

the marketing & communications needs of charities

Summary report of an in-depth research programme

September 2009



Funded by:



www.improvingsupport.org.uk/marketingandcommunications

Your gateway to third sector support, information and resources.

Commissioned by Media Trust, research conducted by:



Foreword from Media Trust

There are over 160,000 registered charities in England and Wales, and countless other community groups and good causes vying for our attention on a daily basis. With a myriad of public campaigns, we are under a barrage of messages aimed at trying to change our views and behaviour every single day, and this is coupled with millions of messages that bombard us as consumers. So, it is essential that delivery of outstanding marketing and communications activity should be at the very top of any charity's priority list, if it is to make its voice heard amongst this ever increasing congestion of communication.

Media Trust is leading the 'Marketing and Communications' work-stream of Capacitybuilders' Improving Support Services. The express aim of this work-stream is to improve marketing and communications support to the third sector via support organisations.

This significant piece of new research, commissioned by Media Trust as part of Improving Support, suggests that there is much to do. It reveals a sector that is hugely aspirational, but often unsure of how to secure commitment to marketing and communications activities, or apply principles strategically.

This research provides a unique insight into the capacity and capability for marketing and communications amongst front line and support providers of all sizes and sectors across England. We hope that it will empower them, like us, to push these fundamental skills to the top of the third sector agenda and improve support given on the ground to charities in finding their voice and making it heard.



Gavin Sheppard
Development Director
Media Trust

Contents

Welcome	
Executive summary	2
Insufficient core investment in Marketing & Communications	8
Online presence, but digital benefits are unrealised	12
Non-strategic marketing planning, urgent need for support	16
Support from within the sector is preferred, but difficult to access	20
Aspiration within charities to raise the bar	24
Conclusions	27
Media Trust	28

This Summary Report outlines the main themes and conclusions from our in-depth research project. If you would like to study the full research findings, please contact the Marketing & Communications Services Team at Media Trust.

contactus@mediatrust.org
(Subject: Media Trust Research)
+44 (0)207 217 3717

With funding available from the ‘Marketing and Communications’ work-stream for Capacitybuilders’ Improving Support Services, Media Trust commissioned research to identify the capability and capacity for marketing and communications support in the Third Sector; and to explore how support organisations can best help to enhance these capabilities within frontline organisations.

The research was specially designed to identify:

- The strengths and weaknesses of the existing marketing and communications of frontline and support charities
- The marketing and communications needs of front line charities
- The services currently available from support organisations to meet those needs
- The potential gaps in the services available
- The priorities for developed or new services to fill the gaps and, by implication, where funding should be targeted

The research focussed on three aspects of marketing and communication namely, marketing planning, online and digital activity, plus marketing support and operations. In each instance organisations were asked to assess their current performance and identify their priority for improvement.

Overall, across all size and type of organisations questioned, a number of general themes emerged from the research, indicating key areas of concern and priorities for improvement.

- Insufficient core investment – the research suggests that at a fundamental level there is a lack of management and stakeholder support for training and strengthening marketing spend
- Unrealised digital benefits – despite most organisations questioned having an online presence nearly all expressed concern that their full potential for digital marketing and communications was not realised
- Lack of strategic planning – with a variety of diverse, short-term activities most groups identified a significant gulf between recognizing the urgent need to plan marketing and communication strategies for the long term and the ability to do so
- Support from within the sector – this was repeatedly identified, as a preferred option as it was felt like-minded groups fully understood the role, value and ethics of the Third Sector from experience. However, there was no clear route to access these groups.
- Desire to raise the bar – despite the various challenges and issues identified by the research, there is an underlying aspiration for all groups to improve marketing and communications within their sector.

Our methodology, respondent profile and segmentation

Prior to conducting this study, our research partners BPRI conducted an initial stage of qualitative research: an exploratory study of 16 face-to-face in-depth interviews with organisations of mixed size and status (frontline and support organisation status). Key insights from this initial research were that many third sector organisations had no formal, structured, marketing and communications process, thus precluding the use of process mapping for streamlining work. Also size, rather than status seemed to determine the organisation's approach to their marketing and communications. Finally, the level of marketing activity carried out and the need for support differed greatly from organisation to organisation.

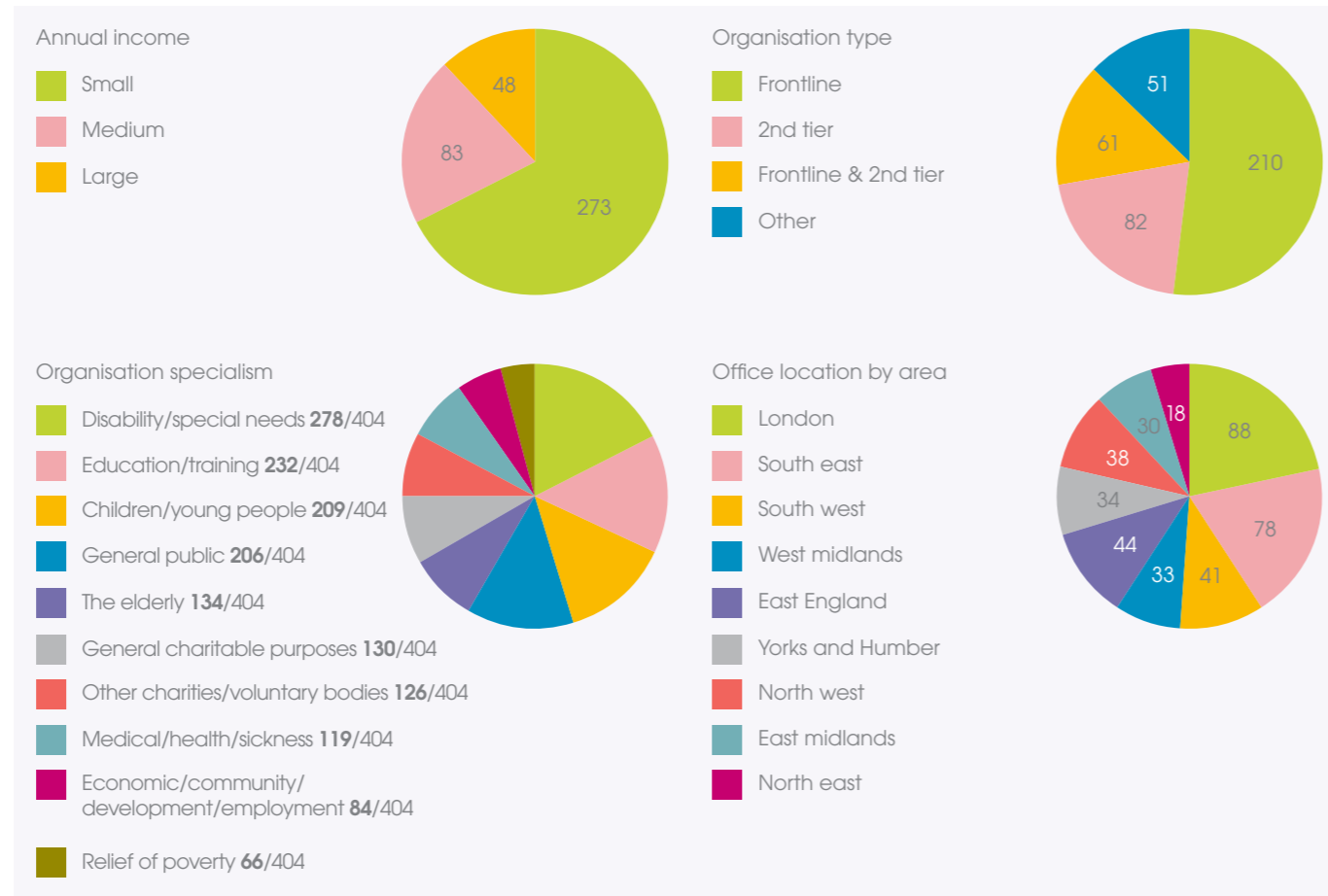
Small <£0.5m	Medium £0.5-£2.5m	Large >£2m
273	83	48

The quantitative research which followed and forms the basis of this report was designed to measure the needs and level of support available in the third sector in England in more detail. 404 organisations were contacted (from a sample provided by Guidestar) and representatives from each participated in a 25-minute telephone interview, conducted by BPRI between 13th and 23rd January, 2009. This survey investigated:

- The size, structure and function or specialism of the organisation
- Their planning and marketing activity
- The existence and use of their web presence
- Their operational effectiveness
- Their success at accessing support

