



A Paradigm Shift: Industry Report on KOL Identification, Planning and Engagement for Biotech and Pharma

A FirstWord Perspectives Report

Presented by



A Paradigm Shift: Industry Report on KOL Identification, Planning and Engagement for Biotech and Pharma

Presented by



Introduction

Medical Affairs and MSLs have traditionally spent much of their time travelling to and from meetings with Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and Healthcare Providers (HCPs) and attending conferences. However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the opportunities for in-person face-to-face engagement with KOLs/HCPs. Travel was restricted, hospitals closed their doors to non-essential visitors and major medical conferences moved online. The move to virtual engagement changed the way MSLs work and KOL/HCP engagement in the future will include both virtual and face-to-face interactions.¹

Since the removal of COVID-19 restrictions, there has been a move back towards face-to-face meetings with those KOLs/HCPs who prefer to meet in person. As many conferences prepare to meet in person in 2023, how does this shift impact meetings and, more importantly, how do MSLs prepare for these interactions?

Many of these meetings take place at medical conferences. January kicks off a busy season for many life sciences and healthcare industry groups. It's go time for MSLs to get to know as much as possible about their territory, KOL targets and the latest science.

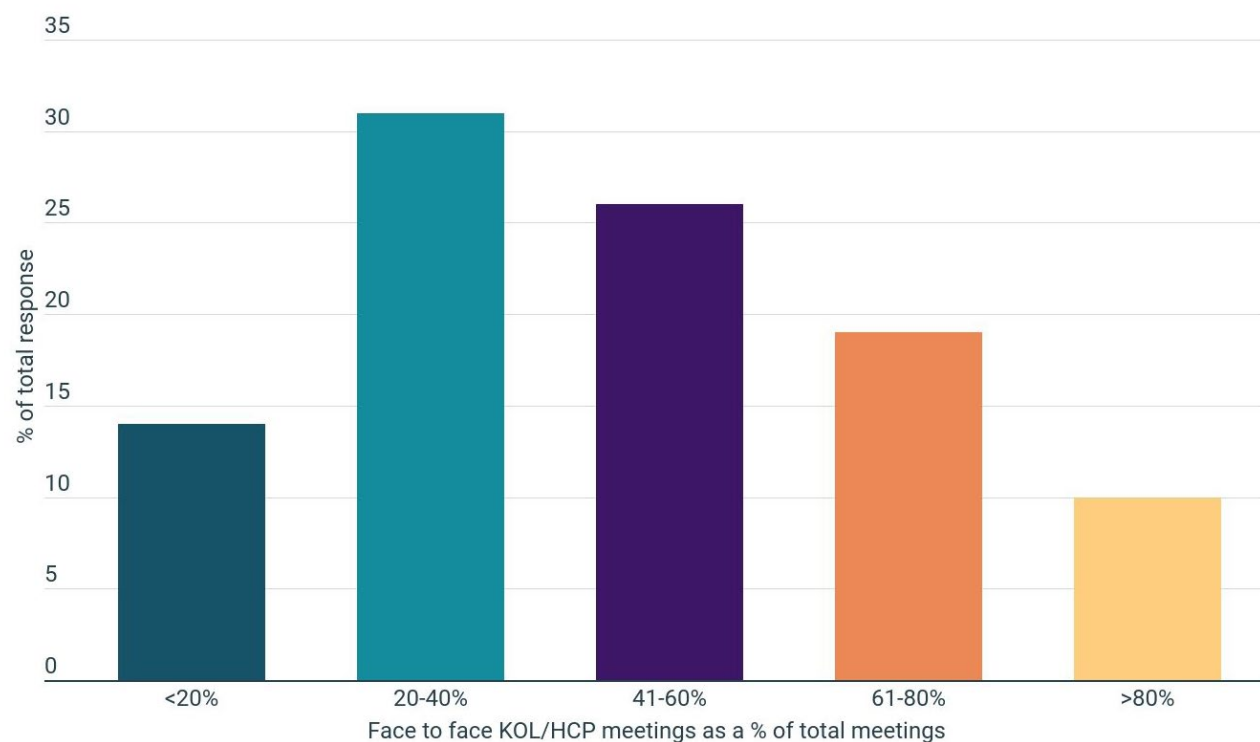
Previous research suggests that around half of MSL interactions with KOLs/HCPs will be online and half face-to-face, depending on the stage of the relationship and the reason for the meeting.²

The results of our October 2022 poll of 93 MSLs based in the US support this theory. Most MSLs have now adopted a hybrid of virtual and face-to-face meetings. Almost one third of the respondents indicate that face-to-face meetings with KOLs/HCPs currently account for 20-40% of the total, while 26% say that 41-60% of meetings are face-to-face.

