



Staying afloat at C-level.

Reaching C-suite executives requires focus. And ingenuity.

What's the first thing a top corporate executive likely does in the morning? Reach for a cup of coffee and *The Wall Street Journal*?

Maybe. If the WSJ is the online and not the print edition.

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According to The Center for Media Research, 67% of C-suite executives rely on the internet as their primary source of information, up 37% in the last four years. During the same time frame, execs report that their use of printed newspapers (including the Journal) has declined 36%.

The Center cites a study from forbes.com and Gartner, which also indicated that C-level executives are relying on online information in other ways.

For example:

- C-Level executives consume media on the Web more than any other medium (TV, Radio, Magazines, Newspapers), at 41%
- More than two in five C-Level executives believe the Web contains the most informative advertising
- Senior executives are increasingly utilizing the Web to find information and shop
- Senior executives are researching their competitors and industry trends online on a daily basis.

Obviously, the speed at which information can be accessed is a key to this growing influence. And as the 'net gains influence, this requires that marketers wanting to reach a top-level audience look at new ways to communicate online.

And, just as important, with other media.

C-suite residents are among the most voracious consumers of information, and they will actively reference multiple links to sources that can either reinforce or contradict what they may have read from initial web pages. Even though the research indicates that digital news outlets continue to gain ground, ad viewership is lagging behind. And even if the Forbes/Gartner study indicates that execs believe the web has the most informative advertising, it's important to note that the interpretation of "advertising" might be a lot broader than banner ads.

Most online viewers are still ignoring banners (see our previous post, [The News About News Media: Digital](#)) and opting instead for search results and news stories. That means focusing your marketing toward search and toward public relations—since execs are reading news daily from mainstream business sources, and, more than likely, key industry trade publications. In fact, article monitoring we've done for clients recently suggests that many trade publications have expanding their online offerings. Clip counts online are up over 100% this year over last, and some publications now offer

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their complete print versions as PDFs for internet viewing.

The gravitation to online information in the C-suite may also indicate the need to look at traditional media, because research still indicates that most company website views still are triggered by a viewer seeing something about the company from another source (digital, print, or electronic). Rex Biggs and Gary Stuart reference studies in *What Sticks* that show that one message in each of three media is more effective than three messages in one medium. They report "The experience encodes a deeper, more meaningful impression in consumers' minds."

Direct mail, trade print ads, and show presence may still be important for conveying the message to the C-suite that a company is an important resource. And rich content on a company website maybe be even more critical if key execs are relying on their mice to gather information: The Center for Media Research also reported that most **initial meaningful contacts** with a company now come through its website.

And once is probably not enough. Keep in mind that the decisions that require C-suite approval are typically major purchases, and execs may need to see multiple sources of information—news reports, testimonials, specs, company background, and so forth—before making direct contact that could lead to a significant sale.

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