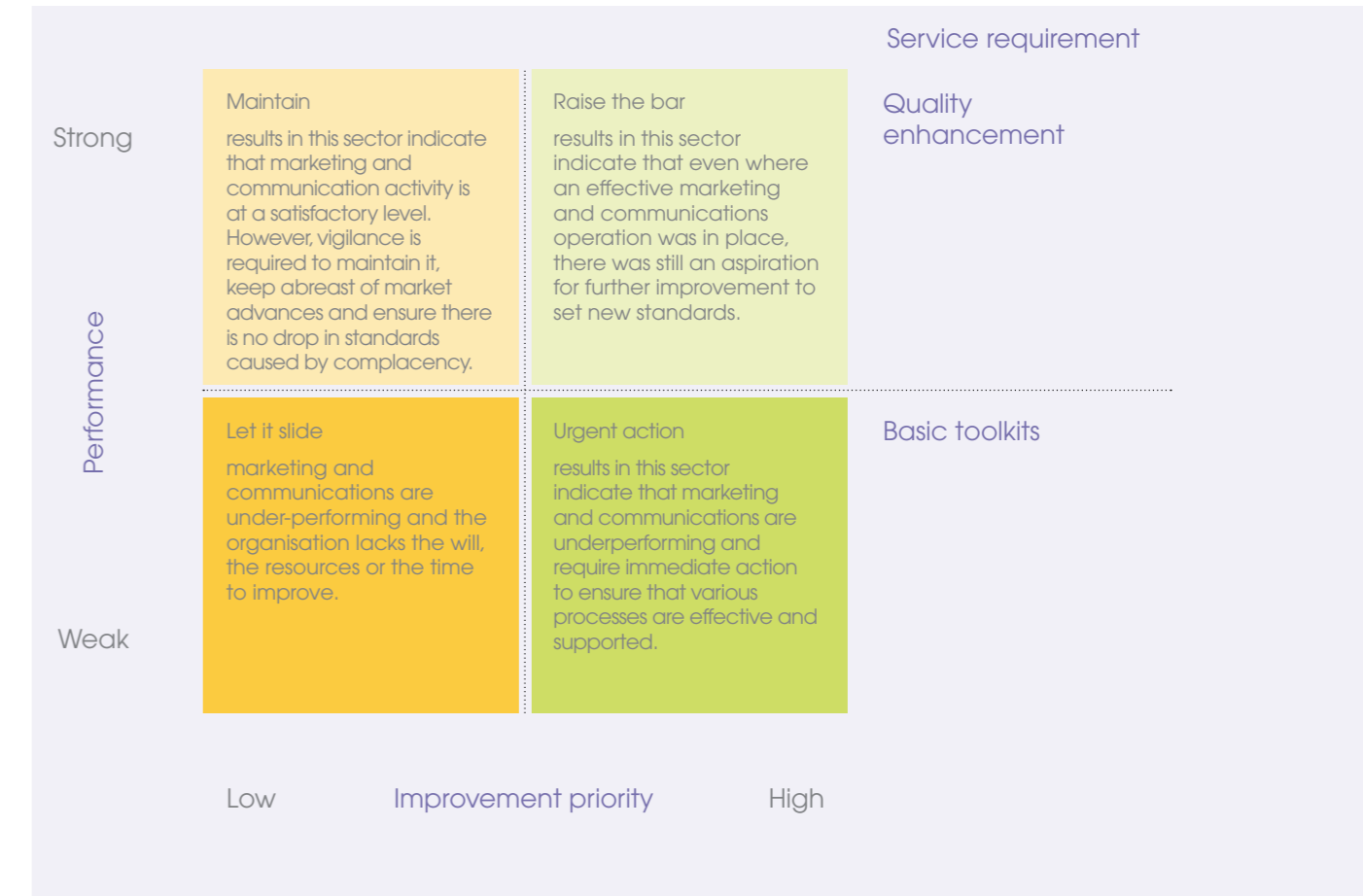
Analysis of the different types and sizes of organisations confirmed the initial qualitative insight - that marketing behaviour was more similar between like-sized organisations than between organisations from the same tier. Thus, size by annual turnover was the most reliable and comprehensive way of segmenting common behaviour within a sector that is notoriously wide-ranging and difficult to segment. Our results are therefore segmented across small, medium and large sized organisations.

In order to achieve representative results, the sample profile encompassed an even spread of organisations by specialism, geographical location, rural vs. urban location, size by staff, size by turnover, and frontline as well as support organisation status.



The Priority and Aspiration Matrix

For an overview of how organisations felt about their current performance in a given area, and how they prioritise areas for improvement, the research results were charted in a matrix format.



Insufficient core investment in Marketing & Communications

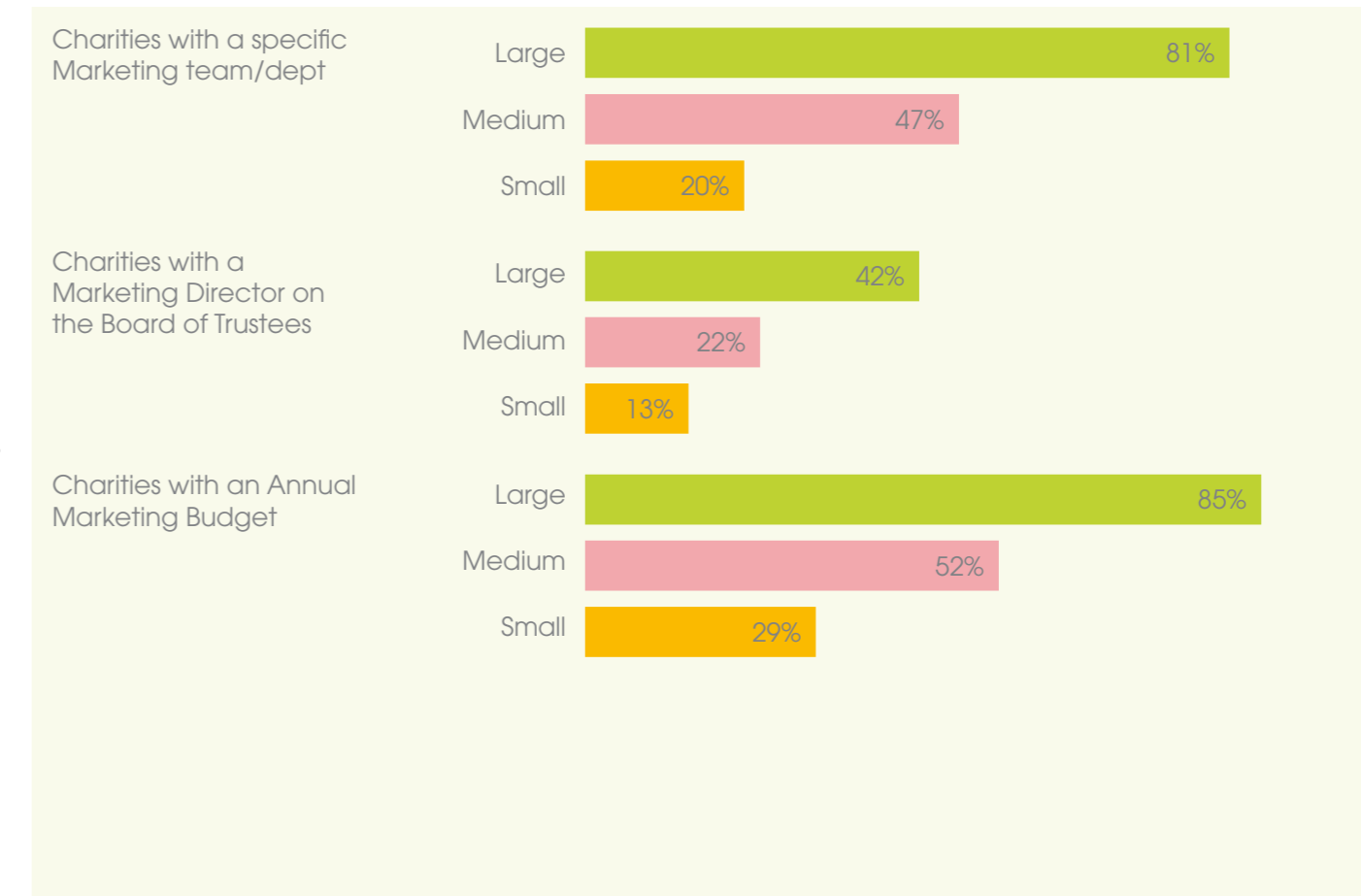
Greater funding, allocation of resources and proactive management are key to improving marketing and communications of charities. However, the lack of financial and human resources at every level severely limits the effectiveness of these sectors.



Insufficient core investment in Marketing & Communications

Research revealed that smaller charities lack marketing resource and management. Despite the advantages that come with increased size, fewer than half of large charities have a Marketing Director on the Board. In fact, all interviews highlighted challenges around the budget available for marketing and communications.

This lack of senior management and trustee support for marketing makes it difficult to secure the necessary funding for such activities. This is compounded by the fact that most organisations lack resource to prove a direct link between marketing spend and the effective delivery of tangible results – although the opportunity to measure the outcome of projects did emerge as a priority for most groups.



Respondents were asked whether their organisation had a specific marketing, PR or communication team, whether someone from these disciplines was represented at director level and if they had an annual marketing budget.

The priorities for investing funds, where available, was also revealing.

Smaller organisations often have no budget at all allocated for marketing activities whilst in many larger organisations, what budget there is, is often linked to specific projects or fundraising rather than to marketing and communication in general. This is reinforced by a perception that funders prefer to allocate financial support to innovative projects rather than building durable in-house marketing infrastructure. However it is the latter that would help to raise the overall profile of the organisation, enabling it to be better seen and heard and subsequently establish relationships with the public and potential funders alike.

Where there is communications budget to allocate, most organisations are still opting to invest in traditional marketing activities; for example printed newsletters, mailouts, leaflets and event-related activities for networking purposes.

