
Online Marketing

for Professional Services Firms

Architecture/Engineering/Construction
- EDITION -



Online Marketing for Professional Services Firms: Architecture/Engineering/Construction Edition
Copyright © 2012

Published by Hinge Research Institute
1851 Alexander Bell Drive, Suite 350
Reston, Virginia 20191

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Design by Hinge.
Visit our website at www.hingemarketing.com

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the 500 CEOs and executives who took the time to participate in this study. Their willingness to share their marketing and financial performance metrics made this research far more valuable and relevant.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to the twenty online marketing specialists who offered their expertise and insights to this study. Their experience and knowledge add invaluable context to our research findings.

Special thanks go out to the four firms we profile as case studies:

GHT, Ltd.
www.ghltld.com

HPD Architecture
www.hpdarch.com

Modative
www.modative.com

Quinn Evans Architects
www.quinnevans.com



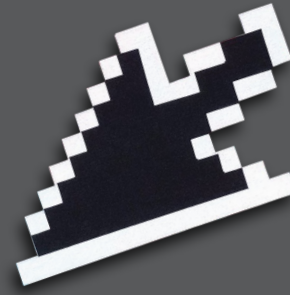
In addition, we would like to thank the Society for Marketing Professional Services (www.smeps.org) for helping us recruit study participants.



1 Introduction	5
2 Methodology	8
3 Online Lead Generation	10
Are Professional Services Firms Capturing New Leads Online?	10
Could There Be a Relationship Between Online Leads and Growth and Profitability?	12
Are Professional Services Industries Taking Advantage of Online Recruiting?	17
Are A/E/C Firms Spending Money on Online Marketing?	19
4 Online Techniques	28
How Do High-Growth Firms Use Online Marketing?	28
Are Online Marketing Techniques Giving High-Growth Firms an Advantage?	29
What Do the Experts Say?	35
5 Conclusions	41
Additional Resources	42
6 The Expert Panel	43

1

Introduction



A revolution is underway in marketing for architecture, engineering and construction (A/E/C) firms.

Marketing is undergoing a fundamental change in the A/E/C community. Whether at a 50-year-old engineering firm in Southern California, an architecture firm in Arkansas or a general contractor in Maryland, the outlook is the same – buyers of design and construction services are finding and vetting firms differently today.

How is marketing today different? Why has it changed? These are questions that my colleagues and I sought to answer. In our original study entitled *Online Marketing for Professional Services: How Digital Marketing Delivers Faster Growth and Higher Profits* – the first national study to look at the online marketing habits of professional services firms – we wanted to find out which techniques were producing real results.

In *Online Marketing for Professional Services: Architecture/Engineering/Construction Edition*, we dive into online marketing's immediate implications for the A/E/C community.

Over the past decade, I have witnessed a booming construction cycle followed by an economic meltdown that brought the industry to its knees.

Buyers are finding and vetting firms differently today.



To some degree, all firms are subject to sweeping trends. Let's consider a few:

- **Increase in public/private partnerships.** Regardless of your position on PPPs, this procurement alternative is here to stay. Today, connecting with new teaming partners is critical, and previous experience and reputation are essential in identifying your best teaming partners.
- **Less construction, more reconstruction.** Federal agencies are operating under smaller budgets and risk prioritization continues to impact future projects. According to Angie Petty, Principal Analyst for the A/E industry at Deltek, "Federal agencies will attempt to maintain and rehabilitate property and structures rather than build new ones. Projects to restore and expand aging infrastructure will take precedence over new construction ... [N]ew projects that are funded will include a focus on energy efficiency, total cost of ownership, facilitating telework and other cost-saving measures."
www.govwin.com/seantucker_blog/report-ae-firms-will-need/200749
- **Specialists have the advantage.** Increasingly, businesses are turning to specialists to solve their unique problems. When time is of the essence, companies want service providers that already understand their business problems and can hit the ground running. And as companies rely more and more on online search to find specialized expertise, location is becoming a less important selection criterium. Finding the *right* provider can be the deciding factor in the success of a business.

*“Searchers either find you,
or they find your competitors”*

-Rebecca Lieb



Changing societal behaviors are also magnifying these industry trends. Consider the following:

- **Technology has disrupted the field:** Geographic proximity matters much less today.
- **Word-of-mouth marketing is being transformed:** Service firms now need to worry about their online reputation — social media is the new word-of-mouth. It's more difficult today to grow a firm with traditional word-of-mouth techniques alone.
- **You aren't relevant if you aren't online:** People are going online to educate themselves and stay abreast of the latest trends and thinking. Professional services firms that opt to join the conversation are building their reputations and dramatically expanding their audiences. Google, LinkedIn, Pinterest and other social media platforms are opening new frontiers.

The trends sweeping the A/E/C industry and changing societal behaviors have disrupted the way firms build business. This nation-wide study looks at the connection between online marketing and firm growth that contribute to the success of A/E/C firms like yours.

Good luck with your marketing!

Sylvia Montgomery, CPSM
Senior Partner, Hinge

Find me online!

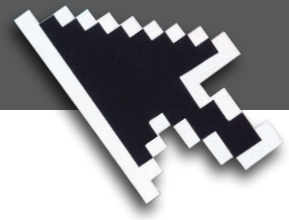
Twitter	@BrandStrong
Facebook	sylvia.montgomery1
LinkedIn	sylviamontgomery
Google +	Sylvia Montgomery
YouTube	BrandStrong
Pinterest	BrandStrong



2

Methodology

This study looks at A/E/C firms, other professional services firms and an Expert Panel.



This study includes results from A/E/C firms, other professional services firms and an expert panel.

This study includes results from two distinct sample groups:

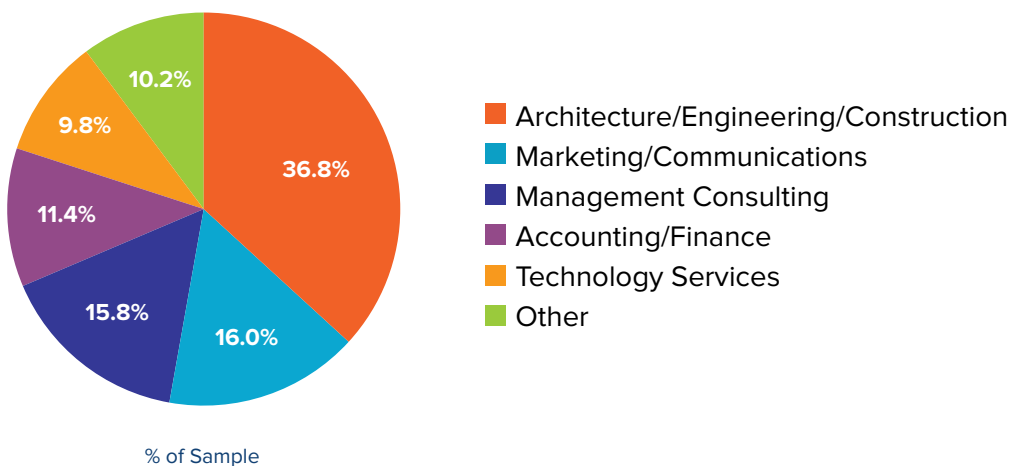
- 500 professional services firms
- An expert panel of 20 online marketing leaders

The overall sample included a total of 500 professional services firms with an average of 319 employees and an average annual revenue of \$53,929,835. Respondents were drawn from senior-level management and executive positions.

The sample included five primary industry groups and a study segment composed of other professional services.:

36.8%
of study
participants
were A/E/C
firms.

Fig. 1. Sample Composition by Industry Group



The Architecture/Engineering/Construction (A/E/C) firms we studied:



3

Online Lead Generation

How Does the A/E/C Industry Compare to Other Professional Services Industries?



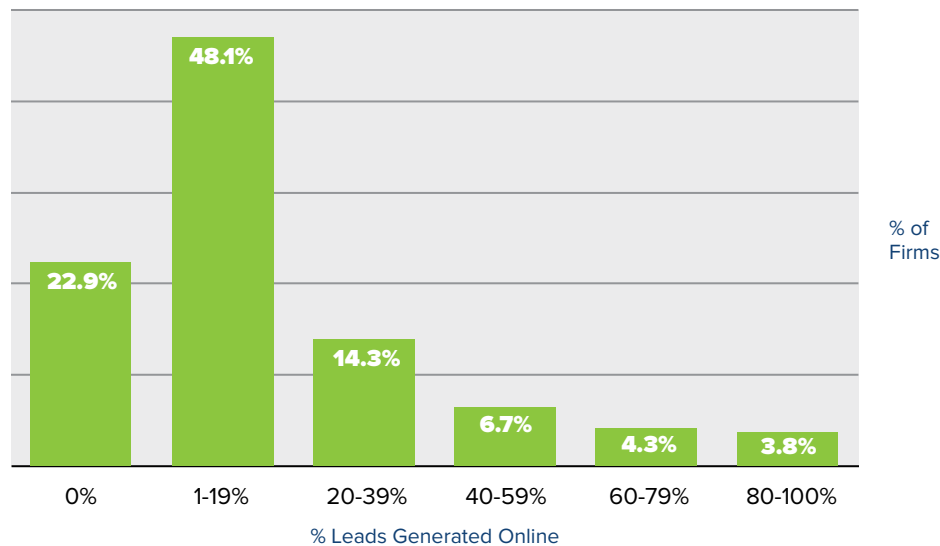
Are Professional Services Firms Capturing New Leads Online?

In this study, more than 77% of professional services firms generated at least some new business leads online. Most commonly (in 48% of responses), firms generated less than 20% of total leads online, although almost a quarter generated no online leads at all.

A significant number of firms, however, produce a high percentage of leads through online marketing. Approximately 15% of firms generate 40% or more of their new business leads online. Clearly, online lead generation can be an effective strategy in the modern professional services firm.

