

Your Point of View

It's YOUR Point of View . . . on Social Media

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For 20 years, Microscopy/Microscopy Education (MME) has been conducting market surveys for the industry, identifying emerging trends and, even more importantly, giving you, the practicing microscopist and spectroscopist, a chance to impact the direction of instrumentation via your input on our surveys. (Many of you remember us for the M&Ms we used to hand out in exchange for your input at key trade shows). The results of 20 years of your valued participation have been profound: new technology that fits your needs, coming on line faster and more economically.

Over the past several years, MME has also conducted market surveys for *Microscopy Today*, first on salaries, then on new directions for the magazine itself. Based on the success of those activities, and prompted by questions posted to the MSA listserver, MME and *Microscopy Today* have agreed to conduct an ongoing series of surveys to answer questions of importance to you, the microscopy and microanalysis community.

So . . . Here's YOUR Point of View on Social Media

First, our thanks to the nearly 900 people who responded to this study. Representing a record-breaking 12.5% of those invited, half of you came from biological sciences and the other half from the materials world. The results show that you are a wonderfully diverse group. Researchers/scientists and professors and their graduate represented about 25% each, with two secondary groups, Lab managers and technicians/technologists, each reporting in at about 16%. Half of you work in research, with smaller groups from analytical service labs (13%), QA/QC or failure analysis or production support (11%), and medical/clinical endeavors (5%).

MME recognizes the immediacy and importance of the various listservers related to our industry but was interested in learning if you were also finding other social media outlets of value, when related to your work and study—specifically related to microscopy and spectroscopy. Clearly, listservers are still your favorite. When we compiled a composite score [1], listservers outranked the next nearest category by 3:1 (Figure 1). LinkedIn ranked second overall, followed closely by Google Groups and Blogs.

When MME investigated LinkedIn further, we found that, currently, there are 27 LinkedIn User Groups relating to microscopy and another 34 (with some overlap) related to spectroscopy. Furthermore, conversations with various vendors during the question-writing phase of the survey indicated that they are beginning to interact more and more with you using this specific social media vehicle. Also, we found an increasing number of demonstration videos on YouTube, strongly supporting the survey findings.

When asked if you used social media at work, half of you said no, and the other half accessed social media via your PCs

or MACs. While half of you don't use social media to check the news, another quarter of you use it to check on the news daily and 13%, weekly.

When asked how you would prefer the vendors to notify you about new instruments and applications, email was your first choice (Figure 2), with eNewsletters a strong second, followed by updates on their websites and articles in trade publications. On the other hand, when you are searching for specific products, websites are clearly the way to go! At 88%, this vote was about the highest MME has seen on any of our surveys.

Once at the vendor's site, two-thirds of you look first for specifications, followed closely by application notes, images, and explanatory podcasts or videos. Although YouTube is important, you find instructional or applications videos on vendor websites especially valuable.

For demonstrations, real, in-house demos with your own samples won hands down (82%!), but media is beginning to have an impact on ordering products, servicing, and training. When ordering, half of you would still like a visit from a live sales rep, but 21% of you are willing to work over the phone and another 28% to follow an online, step-by-step configuration process. Interestingly, only 3% find LiveChat useful for the ordering process.

For service, nearly half of you would like access to an expert or consultant, while another quarter prefer WebEx with an online service technician for diagnosis and service. Only 16% prefer online "how to" software support and training.

Social media has only modest impact on either your positive or negative view of a vendor. If you saw a positive review of a vendor on Twitter, FaceBook, LinkedIn, or the listserver, only one-third of you would move the vendor to the top of your evaluation list. For the other two-thirds, the review would have no impact. Similarly, if you came across a

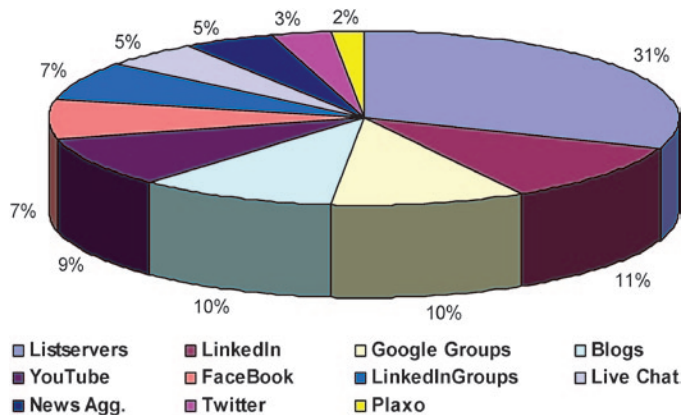


Figure 1: The most useful social media tools.