¹ FirstWord (December 2021) Innovations in KOL Identification, Engagement and Development. Retrieved from <https://www.firstwordreports.com/reports/596202083> [subscription required]

² FirstWord *Op cit.*

Q1. As we learn to live with COVID-19 and most restrictions have been removed, what percentage of MSL meetings with KOLs/HCPs have returned to face-to-face meetings?



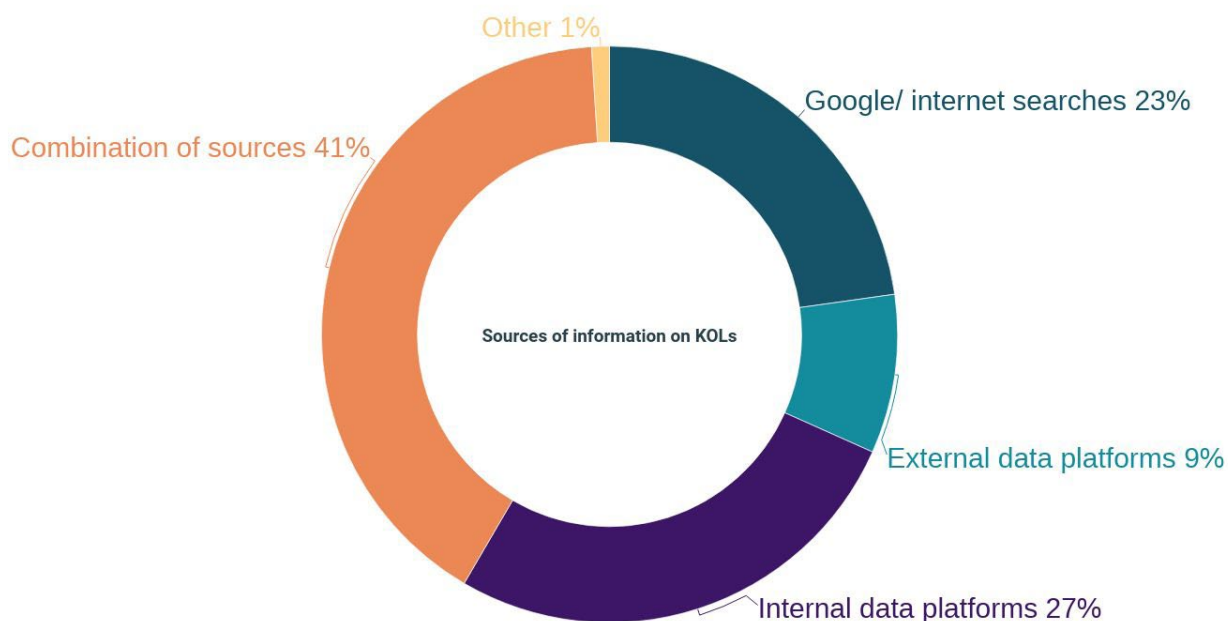
Base: US MSLs (n = 93)

FirstWord Research and Analysis

Most MSLs use either a combination of internal and external databases, or internal platforms such as CRM systems, to profile and segment the KOLs/HCPs they want to engage with.³ Similarly, results of this poll indicate that a significant proportion of MSLs (41%) use a combination of internal and external sources of information in preparation for meetings with KOLs. Another 27% use internal data platforms while 23% search for information online.

³ FirstWord (December 2021) Innovations in KOL Identification, Engagement and Development. Retrieved from <https://www.firstwordreports.com/reports/596202083> [subscription required]

Q2. How do you currently source data/information/analytics about KOLs in preparation for meetings with them?