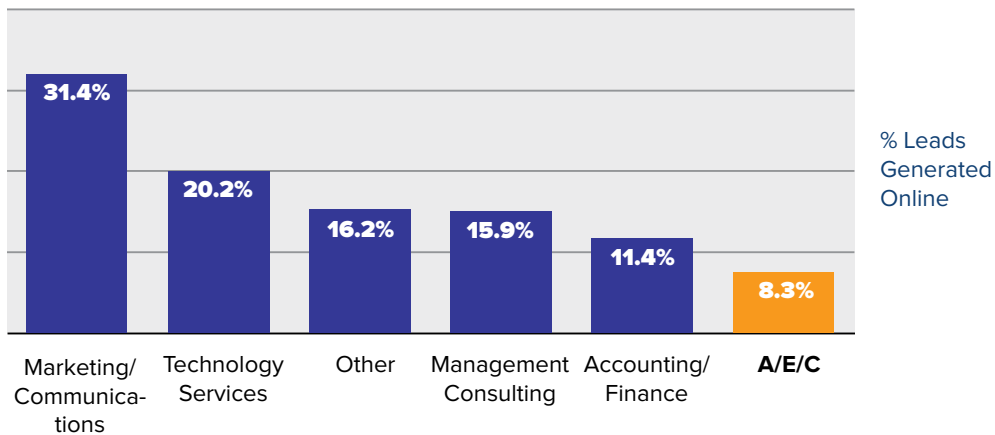
Almost 15% of professional services firms generate 40% or more of their new business leads online.

Fig 2. Online Lead Generation



There is a wide discrepancy in online lead generation among the different industries.

Fig 3. Online Lead Generation by Industry



As you can see in the graph above, A/E/C trails all other professional services industries in online lead generation.

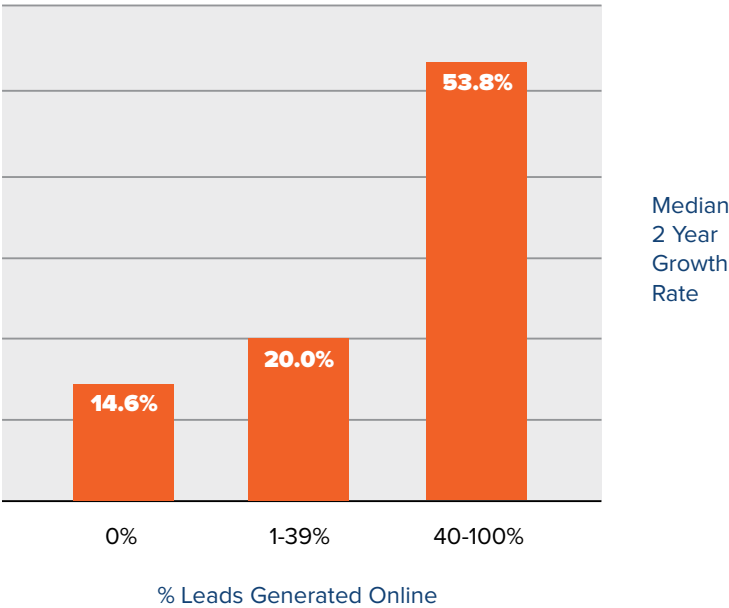
This is a noteworthy figure given the relationship we found between online leads and financial health. We explore this relationship next.

Could There Be a Relationship Between Online Leads and Growth and Profitability?

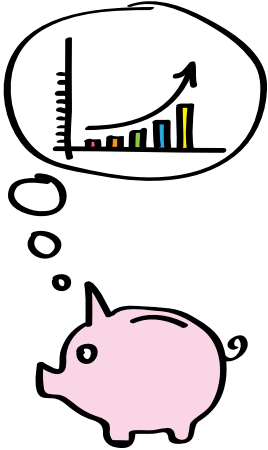
We found convincing evidence that firms that generate leads online not only grow faster but also are more profitable.

In the figures below, you can see that professional services firms generating at least 40% of their new business online exhibit substantially greater growth.

Fig. 4. Median Growth Rate and Online Lead Generation for All Professional Services Firms*

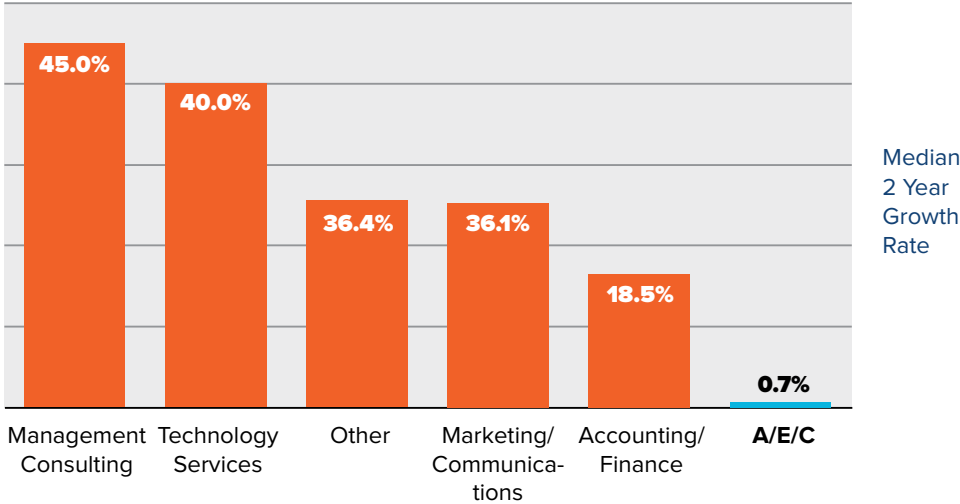


*Given the potential of very large and very small firms to skew the results, we selected the median values as the most stable measure of central tendency.



The group of professional services firms growing at the highest rate is generating at least 40% online.

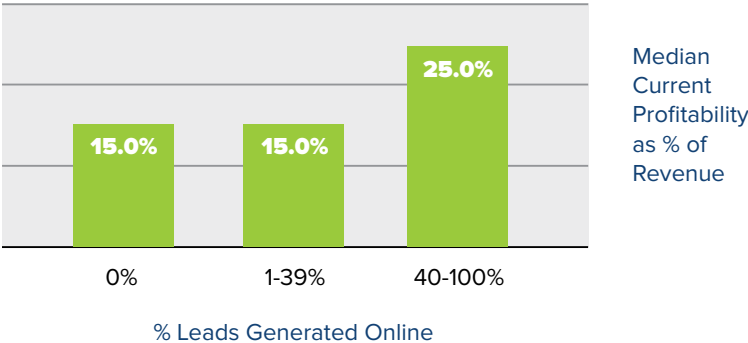
Fig 5. Growth Rate by Industry



Given the relationship in Figure 4, we would expect A/E/C to have the lowest growth rate because it has the lowest level of online lead generation. As Figure 5 shows, that is exactly what we found.

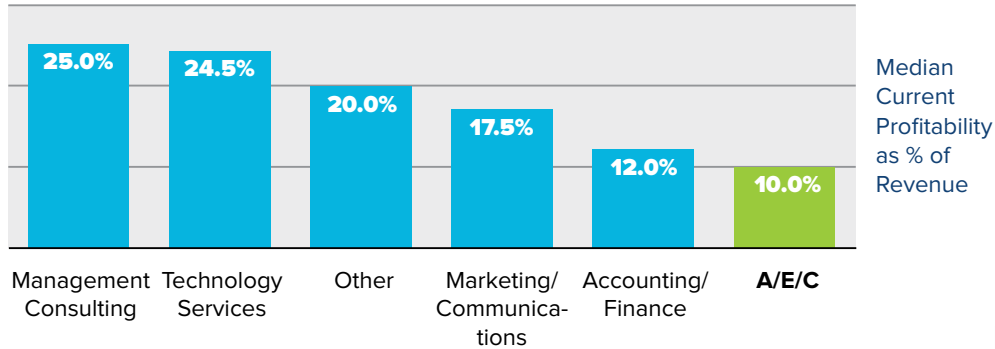
Professional services firms that generate a higher percentage of leads online grow faster and are more profitable.

Fig. 6. Median Profitability and Online Lead Generation for All Professional Services Firms



Across all professional services firms, greater online lead generation is also associated with greater profitability.

Fig 7. Profitability by Industry



Given the relationship in Figure 6, we would expect A/E/C to have a low level of profitability. That, in fact, is what we found, as shown in Figure 7.

WHY MORE PROFITABLE?