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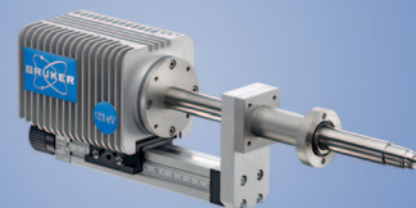
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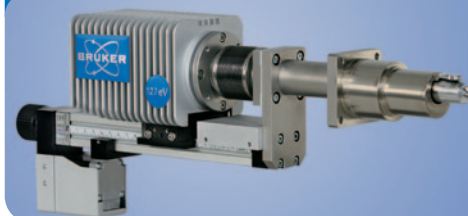
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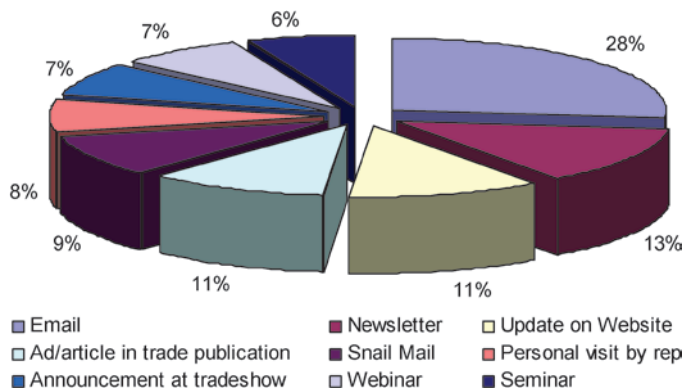


Figure 2: Preferred method to receive new product/application announcements.

negative review, two thirds of you would continue researching other sources to see if the perception was widespread and, for a quarter, it would have no impact.

Finally, with all the recent enthusiasm for Facebook, we asked you if it was important for a vendor to have both a corporate website, which contains the bulk of their material, as well as a Facebook site where more dynamic discussions could take place. Your vote was 3:1 against. Based on the activity on listservers and regular websites, this is a very understandable view. However, this trend bears watching. ReadWriteWeb reports that the Facebook crowd is aging. Originally started as a service for college students in 2008, the average user's age had already risen to 26, and earlier this year, to 33 and climbing. No one really

knows the average age of microscopists and spectroscopists, but taking this factor into consideration, is Facebook just coming into our "average age range"? Secondly, one of Facebook's key attractions is its immediacy. In comparison, the world of microscopy and spectroscopy has enjoyed that immediacy via our listservers for years. One could argue that Facebook opens the discussion to pictures, videos, and recordings. On the other hand, as a community, we tend to be extremely busy. Would we find this outlet merely another distraction in an already "noisy" world? Only time will tell. We'll ask you again in a year or two and see how the landscape has changed.

What's Next?

Beginning in mid-June, MME will assist *Microscopy Today* in updating subscriptions. Watch your email for an invitation. Links will also appear in print editions of *Microscopy Today* as well as on the website. In September, we'll conduct the very valuable "Annual Salary Review." Results from that and subsequent studies will appear periodically in *Microscopy Today*, so keep an eye open for future invitations and results.

References

[1] Composite score was derived as follows. "Most important" = 4 pts, "2nd most important" = 3 pts, "3rd" = 2 pts, "4th" = 1 pt.

$$\text{Composite score} = (\# \text{ most important} \times 4) + (\# \text{ 2nd} \times 3) + (\# \text{ 3rd} \times 2) + (\# \text{ 4th} \times 1)$$

