Social Media Is Not Killing Email

Contributed by eMarketer
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Email remains the top choice for marketing communications among all age groups

The latest death knell for email was sounded by data in comScoreâ€™s â€œ2010 U.S. Digital Year in Reviewâ€• report, which noted a decline in time spent with web-based email among all US internet users under 55. Users ages 12 to 17, who have been most likely to drop email in favor of other online communications like social networking, had the steepest decline in usage, down 59%.

But web-based email checked at a desktop computer is only one slice of all email communications, and email represents an overwhelmingly important communications channel.

According to research from customer relationship marketing agency Merkle, 87% of internet users checked personal email daily in 2010, a number that has changed little since 2007.

Among those with a separate email account for commercial email, 60% checked daily, down just 1 percentage point since 2008.

Further, social media usage is hardly taking away from email. Rather, social media users are significantly more likely than other internet users to check their email four or more times per day, and less likely to check infrequently.

Mobile access is also encouraging email users to check more often. More than half (55%) of those surveyed who had an internet-enabled mobile phone checked their personal email using their phone, and nearly two-thirds of mobile email users checked their account at least once a day.

There is some evidence that personal communications are shifting away from email, though.

Messages from friends and family are taking up a smaller share of all time spent with email, while the share spent with commercial emails is rising. And the proportion of respondents spending at least 20 minutes per week with email from friends and family fell from 71% in 2009 to 66% in 2010.

But email is still a major method of communicating for the vast majority of internet users. Across all age groups, it was the top choice for receiving commercial communications.

Most respondents preferred the phone for personal communication, but email was the most important online channel for communicating with friends and family among every age group except 18- to 29-year-olds, a demographic for whom email was tied with social networks.

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