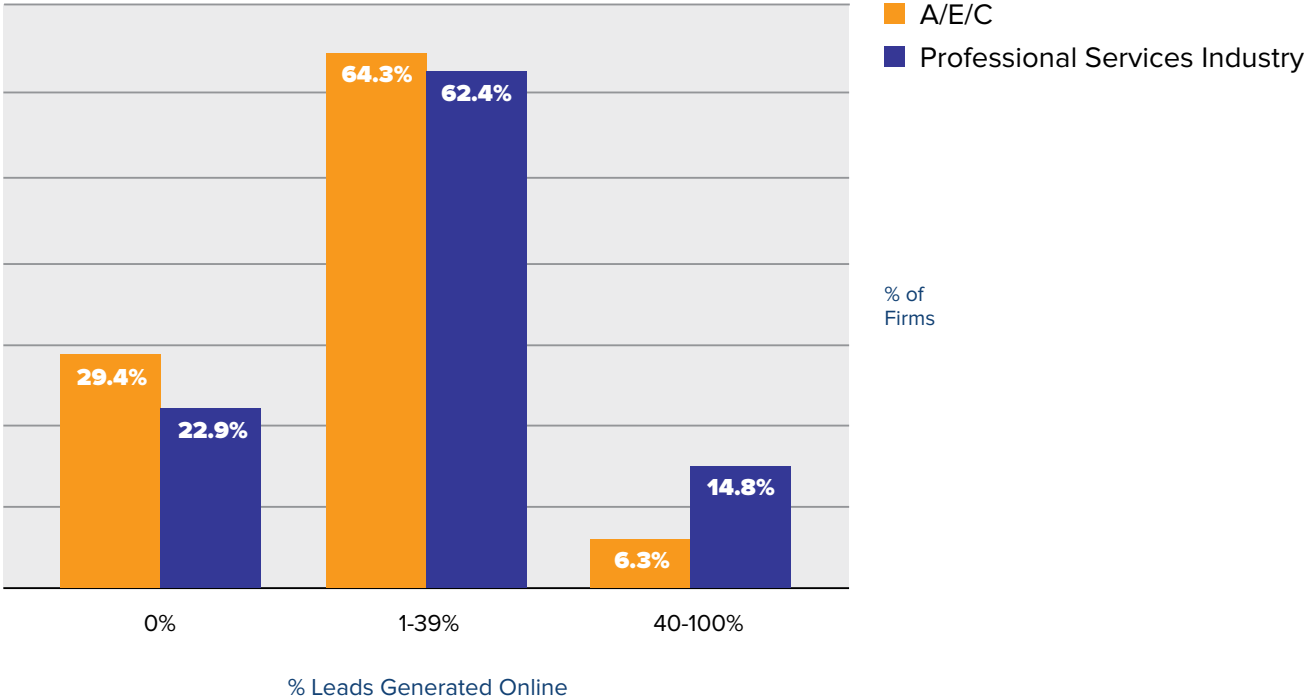
Why are firms that generate a higher percentage of online leads more profitable? Our data does not provide a definitive answer, but one explanation is that over the long term, online marketing simply costs less than traditional marketing. For example, consider a firm that makes an up-front investment in search engine optimization. Once the firm achieves top search engine rankings, the leads continue to flow in without incurring high ongoing costs.

Contrast this against traditional marketing techniques, which often come with sustained campaign expenses. Data supporting this view have been published by Hubspot, who found that online leads generated from inbound marketing had a 62% lower cost per lead than those generated using traditional approaches such as trade shows, direct marketing and telemarketing. (www.Hubspot.com/state-of-inbound-marketing/)

Percent Leads Generated Online

To their disadvantage, a substantial portion of A/E/C firms generate no online leads at all. Very few A/E/C firms are generating online leads at the benchmark rate of 40% or more.

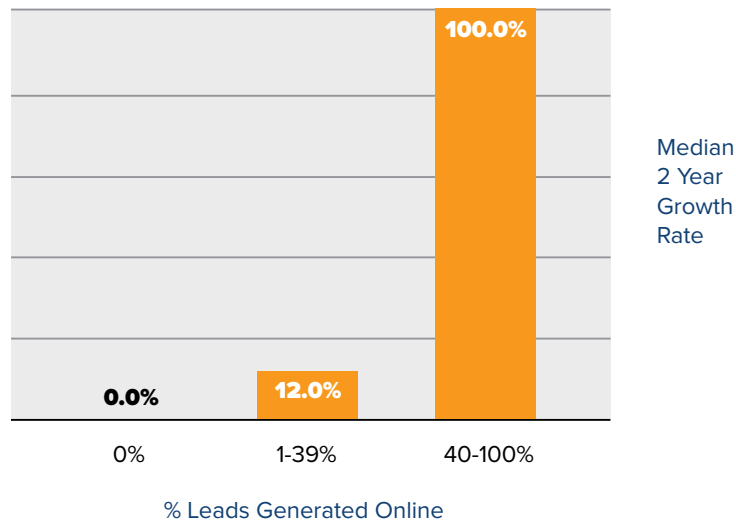
Fig. 8. Online Lead Generation



In those few A/E/C firms that do produce at least 40% of their leads online, we see dramatic growth. These firms enjoy a median two-year growth rate of 100%. This observation is consistent with our findings in other high-growth professional services firms. What works for other industries appears to work for A/E/C firms, as well.

As with other industries, A/E/C growth rates trend rapidly upward with a rise in online leads.

Fig 9. Median Growth Rate for A/E/C Firms



A/E/C firms that produce at least 40% of leads online are also seeing a median 2-year growth rate of 100%.

We cannot say with certainty that online lead generation is solely responsible for growth and profit in a firm. However, looking at the data, we can infer that online lead generation has a positive influence.

Are Professional Services Industries Taking Advantage of Online Recruiting?

Recruiting is a key issue for many companies. More than half of the firms in our study use online recruiting in some capacity. Forty-five percent don't use online recruiting at all.



About 25% of firms attract 40% or more of their new hires online.

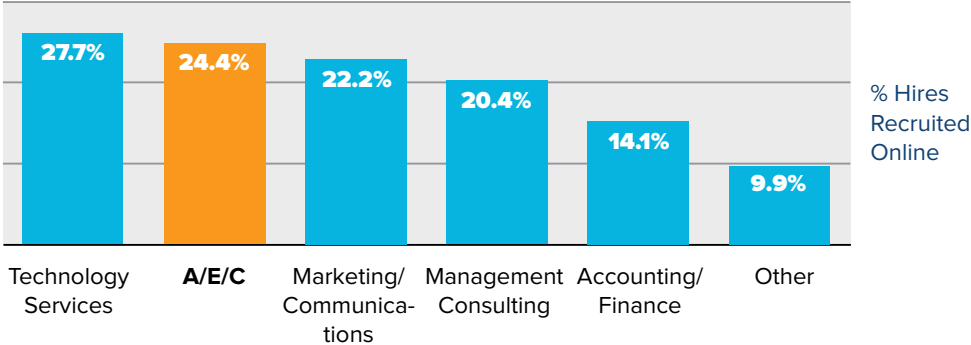
Fig. 10. Online Recruiting Across All Professional Services Firms



IS ONLINE RECRUITING A TREND?

We do not have historical data on this topic, but we expect more and more firms to use their websites for recruiting purposes. As young adults continue to enter the work force — and as business search engine use grows — online recruiting is likely to become increasingly important to professional services firms.

Fig. 11. Online Recruiting by Industry



Interestingly, while A/E/C trailed other industries in online leads, it is one of the industry leaders in online recruiting.

A/E/C is a leader when it comes to online recruiting.

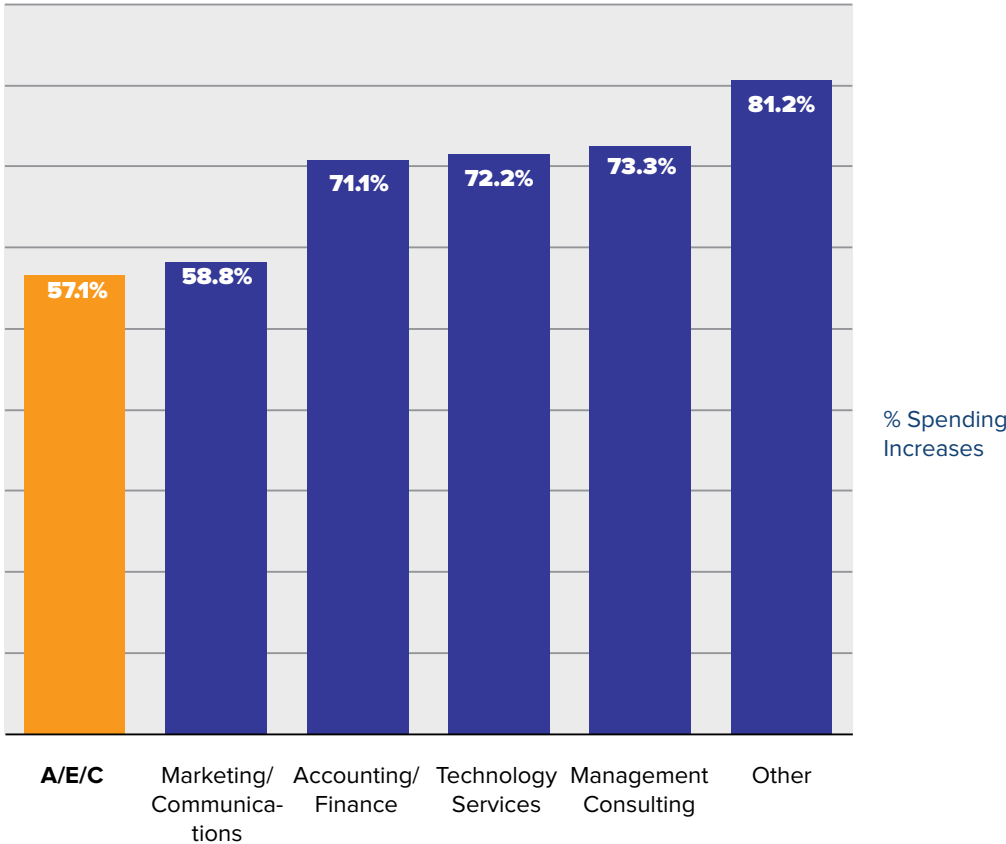


Are A/E/C Firms Spending Money on Online Marketing?

Given the success of online marketing, we were not surprised to see that the majority of professional services firms are planning to increase their online marketing budgets.

We found that two thirds of professional services firms are planning sizable increases in their online marketing budget over the next year. One third anticipated no change in online marketing dollars, and less than 1% planned to decrease their online marketing spending.