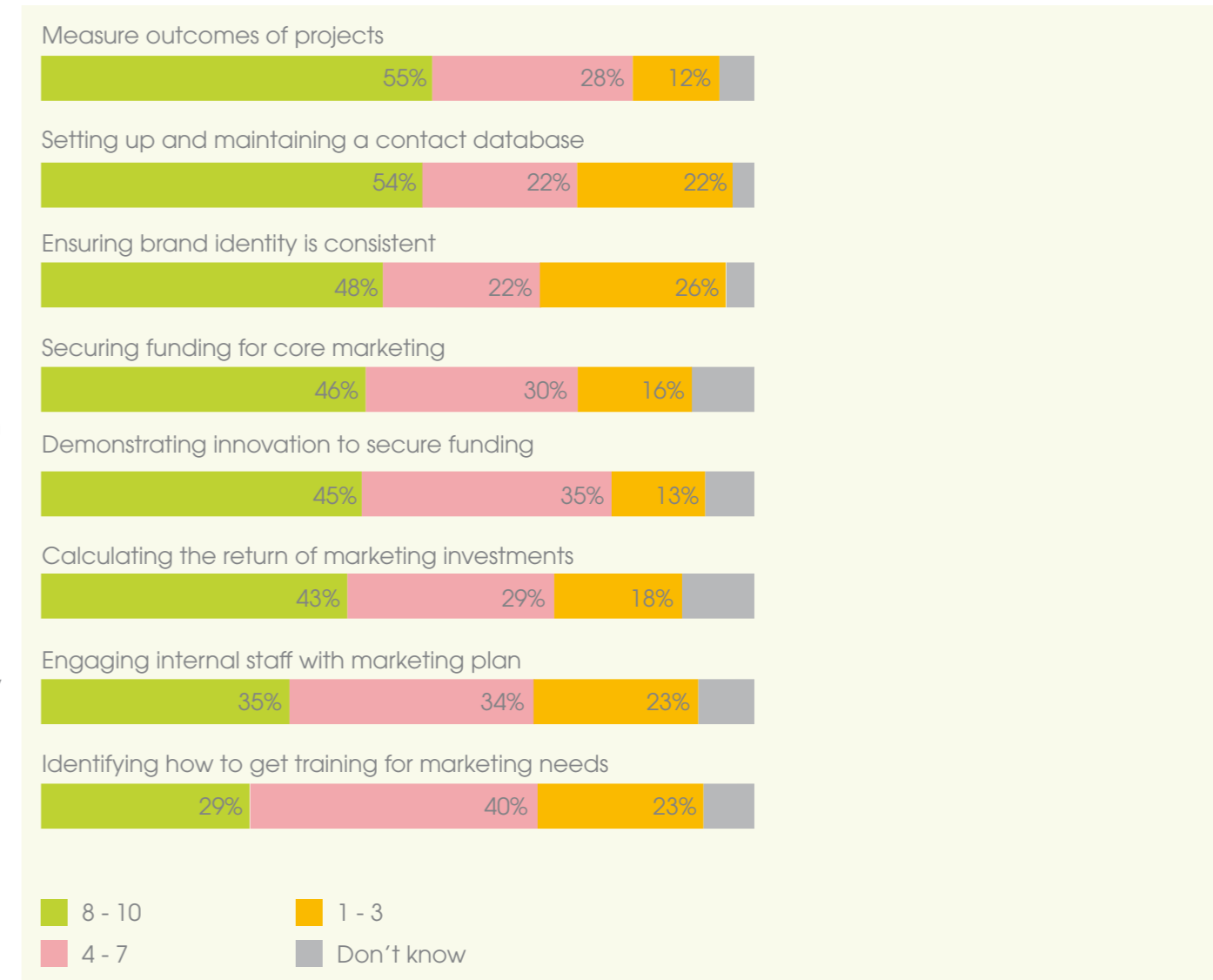
Only 15% of smaller organisations use digital marketing and social media as opposed to 44% of large organisations, and overall our research revealed that all organisations regardless of size still focus their marketing and communication efforts on traditional, mainstream activities. There is a perceived hesitance in employing emerging marketing tools, such as online social networking, mobile, eMarketing despite the lower cost opportunities and more accurately measurable benefits of these channels.

Once again, respondents expressed a tendency to rely on tactical activities around specific projects, instead of adopting a strategic perspective on planning marketing and communications activities. Additionally, emphasis on marketing activities is placed on those which tactically may contribute to networking opportunities (for example both attending external events and organising proprietary events), and publicity (for example, press releases).

In summary, due to tactical allocation of marketing budget, organisations are channelled into performing equally tactical activities, at which point they lean on traditional means of communicating to audiences. This has the potential to widen the gap between how they communicate, and how their audiences increasingly prefer to receive information.

With such limited resources available to them, third sector organisations in general and small organisations in particular struggle to identify the best way to allocate their budgets in order to show a return on their investment. This needs to be addressed so that organisations can devise an effective marketing and communications plan that can be easily implemented with results that can be measured.

In summary, securing funding specifically for marketing and communications is a fundamental concern across the third sector. Many are aware that this requires innovation and planning but so often they lack the ability or access to support to take this next step and take the action they know is necessary. Subsequently, this is an area where support providers have an opportunity to help make a marked improvement.



All groups were asked how important they think it is for their organisation to improve its performance on each activity by assigning a score out of 10.

Online presence, but digital benefits are unrealised

The Internet offers huge potential resources for the third sector. Almost all of organisations consulted have websites but only larger organisations seem able to begin to realise the full potential offered by their online presence. Small and medium organisations can find the complexity and nature of the technology particularly daunting.

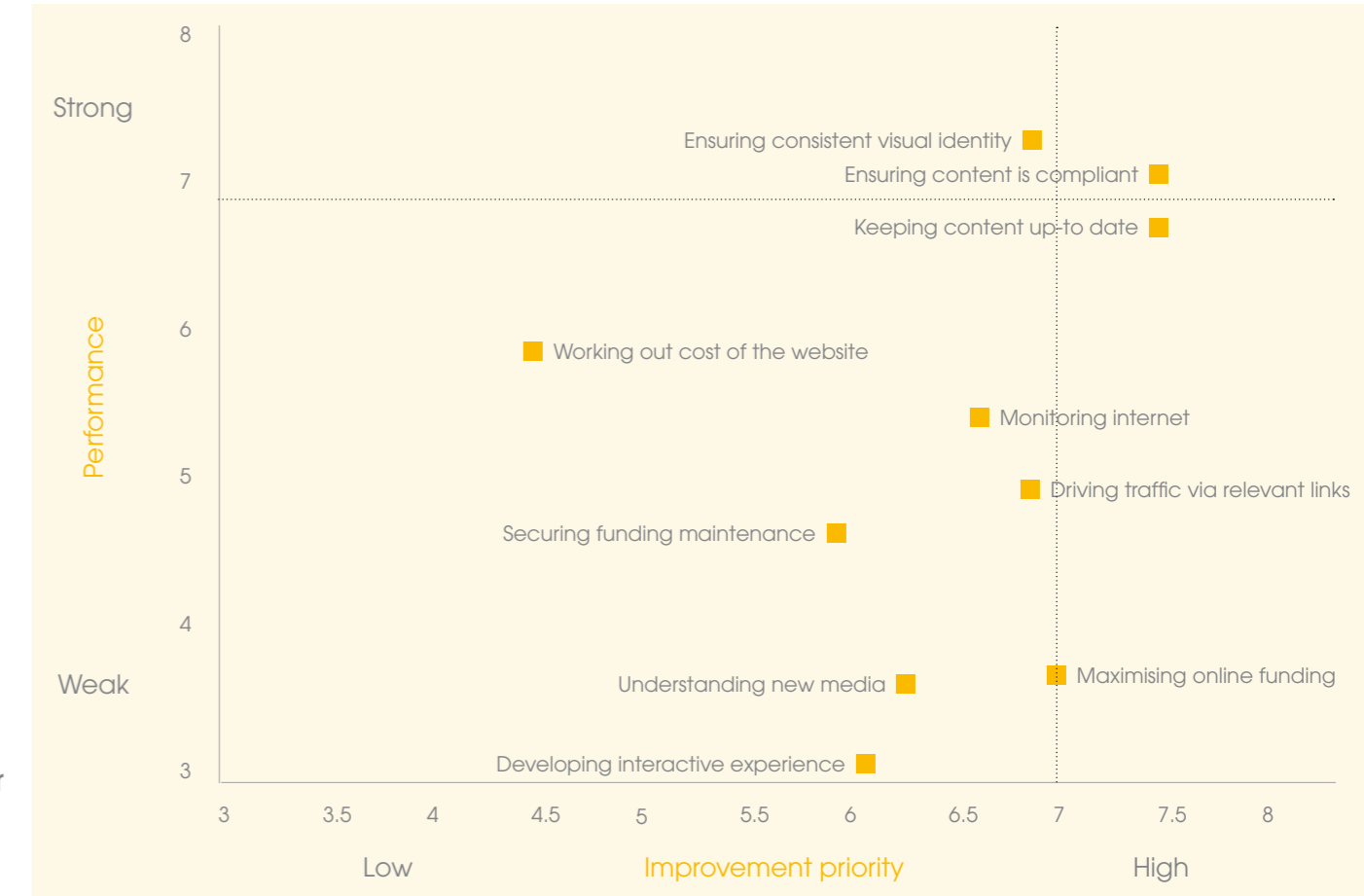


Online presence, but digital benefits are unrealised

Of all the organisations questioned almost all, regardless of size, have a website. However, the quality of their online offer varies. The research shows that larger organisations understand the need to exploit their web presence via investment, innovation and keeping abreast of changes in technology; whereas smaller organisations often lack the funding, skills and will to fully exploit the potential of their web presence. The differences between these different groups are reflected in their priorities for change.