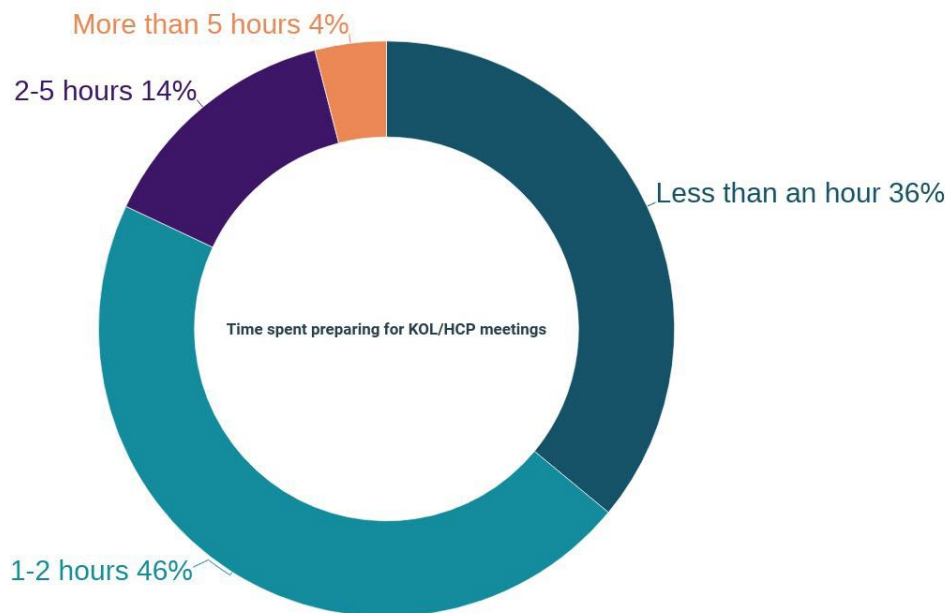


Base: US MSLs (n = 93)

FirstWord Research and Analysis

Most MSLs spend up to two hours preparing for each meeting with a KOL/HCP. Among the respondents to this poll, more than one third spend less than an hour on meeting preparation, while another 46% spend one to two hours on this activity.

Q3. How much time do you spend preparing for each meeting with a KOL/HCP?



Base: US MSLs (n = 93)

FirstWord Research and Analysis

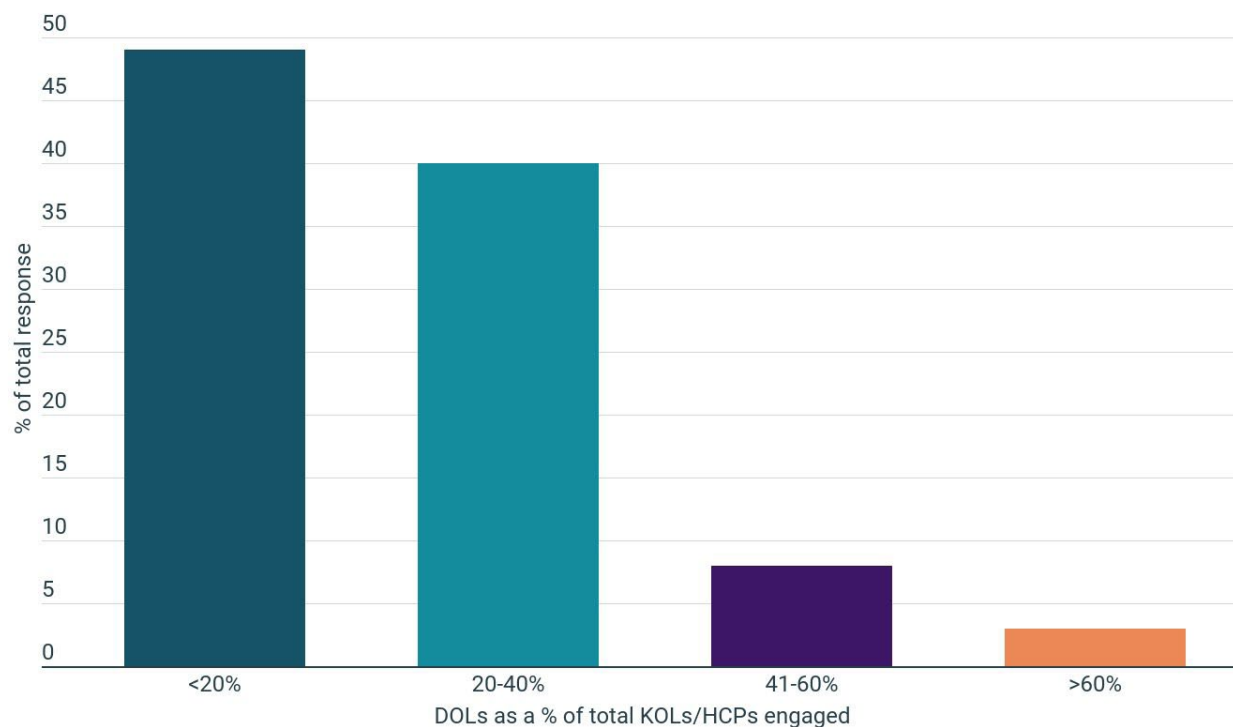
Digital influencers, also known as digital opinion leaders (DOLs), have a considerable online presence and are well known in their field. During the pandemic, travel and access restrictions meant it became more important to identify DOLs who have a significant digital influence.⁴ Research suggests that by 2027, MSLs expect to spend almost as much identifying DOLs and traditional offline KOLs.⁵