Fig 12. Percentage of Firms that are Planning to Increase Spending

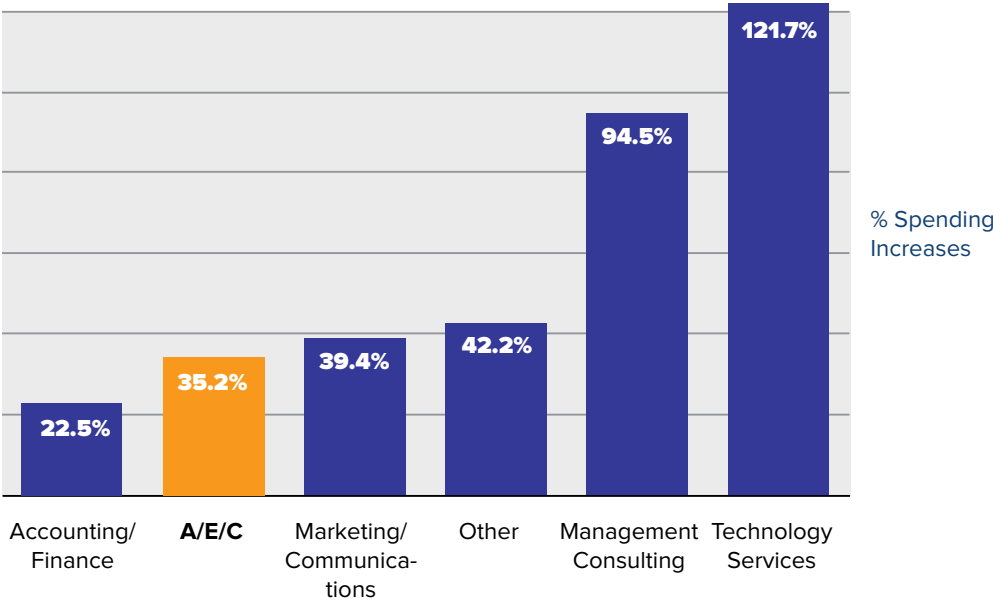


Nearly 60% of A/E/C firms are planning to allocate more dollars to online marketing.

All of the professional services industries we studied are planning to boost their online marketing budgets. Technology and management consulting are anticipating the largest increases in spending, with planned hikes of more than 120% and 90% respectively.

By contrast, the average firm in the A/E/C industry is planning to increase online marketing spending by just 35%.

Fig 13. How Much More are Firms Planning to Spend for Online Marketing?



The average firm in the A/E/C industry is planning to increase online marketing spending by 35%.

CASE STUDY

HPD Architecture gets it. Plain and simple.



This 3-person, Dallas-based design and remodeling firm has made progress in the social media world that you just don't see every day in a professional services firm.

By blogging, podcasting, and interacting with the design community online via Twitter, the firm has raised its visibility to a national level. And in a world of referrals and word-of-mouth marketing, they are driving considerable traffic to their website and generating targeted, qualified leads online.

How can three busy people accomplish so much? We spoke with HPD vice presidents Laura Davis (@hpdArchitecture) and Larry Paschall (@ArchHappyHour) to find out.

Embrace it, Commit to it, and Don't Look Back

HPD started their quest for online success two and a half years ago. Like many firms new to the digital space, the team was unsure where to begin. Eager to find a new marketing channel in a challenging economy, they turned to social media to increase market exposure and lessen their dependence on referrals.

“Our original goal was brand awareness,” said Davis. “Nobody knew who we were, and it was important to increase visibility in order to survive in the rough economy.”

CONNECT WITH HPD ARCHITECTURE

www.hpdarch.com

Blog: netoffer.com/dallas-architect/blog/

Twitter: [@hpdArchitecture](https://twitter.com/hpdArchitecture)

Facebook: [hpdArchitecture](https://www.facebook.com/hpdArchitecture)

At the time, the firm had no website. So Davis set up Facebook and Twitter pages and began exploring their possibilities. Before long, HPD became convinced that social media was a legitimate long-term marketing channel that would increase awareness of the firm in their local community.

Find Your Position Before You Start Running

Before HPD began spreading the word online, they realized it was necessary to have a concrete brand strategy. In working sessions the team hashed out a range of critical issues, such as:

- Who is HPD?
- What do we stand for?
- Who are our target clients and how do we reach them?
- What is our position in the marketplace and what are our messages?

These fundamental working sessions proved to be crucial. The firm's positioning as an architecture and design resource allowed them to gain traction in noise-flooded channels such as Twitter. In fact, their positioning is largely why they are so well known online today.

Why Use One Weapon When You Have Many?

Once HPD's brand strategy was in place, they took advantage of several online marketing platforms:

- **Twitter** – Davis and her team began following people relevant to their community. They invested a significant amount of time meeting design community members and finding ways to add value to discussions. Initially they interacted with the local community, but over time their reach expanded geographically. The network grew as Davis shared links to interesting content on other design websites, gradually building trust and credibility.

- **Facebook** – The firm uses their Facebook page as a place to post interesting articles. Again, the goal was to build a reputation as a resource for the architecture and design community. By talking about the industry and not directly promoting HPD itself, they've created a high-quality educational resource where people can find and retrieve information.
- **Podcasts** – After seeing other companies have success with webinars, HPD decided to try their hand at a similar media format: audio podcasts. Their branded series, *The Architecture Happy Hour*, is a monthly audio recording in which Davis and Paschall talk about a wide range of topics, from home owner tips to gays in architecture. The team uses social media to promote the podcast, and over time they have built a following of loyal subscribers.
- **Blog** – Some companies use their blog to talk about their firm's latest and greatest accomplishments. In contrast, HPD uses its blog to spotlight innovative and interesting happenings within its community. It also uses this space to summarize podcasts and republish interesting discussions. The blog is another place for the team to share expertise, interact, and develop trust.

Kindergarten Basics – Sharing is Good

In a world filled with spam and promotions, the last thing community members want to see in their twitter feed is an advertisement or press release. HPD understands this, and from day one they have built relationships — and their reputation — on the quality of the content they share.

Their thinking goes like this: people who share carefully selected industry news, photos and articles will be respected and followed. Before HPD had any content of their own to contribute, they were promoting other websites and influencers. And once they had a podcast to share, followers were all ears.

A One-Hour-Per-Day Workout

The HPD team dedicates about an hour per day to social media activities. This includes:

- Recording and editing podcasts once a month
- Interacting, responding, and sharing on Twitter
- Sharing content on Facebook
- Writing blog posts once a month

One tool HPD has found useful is Hootsuite. This software allows a person to manage multiple accounts and platforms from a single computer screen. If Davis wants to share an article on two Twitter accounts, a Facebook page, and a LinkedIn profile, she can do it quickly and efficiently with Hootsuite.

Yes, You Still Have to Get Off Your Butt

It's important to note that all three HPD team members still go out and network at live events. But they supplement traditional marketing tactics with social media.

Meeting someone digitally is no replacement for shaking a live hand, especially in a field such as architecture where relationships still matter. In Hinge's online marketing research study we found that the fastest growing companies are employing both traditional and digital forms of marketing. So before you allocate all of next year's marketing budget to social media, remember that a good old fashioned cocktail can still be an effective way to start a business relationship.



Is It Worth It?

Most marketing companies will say you need social media. But what does a firm that's actually been doing it for two and a half years have to say?

“So far it's working,” says Davis. “New people are reaching out to us, and they are finding us online. We've gotten exposure from architecture blogs that want to interview us, we've gotten speaking engagements that we would not have gotten otherwise, and our website traffic has increased significantly.”

Google has noticed the online activity. HPD's website and blog are being indexed regularly and qualified leads are coming to the site from valuable search terms, such as “home design in Dallas.” These qualified leads are a direct indicator that their online efforts are paying off.

HPD started with a goal to increase visibility in the marketplace. Their strategy is working. And things are only going to get better for these hard working architects.

CASE STUDY

Architecture Firm Finds 90% of Leads Online



If you've ever doubted the power of a website as a lead generation tool, look no further than Modative Architects. During a recent conversation with their co-founder, Derek Leavitt, we uncovered some striking statistics:

- Approximately 90% of the firm's leads come through its website
- They receive around 4 warm leads per week online
- The firm's web traffic increased from 10 visits a week to 400 per day in a short period of time

How were they able to achieve such results so quickly?

Finding the Right Keyword Opportunity

Derek and his business partners, Christian Návar and Michael Scott, were able to use search engine data to find great keyword opportunities. They were careful to select terms that receive heavy search traffic but which don't appear on many websites. Often these are highly specific keyword phrases, such as "small lot subdivisions."

This is a niche keyword that they felt they could own. It accurately describes one of their core services, so it was ripe for the taking. Okay, now what?

CONNECT WITH MODATIVE

www.modative.com

Twitter: @modative

Blog: www.modative.com/modern-architects-blog

Facebook: [Modative-Architecture](https://www.facebook.com/Modative-Architecture)

Creating a Quality Content Piece with a Conversion Action

The Modative team then wrote several pieces of educational content on the topic of small lot subdivisions. They packaged these pieces as “guides” and “packets” and posted them in the Resources* section of their website for download.

These helpful content pieces are free, but they require an email address to download. The idea here is that when someone searches on a specific keyword phrase, they will click through to this resource page. If the content on the page is relevant, a visitor will supply their email address and download the piece. Each visitor who takes this action is then added to the firm’s list of leads and enters their sales pipeline.

After some initial success, Modative has taken this approach to heart and transformed its website into a lead generation machine. Check out their resources to see other examples of content they offer to prospective clients.

* www.modative.com/architecture-resources-architect-help/



4

Online Techniques

What Can the A/E/C Industry Learn From High-Growth Professional Services Firms?

How Do High-Growth Firms Use Online Marketing?

In our previous research, we uncovered a group of professional services firms that grow much faster and are more profitable than their peers. These results are documented in our book, *Spiraling Up: How to Create a High Growth, High Value Professional Services Firm*.^{*} In this study, we revisit high-growth firms with the goal of determining how they approach online marketing.

We defined high-growth firms as those that are growing by at least 20% per year over two successive years and are generating at least 40% of their leads online. We found high-growth companies in all of the professional services industries we studied. Some industries had higher percentages of high-growth firms than others.