Small charities were primarily concerned with ensuring their websites complied with regulations, that the content was kept up to date and that they could somehow maximise online fundraising opportunities.

Medium charities identified different priorities including monitoring and understanding Internet traffic, driving traffic efficiently to their site via links and again, unsurprisingly like their smaller counterparts, maximising their fundraising opportunities.



All groups were asked about their current performance in various aspects of setting-up and maintaining a web presence and how they prioritised their need to improve in each one.

Online presence, but digital benefits are unrealised

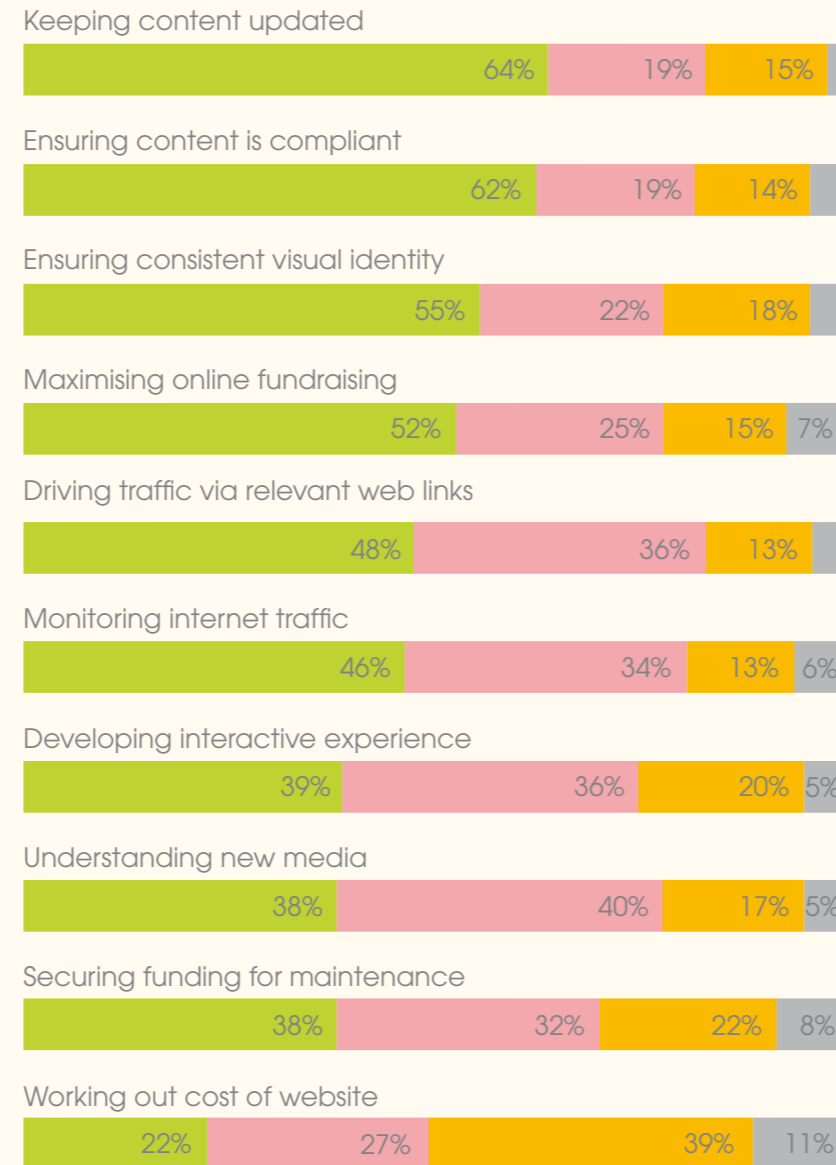
14

Large charities expressed a desire to explore and exploit the numerous benefits new media and social networking may provide while developing an interactive user-experience and again, using this channel as a tool to secure ongoing funding.

However all size groups seem unsure about how to implement these priorities, improve their online capabilities and generally seem to feel out of their depth.

Looking more closely at these problems, the following factors emerged as key challenges for the smaller organisations. They frequently lack in-house capabilities to maintain and update their website. This lack of specialist expertise means they are unable to take advantage of the opportunities of Web 2.0, and have a lack of confidence with new tools such as social networking sites.

All groups were asked **how important** they think it is for their organisation to **improve its performance on each activity** by assigning a score out of 10.



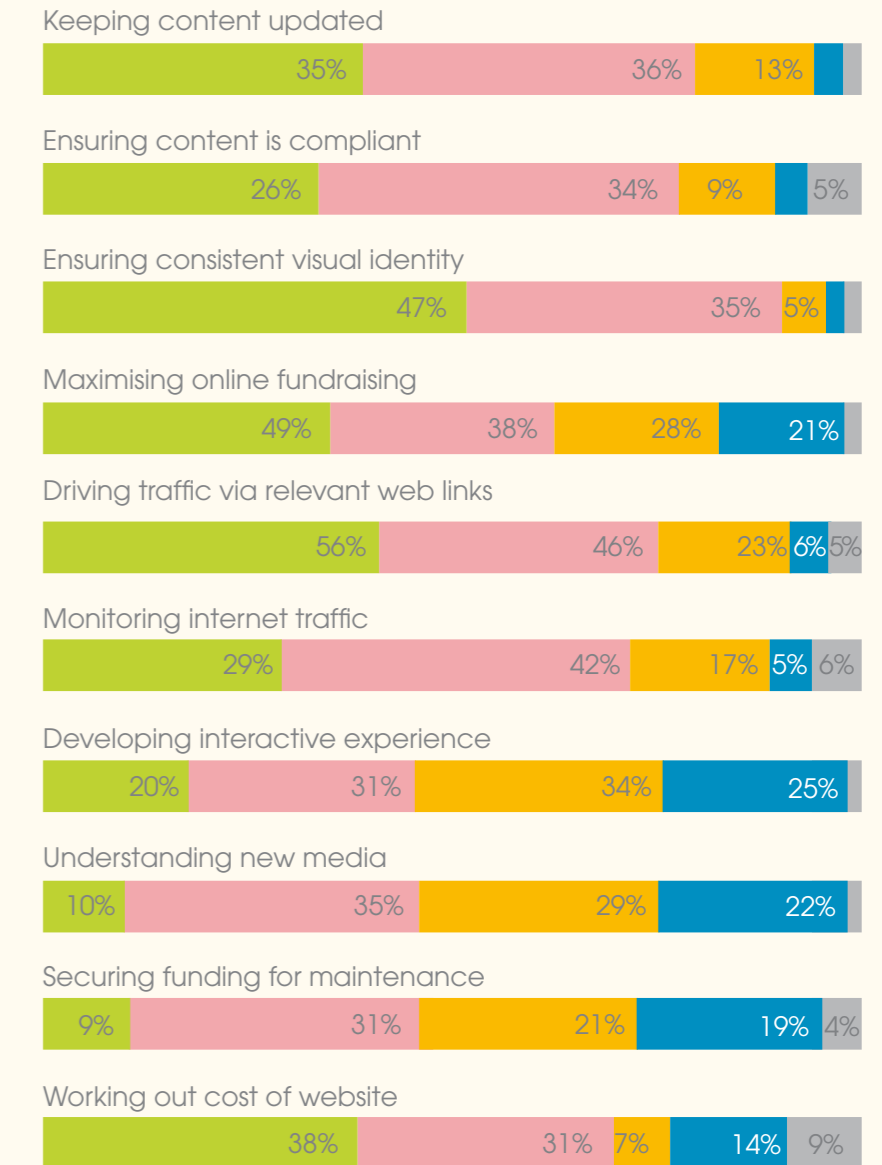
Online presence, but digital benefits are unrealised

15

Finally, they are also anxious about the perceived costs of investing in an area (of which they have little or no understanding) and the risk of not achieving maximum return. So, similar to securing core investment, they recognise the various relevant factors but lack the access to support to make the necessary changes. So, although smaller groups acknowledge they are missing out on the full and growing potential of this channel they feel the need to cover the basics and understand their options first.

Larger charities, on the other hand, are able to take advantage of the Internet to a much greater degree often with dedicated human resources. They use their larger budgets to maintain and extend their online presence and optimise the channel including tracking traffic, introducing interactive features and developing relevant links to boost traffic.

All groups were asked to **rate their performance** on a number of activities that other organisations say they do when **setting up and maintaining a web presence** by providing a rating out of 10.



