from submission to final approval, against 16 for in-house teams. From 6 profiles up, agencies wait 40 to 44 hours, while in-house teams of the same size wait 14 hours or less. The likely reason is the client: at 34 to 43% of agencies with 6 or more profiles that use approvals, a client approved or rejected posts directly.

Rejections are rare everywhere. The typical agency rejects 1% of the posts it reviews and the typical in-house team none, and almost every post is approved at a single step.

Few small agencies and few mid-sized in-house teams use approvals, so the figures for agencies with 1 to 5 profiles and in-house teams with 16 to 50 profiles are the least precise here. A dash means too few accounts to publish.

How they work with clients

Table 5.1 Client tools, agencies and in-house teams

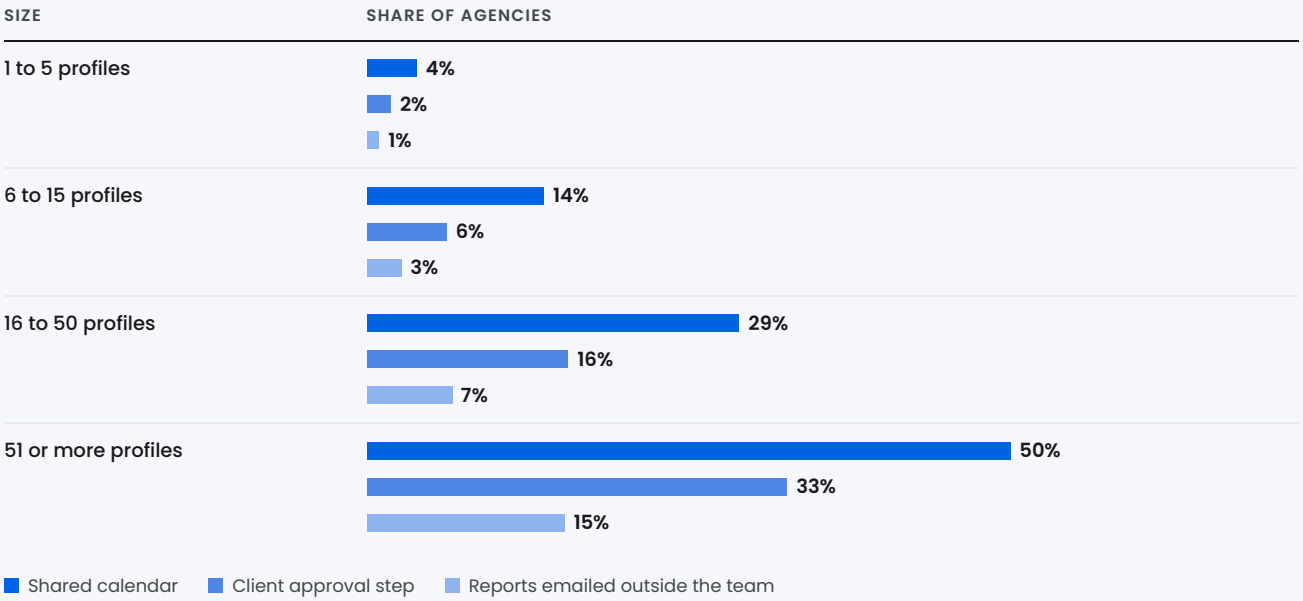
	AGENCIES	IN-HOUSE TEAMS
Accounts with a calendar shared outside the team	**16%**	3%
Accounts with a client approval step	**9%**	2%
Accounts that email scheduled reports outside the team	**4%**	1%
Accounts with their own branded (white label) version of Vista Social	**1%**	0%

Source: Vista Social Research, accounts and posts from November 2025 to October 2026.

Agencies, by size:

FIGURE 3

Client tools at agencies, by size



Share of agencies with each client tool, by size (brand profiles on the account), as of November 2026. Source: Vista Social Research.

Vista Social Research vistasocial.com/research/how-agencies-run-social-media

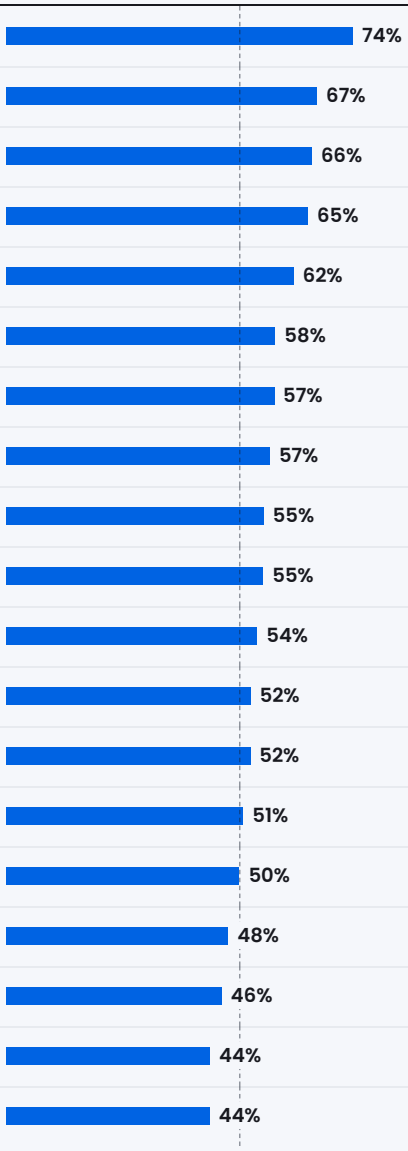
Client tools grow with the agency. Few agencies with 1 to 5 profiles share a calendar with clients (4%), but half of agencies with 51 or more profiles do, and a third have a step where the client approves posts. A report counts as sent outside the team when it goes to an email address on a domain no team member uses.