High Growth in Industries

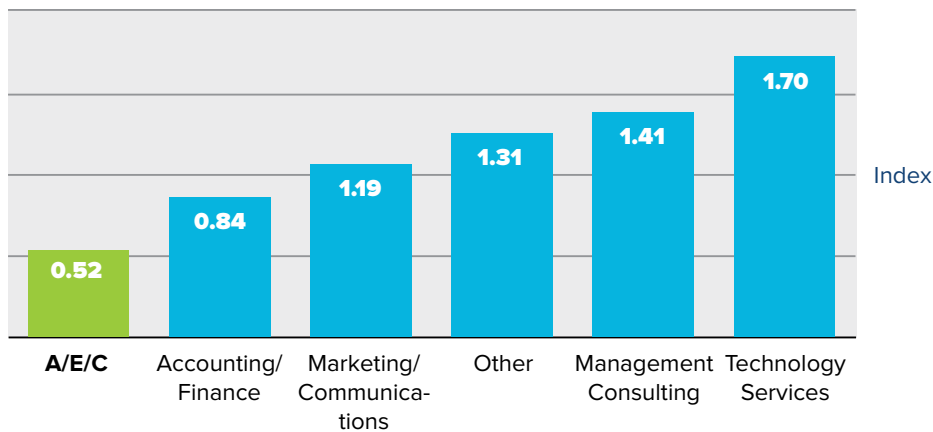
We calculated an index to show the likelihood that a high-growth firm would be associated with a particular industry. An industry index of 1.0 represents an average chance that a firm would find itself in the high-growth category. Likewise, an industry index of .5 indicates that a firm in that industry would be half as likely to be a high-growth company. Below are indices for the industries we researched in this study.



^{*}www.hingemarketing.com/spiralingup

High-growth firms are *most* likely to be found in the technology and management consulting industries. High-growth firms are *least* likely to be found in the A/E/C category; however, high-growth A/E/C firms were present in our sample, though in smaller proportions relative to other industries.

Fig 14. Relative Index of High-Growth Firms by Industry



High-growth firms are *least* likely to be found in the A/E/C category.

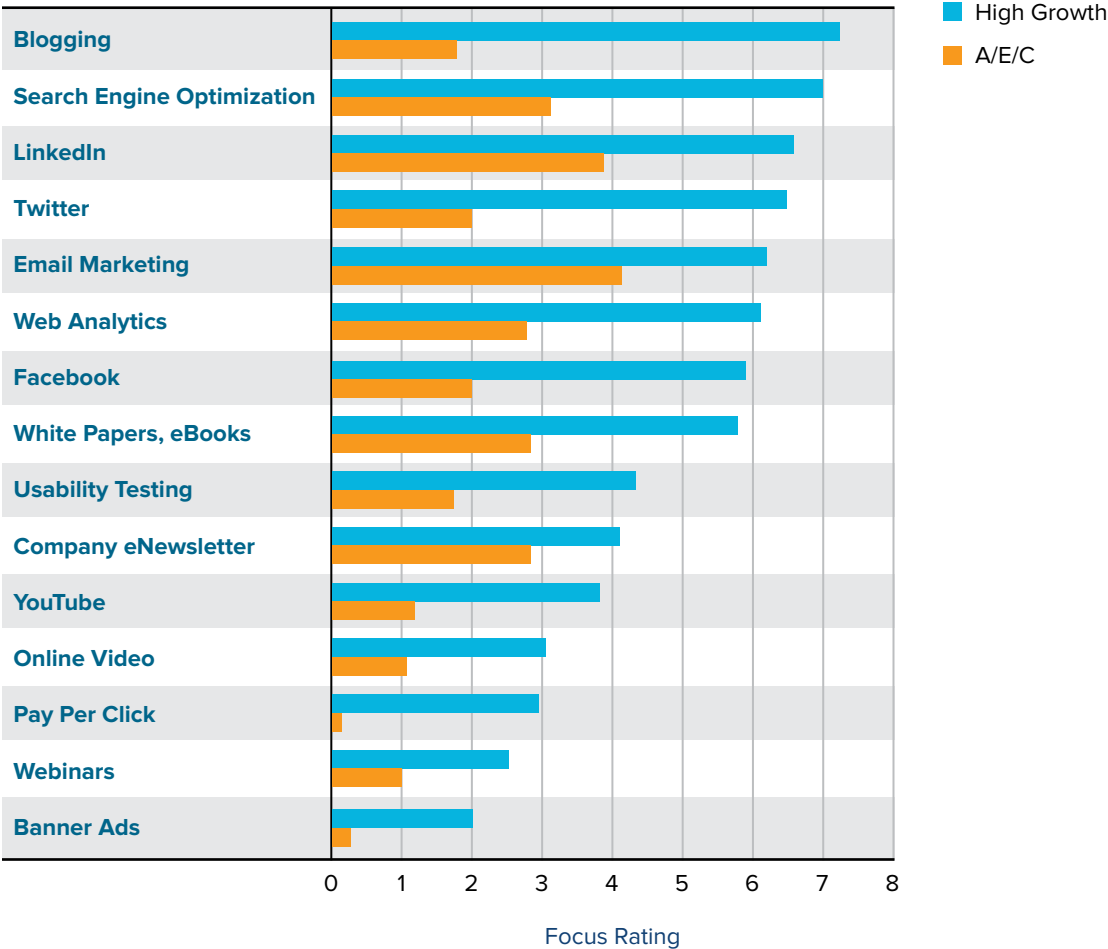
Are Online Marketing Techniques Giving High-Growth Firms an Advantage?

What makes some firms grow faster and be more profitable? We asked study respondents to tell us how heavily they use each of fifteen different online marketing techniques. Answers were ranked on a scale of 0 to 10. A 0 rating indicates no focus on the strategy; a rating of 10 indicates a heavy focus on the strategy.

Higher-growth firms tend to put a greater emphasis on nearly all forms of popular digital marketing techniques, and they report greater efficacy when using these techniques.

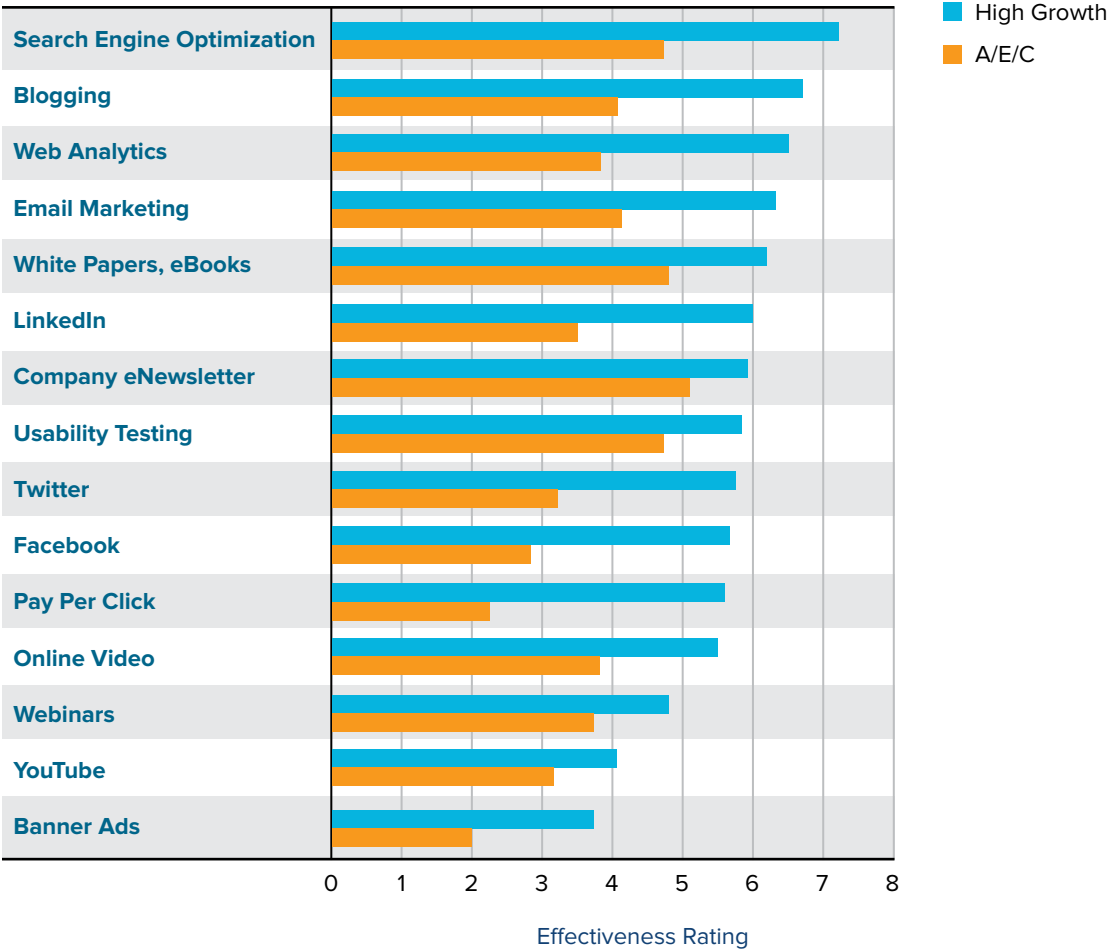
In the chart below, we compare the answers from A/E/C industry firms with those of high-growth companies. High-growth companies report heavier use — often substantially — of all online marketing techniques compared to A/E/C firms.