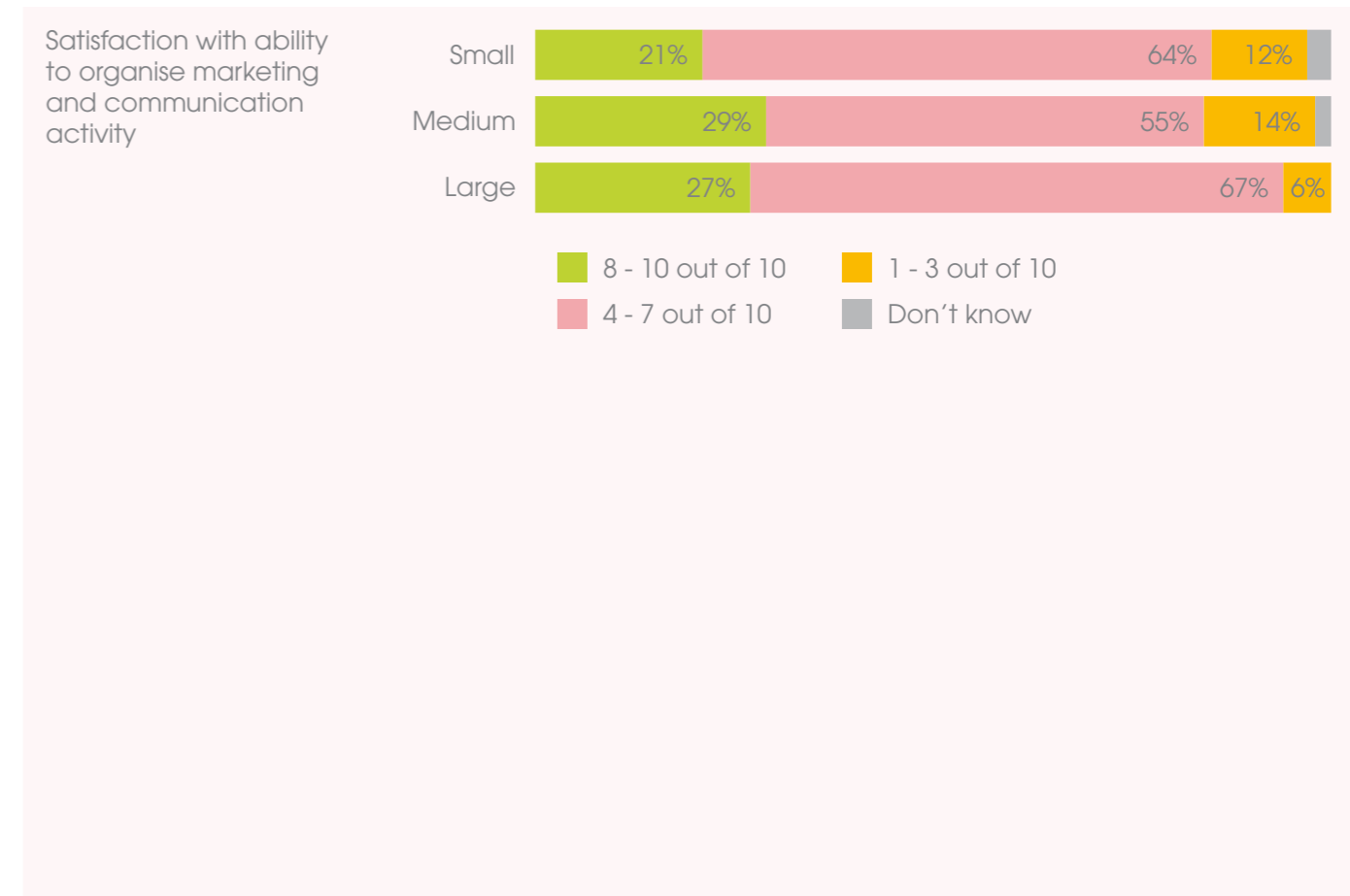
Non-strategic marketing planning, urgent need for support

All charities recognise the urgent need for them to improve their approach to marketing planning, looking at a more productive strategic approach rather than relying on their more typical tactical methods and decisions. Amongst all organisations there was a consistently large gap between current performance and priority to improve.



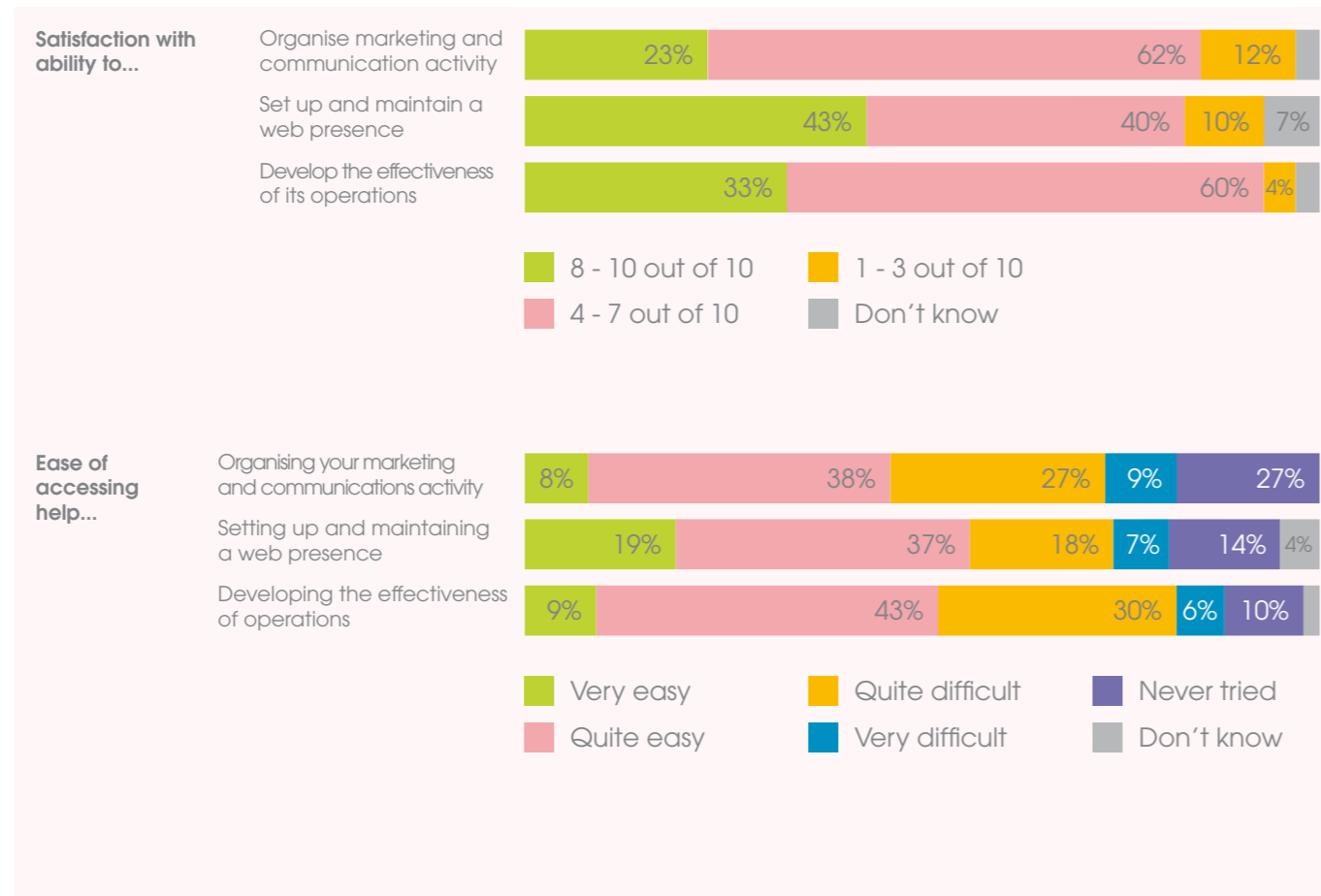
Non-strategic marketing planning, urgent need for support

In the course of our research, the ability of all charities to organise and implement their marketing and communications activity, into a cohesive, well structured and productive system scored the lowest satisfaction rating of all the themes we explored. Less than a quarter of charities questioned were satisfied with their current performance.