Which industries' brands agencies run

Brand profiles with an industry, by who runs them:

FIGURE 4

Brand profiles by industry and who runs them



INDUSTRY	SHARE RUN BY AGENCIES	AGENCY-RUN posts a week	IN-HOUSE posts a week
Apparel and fashion retail	74%	2.2	2.2
Construction and contractors	67%	1.3	2.0
Grocery and food stores	66%	1.8	1.8
Restaurants, cafes and bars	65%	1.7	1.6
Nonprofits, associations and religious organizations	62%	2.4	2.3
Real estate	58%	1.5	2.0
Hotels and lodging	57%	1.2	1.1
Health care	57%	1.8	2.1
Food and beverage brands	55%	1.5	1.9
Legal services	55%	1.9	2.1
Professional services	54%	1.3	1.9
Finance and insurance	52%	1.5	1.8
Wholesale and distribution	52%	1.7	1.6
Sports, fitness and entertainment	51%	1.7	2.1
Car dealers	50%	2.1	1.6
Specialty retail	48%	2.0	1.9
Salons, spas and personal services	46%	1.5	1.8
Education	44%	1.7	2.1
Publishing and media	44%	3.1	3.5

Share of brand profiles with an industry that agencies run, and feed posts per profile per week, among Vista Social's customers, November 2025 to October 2026. The dashed line marks 50%. Read the shares as a ranking, not as the share of all brands that hire an agency. Source: Vista Social Research.

Among Vista Social's customers, agencies run about three quarters of apparel and fashion retail profiles, and about two thirds of construction, grocery and restaurant profiles. Publishing and media, education, and salons and spas are the most often run in-house: these brands tend to have their own content people, such as a newsroom or a school's communications office. The shares describe Vista Social's customers, which include somewhat more agency-run profiles than in-house ones overall, so read them as a ranking, not as the share of all brands in an industry that hire an agency.

In 11 of the 19 industries, agency-run profiles post less often than in-house ones, most of all in construction (1.3 a week against 2.0), professional services (1.3 against 1.9) and real estate (1.5 against 2.0). Car dealers are the clear exception: agency-run dealer profiles post 2.1 times a week, against 1.6 for dealers that post themselves.

Posts per week here are a profile's feed posts over the whole year divided by 51 weeks, for profiles with at least 12 posts, so they run lower than in our How Often Should Brands Post report, which counts only the weeks a profile was active. The agencies, software and business services industry is left out: on the agency side, it is mostly agencies' own pages.

PART 7

What this means for agencies

This report measures what agencies and in-house teams did, not a controlled test (see the limitations). With that in mind:

- **Approvals are where agency time goes.** From 6 profiles up, agencies that use approvals wait 40 to 44 hours for a final approval, against 14 hours or less for in-house teams of the same size. Planning further ahead is how agencies make room for it: they create posts a day or two earlier than in-house teams at every size above 5 profiles.
- **If your clients approve posts, plan for about two days.** The typical agency that uses approvals waits 42 hours from submission to final approval.
- **Few posts get rejected.** The typical agency rejects 1% of the posts it reviews, so most approval time is waiting, not rework.
- **Watch the posting pace on each brand.** Agency-run profiles post a little less often than in-house ones in most industries. Our How Often Should Brands Post report found that brands posting 1 to 3 times a week got 53 to 59% more total impressions in weeks when they posted 1.25 to 2 times as much.
- **Share calendars and reports early.** Half of agencies with 51 or more profiles share a calendar with clients, against 4% of agencies with 1 to 5 profiles.

For how often to post, see the How Often Should Brands Post on Social Media, 2027 Report. For when to post, see the Best Times to Post on Social Media, 2027 Report.

Questions this report answers

How many clients does a social media agency manage?

The typical agency on Vista Social runs 9 brand profiles across 4 networks, grouped into 3 brands, with 2 people on the account. Agencies with 51 or more profiles run a median of 20 brands with 9 people, and 44% of all agencies run 5 or more brands.

How many social media accounts can one person manage?

At agencies, the typical team member handles 3.5 brand profiles, rising to 8.3 at agencies with 51 or more profiles. At in-house teams it is 2.3, rising to 9.1 at teams with 51 or more profiles. Team members include client logins, so agency figures may understate what each staff member handles.

How many posts does a social media manager publish per week?

The typical team member publishes 5.3 feed posts a week at agencies and 4.2 at in-house teams. It grows with the size of the operation, from about 3 posts a week per person at accounts with 1 to 5 profiles to 11 to 15 at accounts with 51 or more.