Fig 15. Focus Rating: High-Growth Firms vs. A/E/C Firms

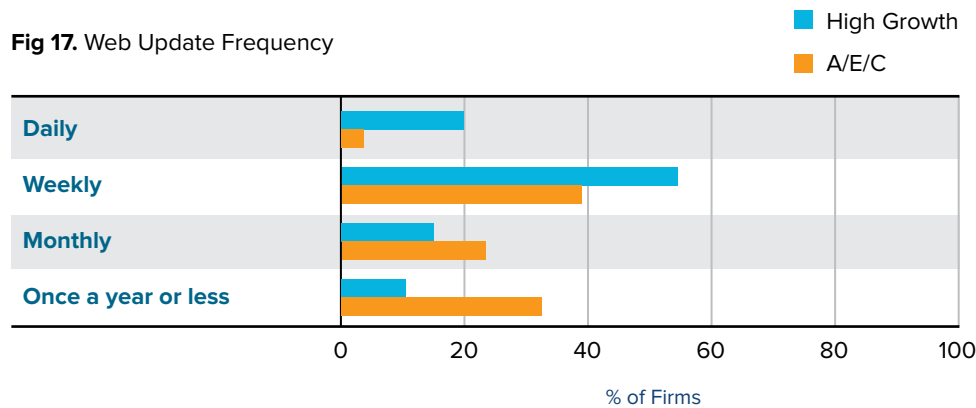


We also asked respondents to rate the efficacy of the fifteen techniques. Again, they rated the techniques on a scale of 0 (completely ineffective) to 10 (extremely effective). In all categories, the high-growth companies reported greater utility than did the A/E/C firms.

Fig 16. Effectiveness Rating: High-Growth Firms vs. A/E/C Firms

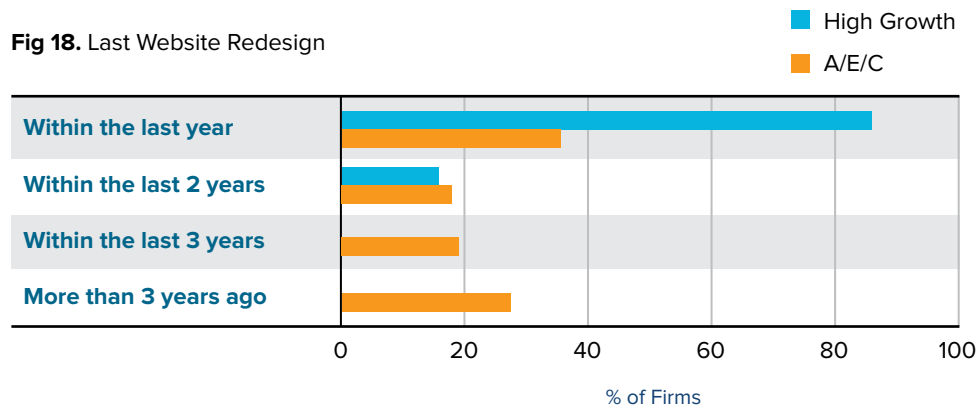


High-growth firms tend to update their websites more frequently. Seventy-five percent of high-growth companies update the content on their websites as often as once a week. In contrast, less than half of A/E/C companies perform such frequent updates.



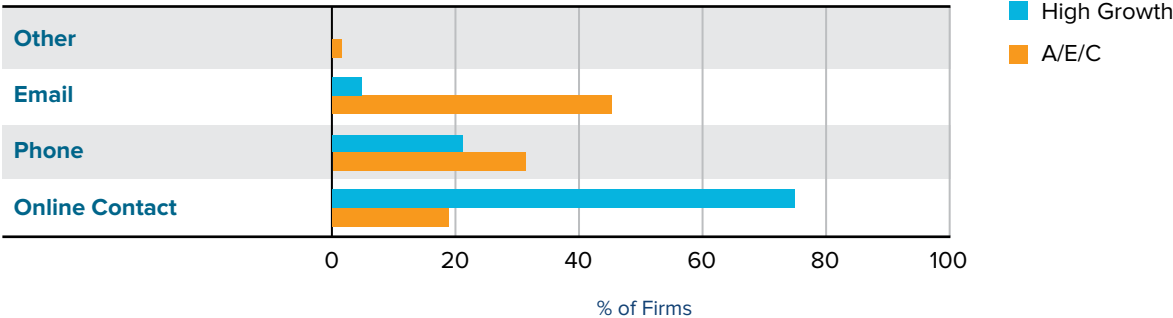
Higher growth firms also tend to redesign their websites far more frequently than firms in the A/E/C industry. More than 80% of high-growth firms have redesigned their website in the previous 12 months. Less than 40% of A/E/C firms redesign their websites with comparable frequency.

Less than half of A/E/C firms update their website at least weekly. 75% of high-growth firms do so on a weekly basis.



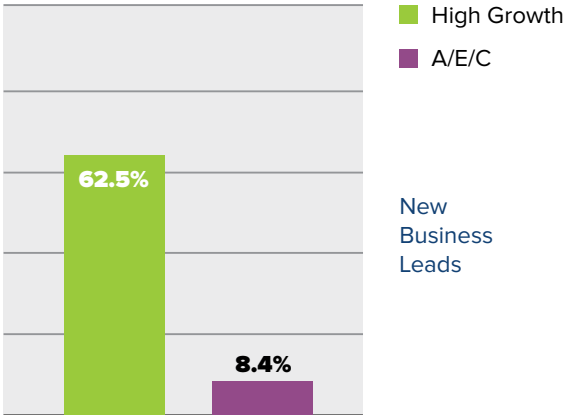
High-growth companies are using online contact forms to a much greater degree than their average-growth peers. Online contact forms are the primary way a website converts visitors to leads, so they are important elements of any online marketing program.

Fig 19. Contact Method



High-growth professional services firms generate far more leads online than does the A/E/C industry as a whole.

Fig 20. Leads Generated Online



From the perspective of return on investment, the online marketing strategy adopted by high-growth firms delivers growth and profitability numbers that far outpace those of the A/E/C industry.

Fig 21. Online Marketing’s Relationship to Growth

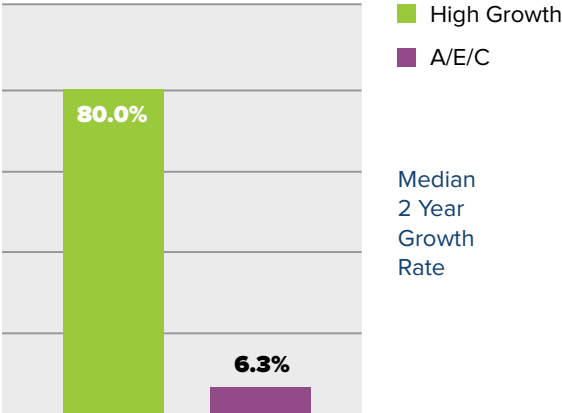
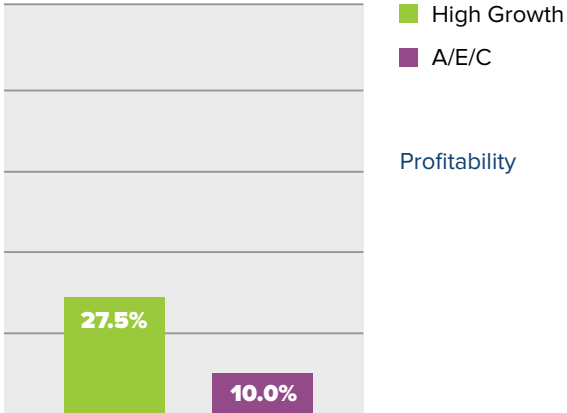


Fig 22. Online Marketing’s Relationship to Profitability



But these low statistics come with a silver lining. Because the A/E/C industry has invested little in online marketing to date, opportunities for improvement abound, and even small changes in strategy could have dramatic effect. Companies profiled in this study demonstrate such shifts in A/E/C marketing.



What Do the Experts Say?

A 20-person panel of experts, profiled in Appendix A, weighed in on the effectiveness of 15 online marketing strategies. These experts comprise among the most respected names in a variety of online marketing specialties, including search engine optimization, social media, pay-per-click marketing, content marketing, web analytics and more.

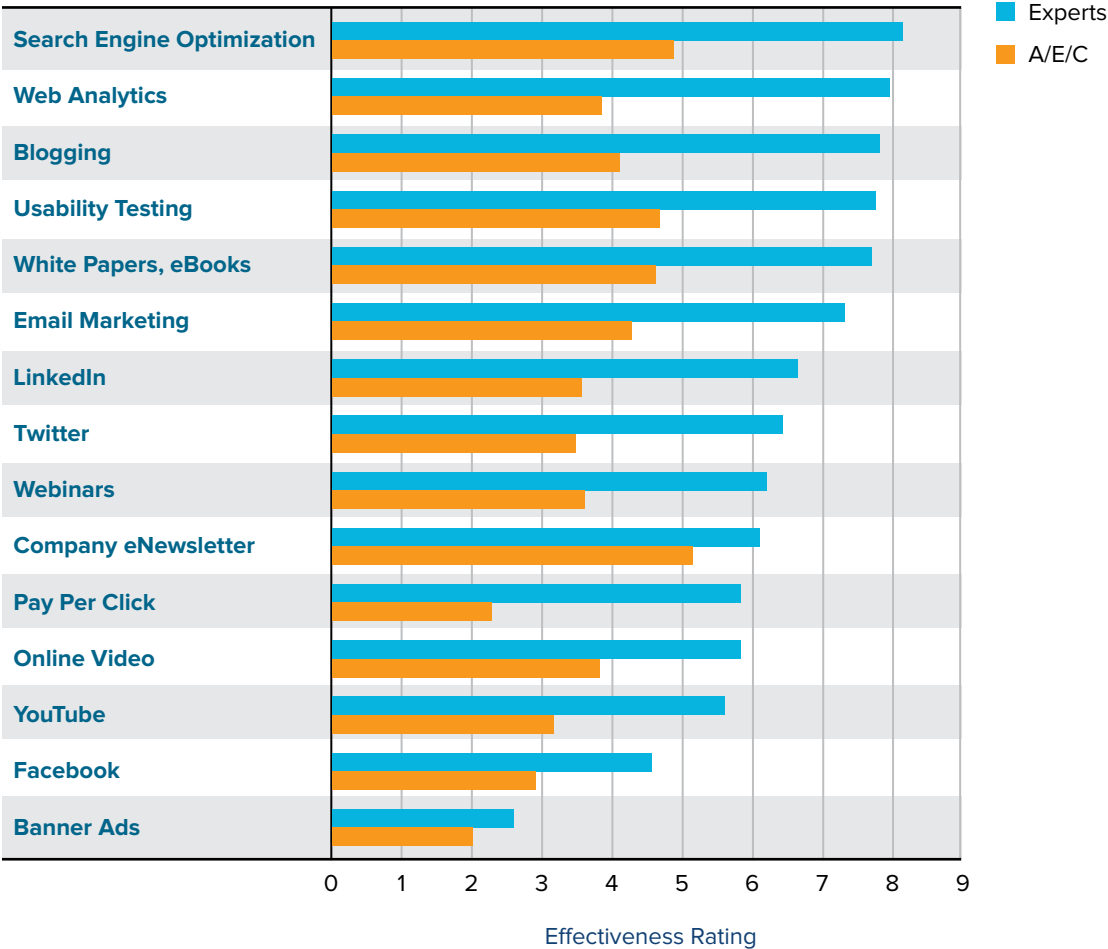
We asked each of these experts to use the same 0-10 scale to rate the effectiveness of each strategy. A rating of 0 indicates an ineffective strategy. A rating of 10 indicates a highly effective strategy.