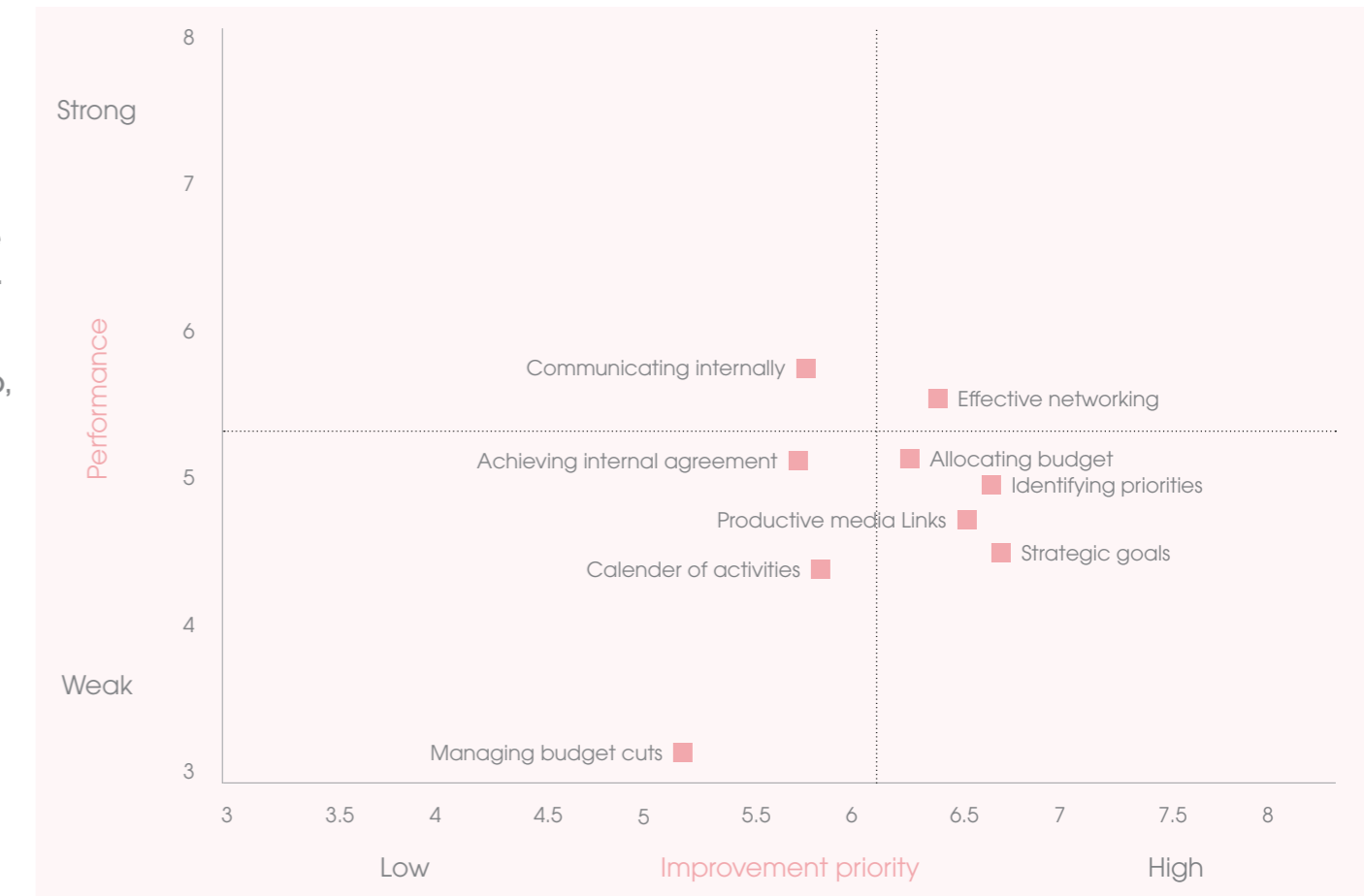
All groups were asked how they would rate their satisfaction with their organisations ability to organise marketing and communications activity by assigning a score out of 10.

Our research would seem to indicate that some of the reasons for this dissatisfaction are endemic in the third sector as a whole, particularly as most organisations seem to lack clearly defined marketing goals. As these elements are key to establishing a distinctive profile and conveying succinct messages to larger audiences there's a negative impact on funding as a consequence. This is compounded by an inability to identify marketing priorities so that they fall back on tried and tested approaches. However, these tactical approaches concentrate on traditional marketing activities over and above more progressive (and often cheaper) solutions such as digital marketing.



All groups were asked how they would rate their satisfaction with their organisations ability to organise marketing and communications activity by assigning a score out of 10.

Of course, as previously identified, part of this problem lies in the fact that marketing budgets are often dominated by funding for specific projects at the expense of organisational requirements. This is further characterised by charities struggling to commit precious limited funds to areas where the best return on their investment is not clear. One noteworthy side effect of this project-by-project approach to marketing investment is that can also limit internal communication. So, to solve this flawed short-term approach will bring with it the innate benefit of improving the group's in-house unity.



All groups were asked about their current performance in various aspects of marketing and communication and how they prioritised their need to improve in each one.

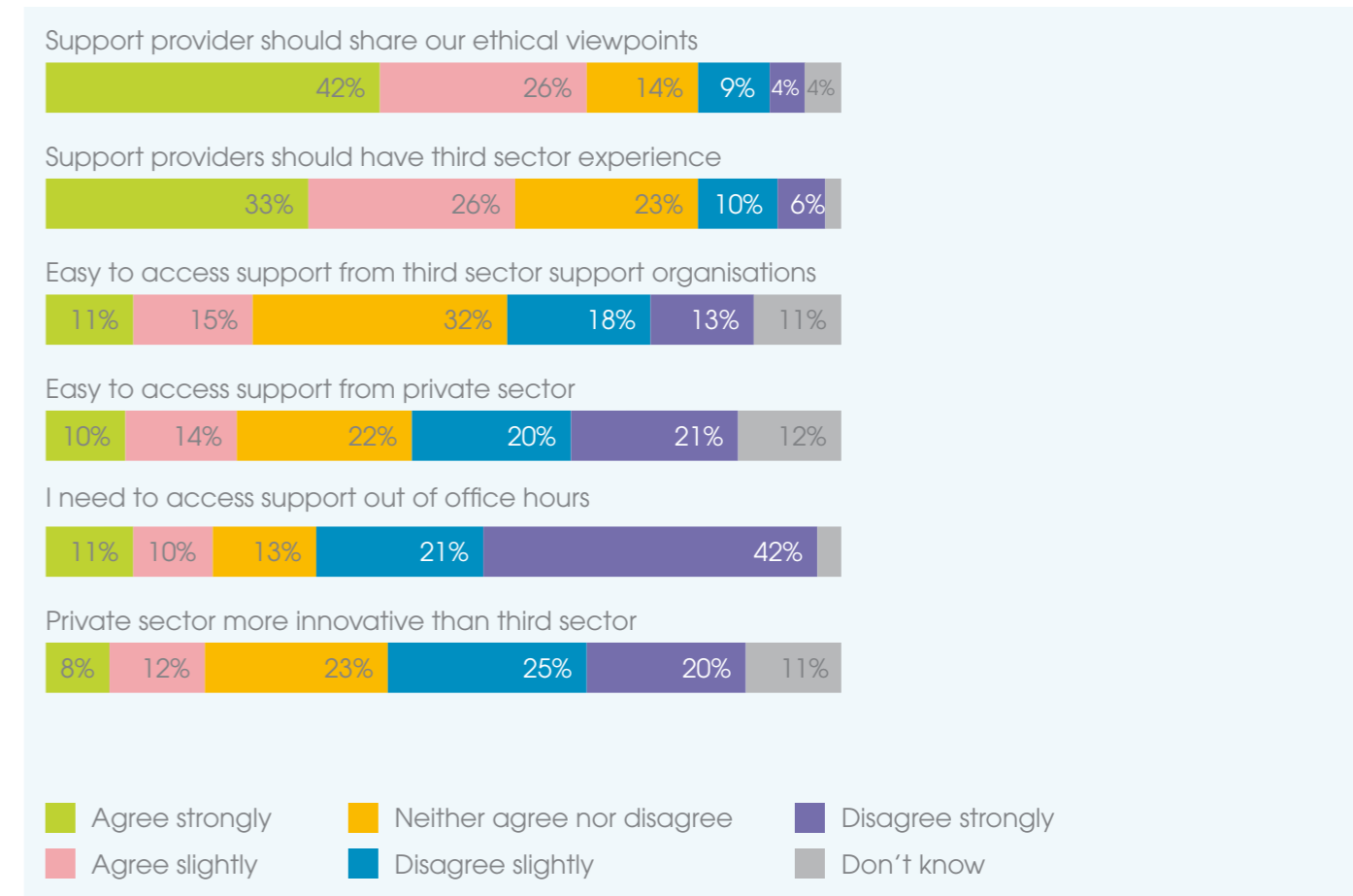
Support from within the sector is preferred, but difficult to access

All organisations recognised the need to seek support for marketing and communications initiatives. However, it was universally asserted that the most invaluable support would come from inside the third sector. It is perceived that these like-minded organisations share the same core values and deep understanding of the experience, capabilities and needs of charities.



Support from within the sector is preferred, but difficult to access

68% of organisations believed that support providers should share their ethical viewpoints while 59% specifically demanded third sector experience from their support providers. However, the reality of how this level of support can be achieved was called into question: 74% of charities were not confident about the ease of accessing support from third sector support organisations.