However, the results of this poll suggest relatively few of the KOLs/HCPs that MSLs now engage with are DOLs. Almost half of MSLs (49%) indicate that fewer than 20% are DOLs. Of the remainder, 40% of MSLs categorise 20-40% of KOLs/HCPs as DOLs, more than half of whom suggest the proportion is nearer 20%. In contrast, just 3% of respondents consider more than 60% of their KOLs to be DOLs.

⁴ FirstWord (December 2021) Innovations in KOL Identification, Engagement and Development. Retrieved from <https://www.firstwordreports.com/reports/596202083> [subscription required]

⁵ FirstWord (June 2022) The MSL Technology Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.firstwordreports.com/reportattachment/596202182> [subscription required]

Q4. What percentage of KOLs/HCPs that you engage with are considered digital opinion leaders (DOLs)?

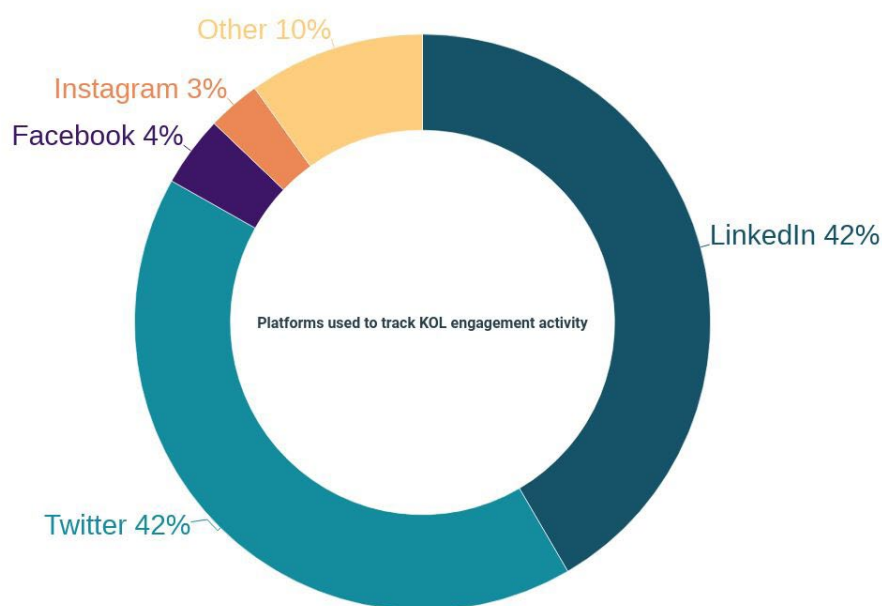


Base: US MSLs (n = 93)

FirstWord Research and Analysis

Thinking specifically about DOLs, LinkedIn and Twitter are by far the most popular social media platforms used for tracking their online engagement, with an even split between these two platforms.

Q5. Thinking about DOLs, which social media platform do you use most for tracking their online engagement activity?



Base: US MSLs (n = 93)

FirstWord Research and Analysis

About H1

H1 is the connecting force for global HCP, clinical, scientific and research information. The H1 Connect platform democratizes access to HCP knowledge and groundbreaking insights for life sciences, academic medical institutions, health systems, and payors. H1 Connect fuels a robust product suite that helps customers discover and engage industry experts, drive equitable research, access groundbreaking science, and accelerate commercial success with the most robust and accurate healthcare professional data. Learn more at h1.co.