In sharp contrast to A/E/C industry responses, the experts placed a higher value on every strategy. Clearly, firms in A/E/C could be realizing greater potential from online marketing strategies.

Clearly, firms in A/E/C could be realizing greater potential from online marketing strategies.



Fig 23. Effectiveness Rating: Experts vs. A/E/C Firms



CASE STUDY

An Architecture Firm Uses Video and More to Build Trust and Engagement



QUINN EVANS
ARCHITECTS

Quinn Evans Architects, a firm with a national reputation for historic preservation, wanted to update their image in the marketplace. As part of a 25th anniversary brand refresh, they redesigned their website to tell their story and update their messaging for a broader audience. But that wasn't the end of their online marketing transformation.

The firm considered a variety of ways to approach online marketing, but they decided to tackle one vehicle at a time and do it right. For the first time, Quinn Evans produced professional-quality video. Instead of presenting a conventional narrative, however, they chose to tell their story from the perspective of their clients. "Our process depends on establishing presence and success in one medium at a time [and] our videos were a success," said Quinn Evans president, Larry Barr.

Their first video, entitled "We See a Better World," offers more than an overview of the firm; it shows how they collaborate with clients to ensure the delivered project meets every expectation. The firm followed up with five additional videos that describe several of their favorite projects — each, once again, told from the clients' point of view. The videos have been tremendously valuable marketing tools. And they have won numerous awards, including a Telly, two Empixx Gold Awards, and a SMPS Gold Marketing Communications Award.

CONNECT WITH QUINN EVANS

www.quinnevans.com

LinkedIn: [quinn-evans--architects](#)

YouTube: [quinnevansarchitects](#)

Facebook: [Quinn-Evans-Architects](#)

Blog: www.quinnevans.com/blog

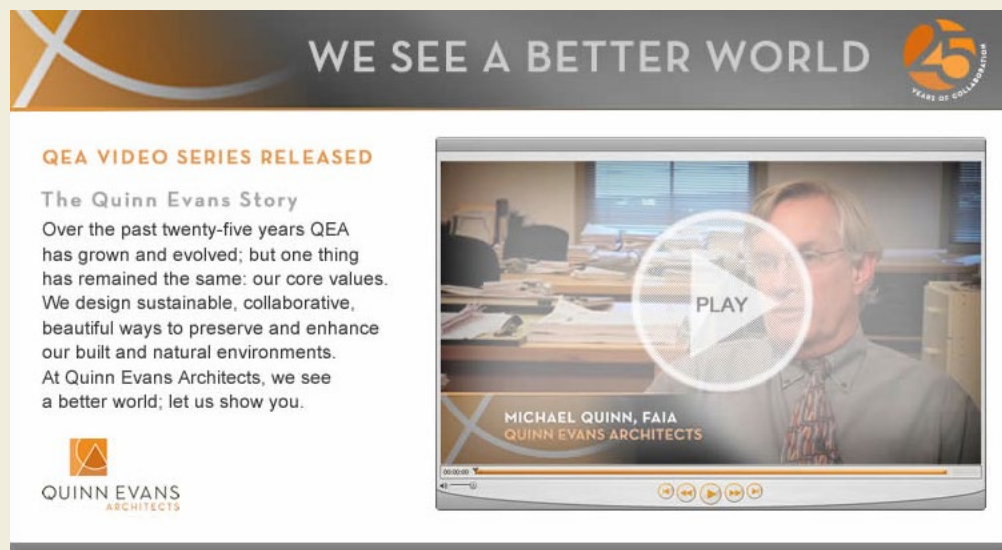



The firm promoted two of the videos initially by email and received about 400 video views — most of them on the day of the email. They have also posted the videos on their website, where they receive a steady stream of views and help engage and nurture new prospects. Since launching their new website and videos, Quinn Evans has witnessed a marked increase in traffic to their site.

More recently, they have introduced a blog to provide a platform to share their expertise and become more involved in the community. In addition, they have begun working their LinkedIn and Facebook accounts, and the firm plans to add Twitter soon.

Like many busy firms, Quinn Evans has found maintaining momentum a challenge. To keep social media and blog activity rolling, the firm has tasked their two marketing staff with managing the online marketing plan — with the patient support of content experts and administrative staff from around the firm.


Maintaining an online marketing program is never easy. But their early signs of success that drive Quinn Evans' commitment.



WE SEE A BETTER WORLD 

QEA VIDEO SERIES RELEASED

The Quinn Evans Story
 Over the past twenty-five years QEA has grown and evolved; but one thing has remained the same: our core values. We design sustainable, collaborative, beautiful ways to preserve and enhance our built and natural environments. At Quinn Evans Architects, we see a better world; let us show you.


QUINN EVANS ARCHITECTS

MICHAEL QUINN, FAIA
 QUINN EVANS ARCHITECTS

PLAY

CASE STUDY

How One MEP Firm is Launching an Online Marketing Initiative



GHT, an MEP firm based in Arlington, Virginia, has cultivated a strong offline presence and reputation over its 45-year history. But they did not have much visibility online. Their website was eight years old and not getting any younger, and the firm was not doing any social media. So in the past year they made the decision to make a serious investment in online initiatives.

CONNECT WITH GHT LIMITED

www.ghltld.com

Twitter: @GHT_MEP

YouTube: [ghltld](https://www.youtube.com/ghltld)

Blog: [www.ghltld.com/
insights/blog](http://www.ghltld.com/insights/blog)

3, 2, 1, Liftoff

To launch their new marketing program, GHT looked first at their website. “Our website was out of date, static and brochure-like,” said Ami Kelly, GHT’s Director of Marketing and Business Development. “It conveyed an image that no longer fit our firm.” So they rebuilt the site from the ground up on a content management system, allowing them to feature their latest work. In addition to updating its look, however, GHT optimized the site for online search and lead generation.



The firm's web partner conducted extensive keyword research to identify the best opportunities to raise GHT's profile in valuable Google search results. Within a month of the site's launch, it began ranking for important keyword phrases, including first position rankings for critical local search terms, such as:

- MEP Consultants Washington DC
- MEP Engineering Services Washington DC
- LEED Commissioning Washington DC
- Building Energy Services Washington DC
- MEP Consulting Washington DC

Once GHT had completely bought into the concept of a new website design, the wheels began to turn and new ideas began to formulate internally. This idea would eventually transform into a multi-faceted, cutting-edge online marketing initiative.

Lead by Example

Once the new site had launched, Kelly began rolling out a new marketing strategy that centered on the new website. She took steps to encourage people throughout the firm to get involved. She wanted to leverage GHT's offline reputation as MEP experts to position the firm as industry thought leaders. The firm created a section on their website called Insights, where they publish their blog, white papers and video. In addition, Kelly and her team are active on social media.

The new website and steady stream of content has contributed to an increase in traffic and the firm was invited to be featured in an issue of PM Engineer magazine. From SEO to video production to blogging to social media, GHT is making the most of online marketing to connect with new prospects on the Internet.

5

Conclusions

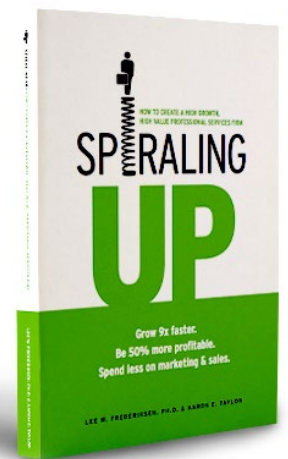
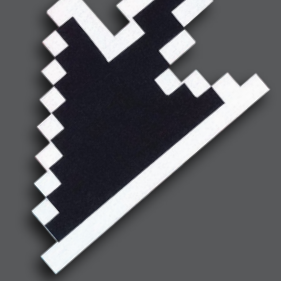
So what does it all mean?

Today, the A/E/C industry is struggling to grow and its margins are low. The current economic environment is an obvious factor — private sector demand is down, as are government contracts. Economic uncertainty and indices of consumer confidence are keeping buyers from committing to new construction projects, although reconstruction is surging.

According to our research, however, there are a number of highly profitable and growing A/E/C firms. What are they doing differently?

Many of these successful firms are investing in a variety of online marketing techniques but they haven't entirely abandoned traditional marketing techniques. A huge benefit of online marketing is the way it efficiently and steadily generates more leads, contributing to higher growth and profits. Online marketing offers many advantages over traditional techniques: lower costs, greater geographic reach, the ability to refine campaigns over time and the power of automation. These benefits make it an attractive alternative to the labor-intensive and expensive techniques of the past. Moreover, today's buyers rely increasingly on the web and social media to find and vet potential firms.