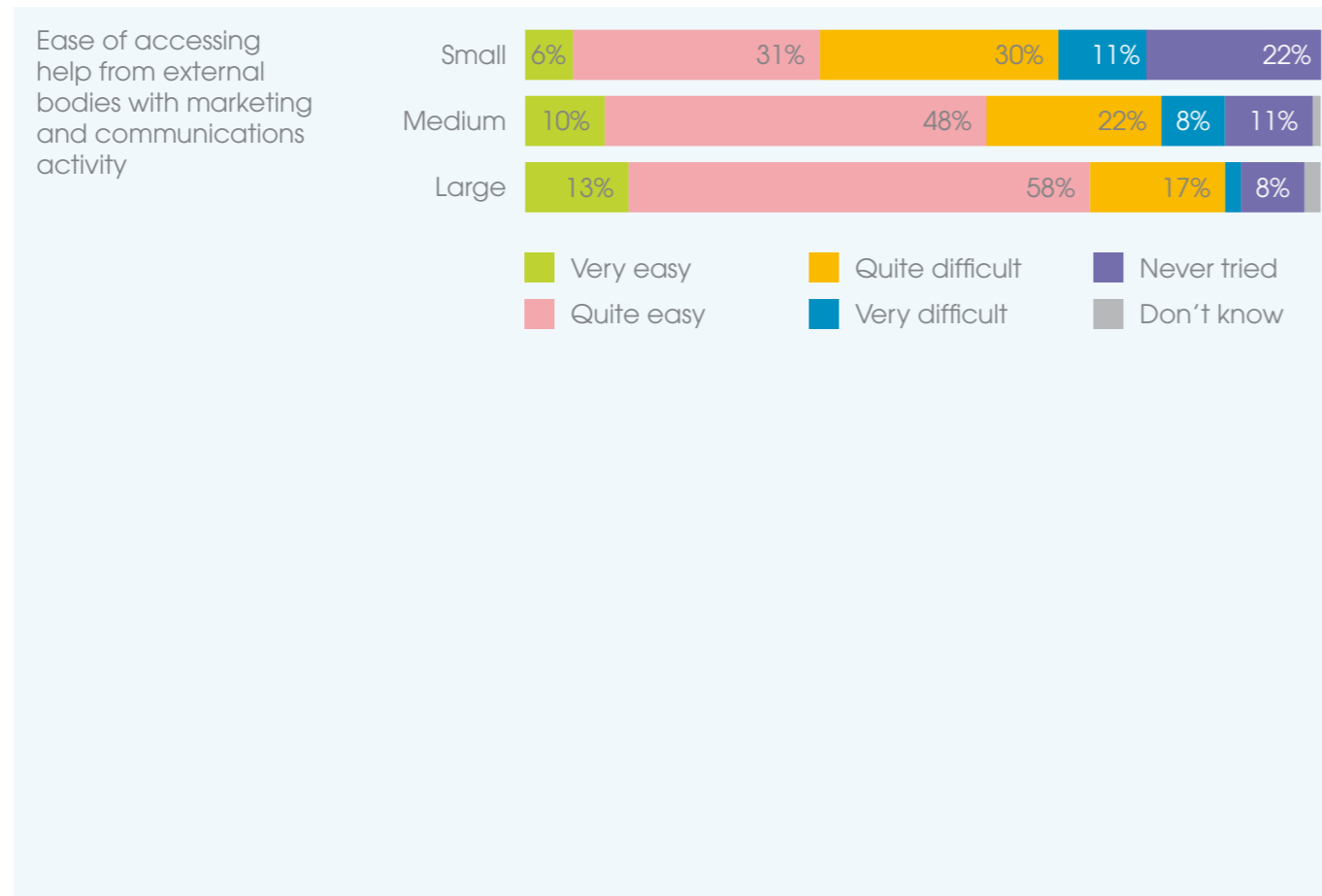
All groups were asked to rate their agreement with certain statements relating to working with like-minded organisations.

Support from within the sector is preferred, but difficult to access

22

The third sector differs intrinsically from the private sector, as it is heavily reliant on individuals, peer groups and goodwill rather than external marketing support. The most common sources of support used by those interviewed were listed as: volunteers, professional resources, contacts and mentors, other charities and personal friends. It is the often diverse and frequently disparate nature of these groups that may have a bearing on the lack of confidence of organising and accessing support.

Although some organisations did use support from the private sector, whether paid-for or pro bono, this was a relatively small number and often only the result of the organisation being unaware of third sector support. There was certainly no evident belief that the private sector could provide more innovative support than like-minded groups.



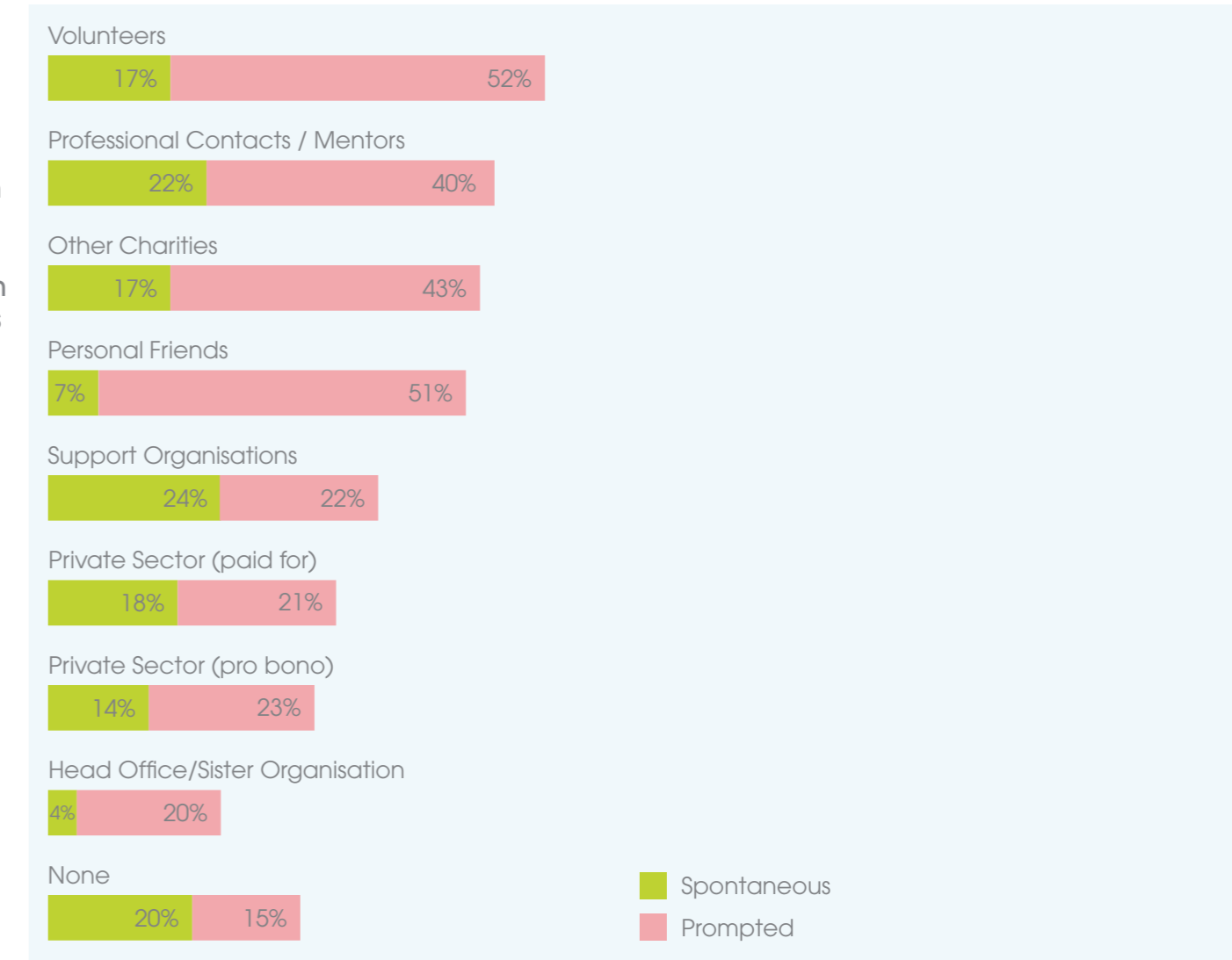
All groups were asked how easy they find it to access help from external bodies and organisations with organising their marketing and communications activity.

Support from within the sector is preferred, but difficult to access

23

As a whole, the research indicated lower than expected use of support organisations. Some, particularly smaller, organisations, appeared unaware that such support organisations even existed. Overall, it would appear that charities rely heavily on word of mouth referrals for marketing and communications support and while this is partly due to a desire to work with peers, it is also an indication that access to formal support is confused.

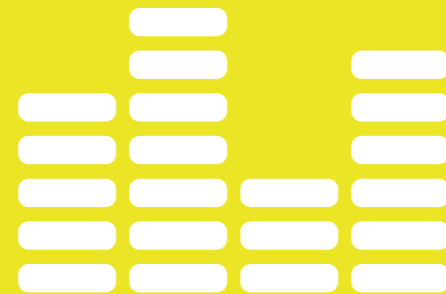
To this end, charities of all sizes universally prioritised an online directory of support organisations in the third sector indicating that, at present they don't know where to look for support. This would give them an invaluable resource they could access independently to meet their diverse and changing needs.



All groups were asked what sources of help have they used for support with their marketing and communications.

Aspiration within charities to raise the bar

If the general conclusions of this research indicate widespread challenges facing marketing and communications provision in third sector organisations, it also indicates a desire to improve. Charities aspire to increase their marketing and communications capabilities and activities and to raise the bar, set new benchmarks and achieve best practice. Furthermore, there is a feeling that the best and most applicable innovation will come from within the third sector, rather than looking to the private sector.



Aspiration within charities to raise the bar

The majority of organisations recognised the crucial importance of optimising their marketing and communications activity. While all size charities aspire to improve in this area, small and medium organisations tend to have a different set of priorities from the larger charities, which highlights how vital it is for the appropriate support to be tailored to each size to best meet their needs.

Of all the groups studied, larger charities seem to be best served by their current activities, funding and support. While smaller charities share many of the same challenges and needs, they frequently lack the resources and manpower to implement certain initiatives.

Consequently, medium size organisations emerged as the most receptive to and in need of the greatest support. By concentrating resources here and targeting these groups, support agencies will also provide relevant solutions for smaller charities.

In turn, support agencies should directly address some of the most basic gaps identified in the research by encouraging marketing spend by demonstrating a clear link between investment and both long and short-term benefits. They should advance the understanding and promote the wider benefits of digital marketing, as well as increase the awareness of and access to relevant support organisations.