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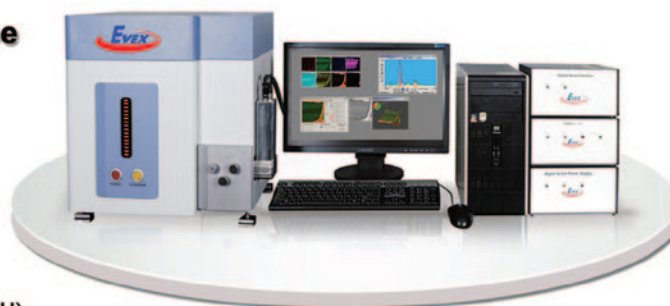
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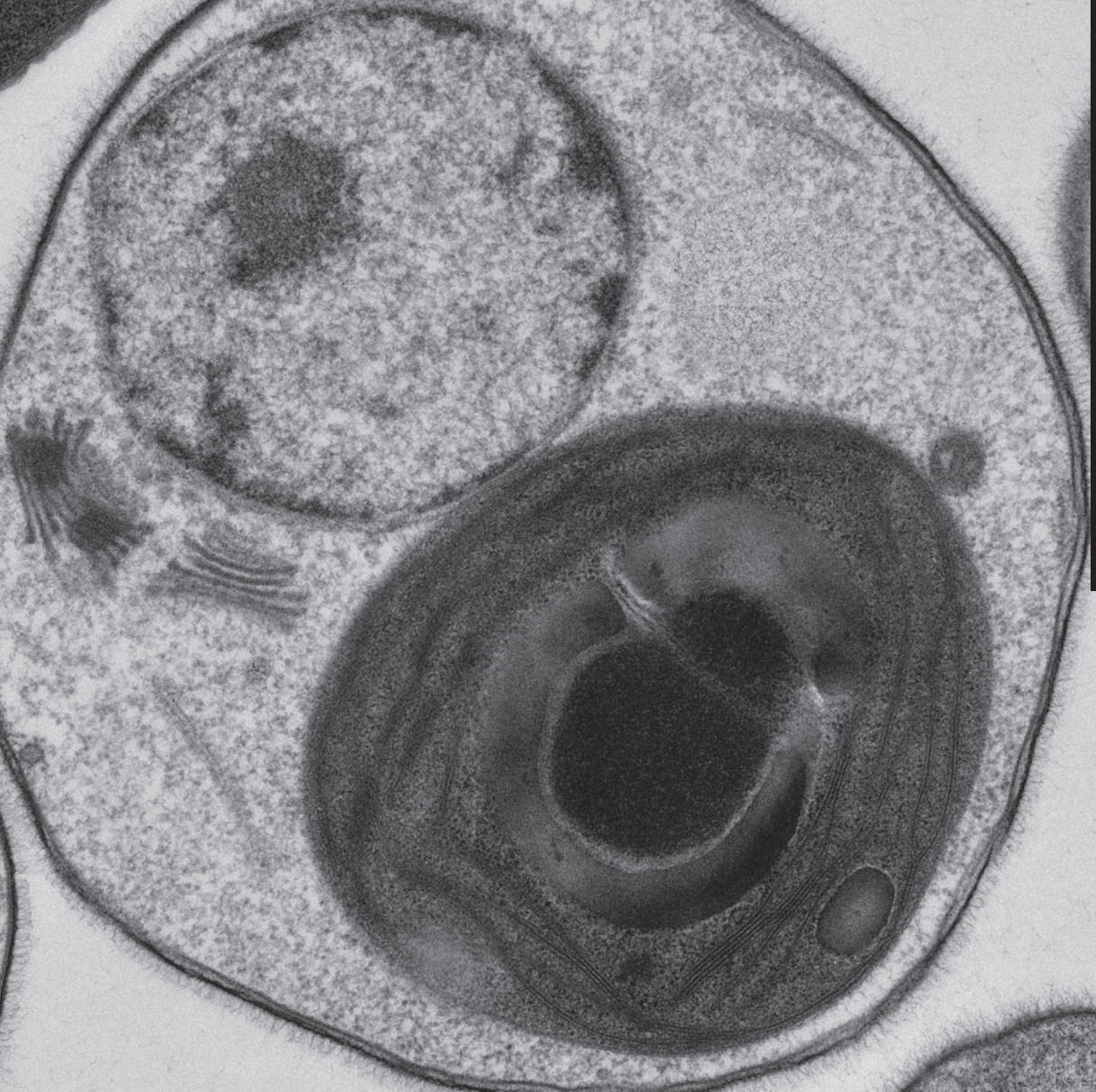


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