More than other professional services industries, the A/E/C industry is late to online marketing. Firms that embrace its potential, however, will be better positioned to attract new leads and build a tangible competitive advantage.



Want to learn more about building a high growth firm?



Download a Free copy of Spiraling Up

hingemarketing.com/spiralingup

Additional Resources

If you want to learn more about marketing your A/E/C firm, check out some of the free resources below:

Spiraling Up: How to Create a High Growth, High Value Professional Services Firm

This book explores the characteristics and marketing habits of firms that grow 9X faster and are 50% more profitable than average. Find out how they do it — and how you can, too. Available for free download:

www.hingemarketing.com/spiralingup

Can Your Architecture Firm Benefit From Rebranding?

If your architecture firm is considering rebranding, you probably have a lot of questions. This white paper provides critical insights into the rebranding process. Available for free download:

www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/can_your_architecture_firm_benefit_from_rebranding/

Changes in the Professional Services Marketing Mix: Traditional vs. Online Marketing

Online marketing is challenging traditional marketing. This article considers some of the key trends influencing the new mix of professional services marketing techniques. Available for free download:

www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/changes_in_the_professional_services_marketing_mix_traditional_vs_online/

The Online Lead Generation Guide for Professional Services Firms

In this guide, you will learn how to make the most of your online marketing tools and access a whole new world of qualified leads. Available for free download:

www.hingemarketing.com/leadgenguide



6



The Expert Panel

Meet the big brains.

To reflect best practices, we interviewed top experts in various online marketing disciplines.

We asked the experts a set of questions that corresponded to our professional services survey.

In addition, we asked about their specific area of expertise and how it might be best applied to professional services firms.

The following experts participated in this research:



Ann Handley
Chief Content Officer at
Marketing Profs
Author of *Content Rules*
Twitter: [@MarketingProfs](#)



Brad Geddes
Founder of Certified
Knowledge
Author of *Advanced Google
Adwords*
Twitter: [@bgtheory](#)



Bryan Eisenberg
Managing Partner at Eisenberg
Holdings, LLC
Author of *Waiting for Your Cat
to Bark?*
Twitter: [@TheGrok](#)



Danny Dover
Senior SEO Manager at AT&T Interactive
Author of *Search Engine Optimization Secrets*
Twitter: @DannyDover



David Meerman Scott
Marketing Strategist and Consultant
Author of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*
Twitter: @dmScott



Eric Enge
President at Stone Temple Consulting
Co-Author of *The Art of SEO*
Twitter: @stonetemple



Ginny Redish
Founder of Redish & Associates Inc.
Author of *Letting Go of Words — Writing Web Content that Works*
Twitter: @GinnyRedish



James Beswick
Founder of One Up Proar
Author of *Ranking Number One*
Twitter: @oneuproar



Jason Burby
Chief Analytics and Optimization Officer at ZAAZ
Author of *Actionable Web Analytics*
Twitter: @JasonBurby



Jennifer Abernethy
America's Social Business Stylist, The Sales Lounge
Author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Social Media Marketing*
Twitter: @SalesLounge



Jim Boykin
Founder & CEO of Internet Marketing Ninjas (formerly We Build Pages)
Blog: www.internetmarketingninjas.com/blog/
Twitter: @jimboykin



Joe Pulizzi
Founder of the Content Marketing Institute
Co-Author of *Get Content Get Customers* and *Managing Content Marketing*
Twitter: @juntajoe



Justin Cutroni
Director of Intelligence at
Cardinal Path
Author of *Google Analytics*
Twitter: @justincutroni



Kristopher B. Jones
Founder / CEO, KBJ Capital
Author of *Search Engine
Optimization*
Twitter: @krisjonescom



Kristina Halvorson
Founder of Brain Traffic
Author of *Content Strategy for
the Web*
Twitter: @halvorson



Lon Safko
Social Media Strategist
Author of *The Social Media
Bible*
Twitter: @longsafko



Mari Smith
Social Media Consultant
Author of *The New Relationship
Marketing*
Twitter: @MariSmith



Michael Fleischner
Founder, MarketingScoop.com
Author of *SEO Made Simple*
Twitter: @mfleischner



Tim Ash
CEO of SiteTuners &
Founder of Conversion
Conference
Author of *Landing Page
Optimization*
Twitter: @tim_ash



William Albert
Director of the Design and
Usability Center at Bentley
University
Author of *Measuring the User
Experience*
Twitter: @UXMetrics

About Hinge

Hinge is a national branding and marketing firm for professional services firms, including Architecture, Engineering and Construction (A/E/C), Technology, Management Consulting, Accounting and Finance, and Government Contracting firms. Hinge's services include Client Research, Brand Strategy Development, Graphic Design & Other Creative Services, Content Development, Website Development, Online Video Production, and Outsourced Marketing Services. For more information on Hinge, visit www.hingemarketing.com.

To keep atop the latest branding and marketing strategies for your professional services firm, follow us on social media and subscribe to our blog.

Twitter: [@HingeMarketing](https://twitter.com/HingeMarketing)

Blog: www.hingemarketing.com/blog

Facebook: [HingeMarketing](https://www.facebook.com/HingeMarketing)

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/hinge

YouTube: [HingeMarketing](https://www.youtube.com/HingeMarketing)

www.hingemarketing.com



About Hinge Research Institute

At Hinge, research is more than skin deep. It helps define who we are, how we help our clients and guides how we grow our own firm. We also believe in sharing our knowledge, not only with our clients but also with the broader professional services community. This commitment has led to the establishment of Hinge Research Institute. The Institute is committed to conducting innovative research on professional services firms and their respective clients.

We are also committed to sharing that knowledge through original research studies, webinars, executive roundtables, whitepapers, articles and books. Please visit us at www.hingeresearch.com to find additional research reports, white papers, and videos.

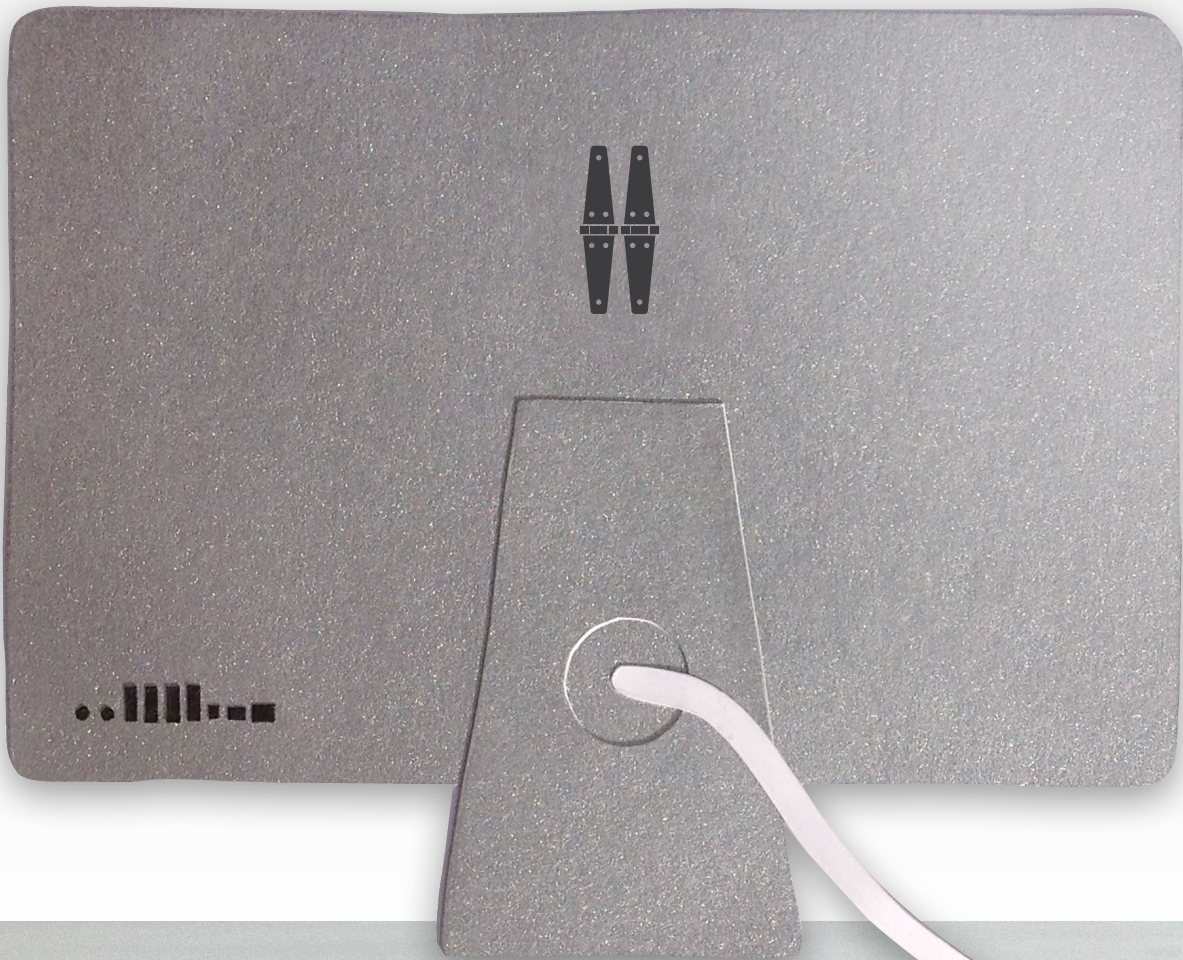
Study Director

Lee W. Frederiksen, Ph.D.

lwf@hingemarketing.com

703.391.8870

THE END



Hinge Research Institute

www.hingeresearch.com