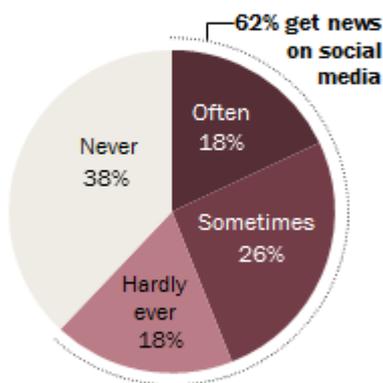


The Public Relations Challenge in a Fake News Era

By Tom Beckett, Founder, [NewsDriver](#)

About 6-in-10 Americans get news from social media

% of U.S. adults who get news on a social networking site ...



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.
"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

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With a growing [majority of U.S. adults](#) now getting their news on [social media](#), the impact, opportunities and challenges for public relations are coming into sharper focus.

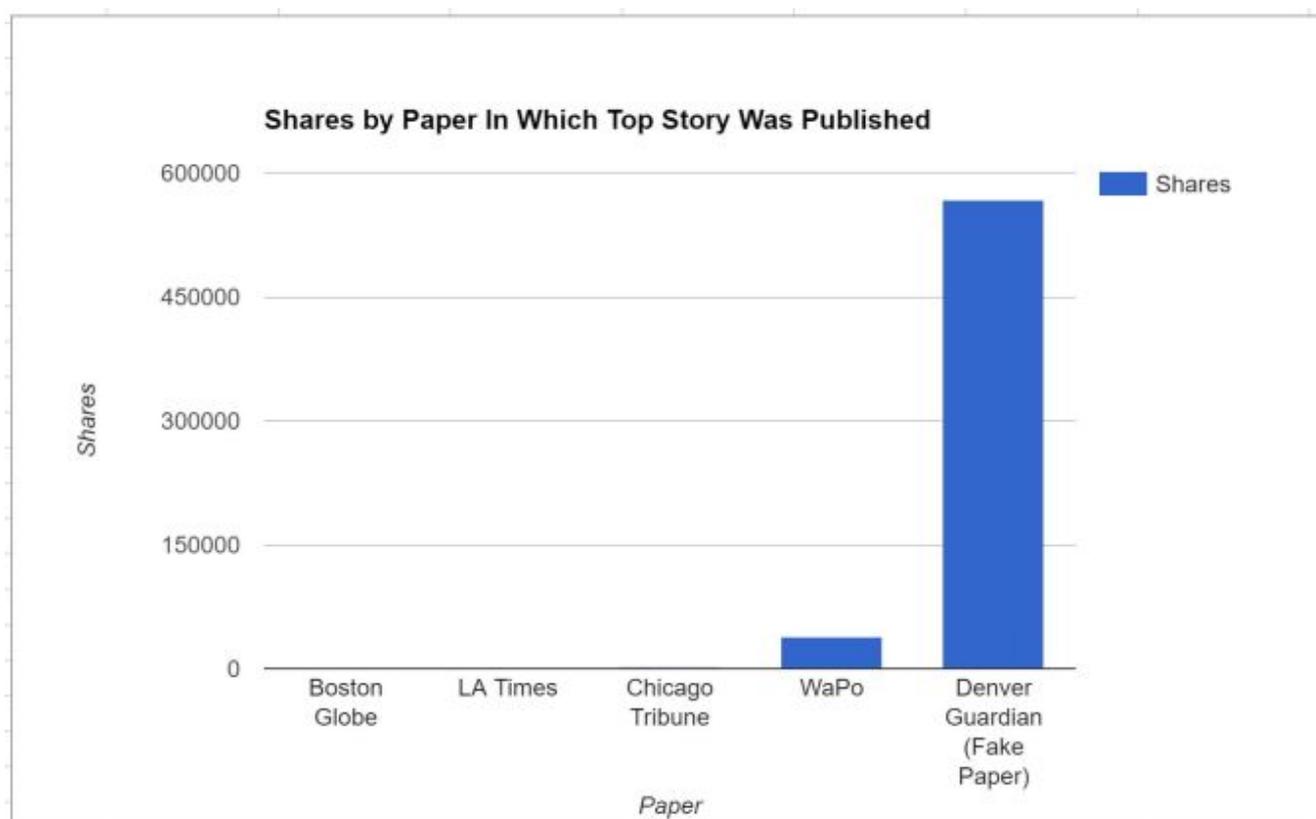
We are increasingly sorting into information tribes and [distrusting traditional institutions](#) – government, media, industry. We turn to our friends and family more than news media, brands or politicians.

Our opinion leaders are the people we know personally or feel connected to on social media. But in this ocean of distrust, a glimmer of light for business. According to the 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer research, [61% percent of respondents trust business](#) to keep pace with rapid change, higher than NGOs or government.

As the just-concluded 2016 U.S. presidential election

reinforced, we now feel entitled to [our own set of facts](#) as well as opinions. [Fake news sites](#), served up by the likes of Facebook and Google, reinforce our version of reality, reaching into politics, culture and business.

Fake news is outperforming real news on critical social platforms, according to this [recently concluded study using Facebook APIs](#).



Source: @holden Hapgood Blog 11/13/16

For now, at least, they serve regularly into Facebook news streams alongside the Washington Post, New York Times, Gizmodo and other journalist-based sites. And there is growing evidence that these [fake news sites are considered as or more credible](#) than legitimate news organizations.

Do you ignore engaging with fake news sites? Treat them like Internet trolls? Go silent or not respond to the false information they so effectively push out to a willing audience? Or engage with them and taint your brand by adding

legitimacy to their efforts?

For brand stewards in public relations, that's an incredible challenge. And an opportunity. We need to think out of the box. Challenge previous notions of gatekeepers and media coverage over connecting to personal influencers. It's not going to be a straight line to a solution, and our choices won't often be either/or, but rather cumulative and adaptive.

About the Author: With nearly three decades of experience in the marketing, public relations, social media and content delivery, Tom has unique insight into the challenges and opportunities facing today's communications professionals. Along with partners Peter Brand and Gavin Carter, Tom founded NewsDriver in 2016 to create a purpose-built SaaS platform that let's public relations professionals identify, combine, connect, share and promote their best content across social media to reporters and influencers. The company's first beta product, NewsDriver Boost, functions as a fully custom social "newswire" building and refining audiences in real-time across social media, boosting content teasers that drive traffic back to the client. Tom's marketing and design consulting firm, Modernist Marketing, consults with start-ups, non-profits, private equity and business-to-business companies to launch and refine marketing and business plans. From 1988-2014, Tom was with Business Wire, where he was senior vice president of global marketing from 2006-2014.