How far in advance do agencies schedule social media posts?

The typical agency creates a post 3.9 days before it goes out, against 2.9 days for in-house teams, and 29% of agency posts are created more than a week ahead, against 20%. Agencies with 51 or more profiles create posts 5.4 days ahead, with 35% more than a week ahead.

How long does client approval of social media posts take?

Agencies that use approvals in Vista Social wait a median of 42 hours from submitting a post to its final approval, against 16 hours for in-house teams. Agencies with 6 or more profiles wait 40 to 44 hours, and at 34 to 43% of them a client approved or rejected posts directly.

How often do clients reject social media posts?

Rarely. The typical agency that uses approvals rejects 1% of the posts it reviews, and the typical in-house team rejects none. Almost every post is approved at a single step.

Do agency-managed social media accounts post more often?

No. Agency-run brand profiles publish a median of 1.5 feed posts a week, against 1.8 for in-house teams, and agency-run profiles post less often in 11 of the 19 industries measured. Car dealers are the main exception: agency-run dealer profiles post 2.1 times a week, against 1.6 for dealers that post themselves.

Which industries use social media agencies the most?

Among Vista Social's customers, agencies run the largest share of brand profiles in apparel and fashion retail (74%), construction (67%), grocery (66%), restaurants (65%) and nonprofits (62%). Publishing and media and education are the most often run in-house, with 44% of profiles run by agencies.

APPENDIX A

Methodology

Data source

Anonymized, aggregated data from Vista Social. The report covers 12k Vista Social accounts that had at least one brand profile connected and updating in November 2026, which run 100k brand profiles. The comparisons use the 3k agencies and 6k in-house teams among them, which run 88k brand profiles, excluding competitor profiles that customers only track.

Agencies and in-house teams

When an account signs up, Vista Social asks what kind of organization it is. Agencies are accounts that answered "agency", plus accounts that run 5 or more profile groups and answered "other", "small or medium business" or nothing: about 3k accounts in all. In-house teams are accounts that answered small or medium business, multi-location business or enterprise and are not counted as agencies: about 6k accounts. The remaining accounts, which answered "other" or nothing and run fewer than 5 profile groups, are left out of the comparison.

Measures

- **Size, brands and team:** brand profiles connected and updating in November 2026, profile groups, and people with active access to the account, as of November 2026.
- **Posting:** every feed post on the account's brand profiles from November 3, 2025 to October 25, 2026 (51 whole weeks), on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, X and Threads, whether published through Vista Social or directly on the network. Stories are not counted. Posts per profile per week is the account's posts divided by its profiles and by 51 weeks; posts per team member per week is the account's posts divided by its team members and by 51 weeks. Accounts need at least 52 posts in the year.
- **Lead time:** posts published through Vista Social from November 1, 2025 to October 31, 2026, from the time the post was created to its scheduled publish

time. A post sent to several profiles counts once. Accounts need at least 52 such posts.

- **Approvals:** the same posts. A post went through approval if it was submitted for review, approved or rejected. Time to approval runs from the first submission to the last approval, for accounts with at least 10 timed approvals. Client approvals are approvals or rejections made by a person outside the team through a shared calendar or link.
- **Client tools:** calendars shared outside the team, approval workflows with a client step, scheduled reports with a recipient on an email domain no team member uses, and active white label setups, as of November 2026.

Every account figure is the median across accounts, or a share of accounts.

Industries

Industries come from the classification used in the Social Media Benchmarks by Industry, 2027 Report: a code from the US Standard Industrial Classification, assigned from each profile's public name and bio. 23% of brand profiles have no industry, and some fall outside the 20 industries in the report. Profile posting pace in Part 6 is the profile's feed posts over the 51 weeks divided by 51, for profiles with at least 12 posts.

Privacy

No figure describes a single customer. A number is published only when it rests on at least 10 Vista Social accounts, and industry figures on at least 50 brand profiles from at least 10 accounts. The analysis used only counts, times and settings. To tell whether a scheduled report goes outside the team, email addresses were compared by domain only, and no address was kept. No captions, media, names or links were read or kept.

Limitations

- **Correlation, not causation.** Agencies and in-house teams differ in size, clients and industries. Comparing them at the same size removes some of this, but not all.
- **What an account told us.** Agency or not is mostly what the account answered at signup, sometimes years ago. Some agencies answered otherwise, and some accounts have changed since.

- **Team members include client logins.** Agencies often give clients access to the account, so agency team sizes may run high, and posts and profiles per person may understate what each staff member does.
- **Lead time and approvals only see Vista Social.** Posts made directly on a network have no creation time or approval record, and teams that approve posts outside Vista Social, by email or chat, look as if they don't use approvals.
- **Time to approval is elapsed time,** from submission to final approval, including nights and weekends, not the time anyone spent reviewing.
- **Industry shares describe Vista Social's customers,** not all brands in an industry.
- **One year of data.** The 2028 edition will show whether the patterns hold.

APPENDIX B

How to cite

HOW TO CITE THIS REPORT

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For press questions or custom cuts of the data, contact the Vista Social team at research@vistasocial.com.