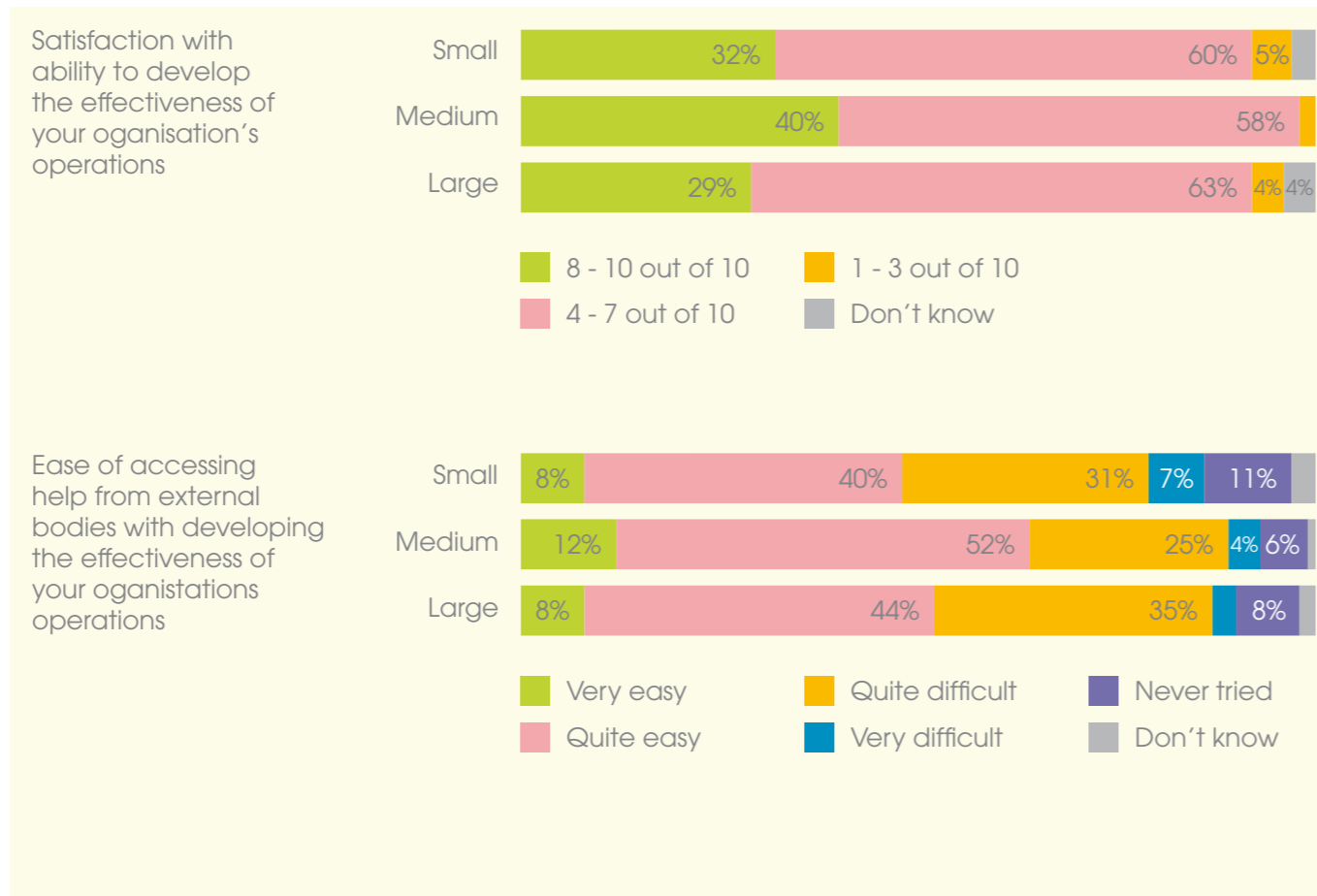
Finally, as this richly diverse sector demonstrates, one size definitely does not fit all. Consequently, successful support organisations should aim to gather more information to better understand this complex and fragmented sector and tailor their services accordingly.

Ultimately, the details of this research should act as a springboard for support groups to match their offer to appropriate areas within charities, prioritising those areas identified as urgent.

Small groups need help building their capacity, which is best done through basic toolkits for quick win/low investment marketing activity, with access to an online advice portal and a training offer for volunteers to create a more consistent and cohesive resource.

Medium groups emerge as the most receptive to outreach programmes, where mentoring, toolkits, expertise and access to an enhanced online community will be the most profitable action.

Large groups need help enhancing and maintaining their marketing capability, which is best served by offering training in innovative and emerging areas in addition to best practice guidance.



All groups were asked to rate how satisfied they are with their current ability to develop the effectiveness of their operations as well as their ease of accessing external help

All the research findings point to enormous appetite and potential to Improve (Marketing & Communications) Support throughout our sector. Whilst the need for support and development are quite clearly identified (even if their solutions in every case are not), the genuine ambition for third sector organisations to improve their marketing and communication activities so that they deliver tangible benefits can be fully realised if effective solutions are made easily accessible, and if the necessary investment in marketing and communications is led at a strategic level.

So, the future is one of real optimism, where this research can act as a powerful tool, a catalyst for real change, and a prompt for further detailed insight into the sector.

About Media Trust

At Media Trust we believe that everyone should have a voice and the opportunity to be heard.

We are the UK's pre-eminent communications charity. Our corporate members include BBC, Channel 4, Daily Mail and General Trust, Disney Channel UK, Guardian Media Group, IPC Media, MTV Networks UK and Ireland, News International, Newsquest Media Group, OMD, Sky, Virgin Media TV and Warner Bros. We work with media organisations and charities to enhance their communications and enable communities to find their voice and make it heard.

Communications Resources and Training

Designed exclusively for charities and those looking to have an impact at the heart of communities, our live training and events programme is designed to inspire, equip and empower you to transform your communications and add impact to your work within communities across the country. The events are delivered by thought-leaders and experts from across the media and communications industry and those from third sector organisations who are leading the way

To complement our public events programme our bespoke training team deliver the full range of media, marketing and communications training designed to meet your organisations' specific needs. From 'communications campfires' and helping you plan your annual strategy to media interview training and press coaching, we work with you to plan the perfect programme and deliver it exclusively to you. We've planned large-scale national events, coordinated complex media projects and delivered training to some of the UK's most recognisable charity and public sector brands. Whatever your bespoke need, talk to us about it! www.mediatrust.org/bespoke

Media Trust is also your destination for a wealth of free marketing and communications support. From handy reference guides and inspiring stories to practical tools and services. Here are just a few:

Get your story written up by professional journalists and sent directly to thousands of news-desks via our unique Press Association partnership, Community Newswire. This innovative, free service is dedicated to taking charity and community stories and sending them out to journalists working in national and regional newspapers, radio and television channels across England. Help your story hit the headlines, use Community Newswire www.mediatrust.org/community-newswire

We've produced a wealth of tools and resources to help inspire your organisation and the communities you work with. If you're a support organisation working with front line charities find out more at www.mediatrust.org/marketing-support

Free professional support from media volunteers and mentors

Not sure how to perfect your PR strategy or need some advice on how to improve your website? Our media volunteers provide hugely valuable support on almost everything from looking over a press release to mentoring disadvantaged young people on media projects. Our Media Matching programme matches hundreds of media, marketing and communications professionals with charities across the UK who want to improve the way they communicate. Sometimes a quick phone call does the job, or it could turn into a longer-term partnership – it's up to you. Visit www.mediatrust.org/media-matching

We run an innovative youth mentoring scheme across England, pairing some of the UK's most influential media professionals with disadvantaged young people to work on youth-led media projects. For more information, visit us at www.mediatrust.org/youth-media

Increase your impact with a film

Telling your story and that of the communities you work with is still one of the most powerful ways to get your message across. Whether you require a three-minute promo for use at a conference or a half hour documentary, our award-winning productions team produce film and video to broadcast quality standards. Talk to us about your production requirements www.mediatrust.org/productions

Tell your story online and on national TV

Broadcasting 24/7 on national digital TV (Sky 539, Virgin TV 233 and from 6 to 9am on Freeview 87) and online at www.communitychannel.org, Community Channel is the UK's only national TV and online platform dedicated to communities, their stories and the organisations that support them. Be involved in innovative programming, tell your story and that of those you work with or add a unique dimension to your campaign. If you think your organisation or community group could benefit from using Community Channel...talk to us! www.communitychannel.org

Support and funding for your media projects

Community Voices is a two-year project that aims to inspire, engage and support disadvantaged communities across England to get their voices heard through digital media. We will be setting up a community network and a digital media hub offering support, resources, training and mentoring; and for a number of selected applicants, grant funding for community projects. Find out more about this project, join the community network, and register for more information at www.mediatrust.org/communityvoices

Through Mediabox we also provide a range of grants for young people and organisations to apply to produce media projects. For more information visit www.mediatrust.org/youth-media



BPRI is a leading UK specialist business-to-business research consultancy, providing clarity on b2b markets and customers. Businesses, public and third sector bodies engage BPRI to resolve strategic, marketing and customer issues. BPRI is part of WPP's global communications network. For more information, visit www.bprigroup.com.

Our corporate members include:

BBC
Channel 4
Daily Mail and General Trust
Disney Channel UK
Guardian Media Group
IPC Media
MTV Networks and Ireland
News International
Newsquest Media Group
OMD
Sky
Virgin Media TV
Warner Bros.

Media Trust

2nd Floor, Riverwalk House, 157-161 Millbank, London SW1P 4RR
Tel: +44 (0)20 7217 3717

The Media Trust Registered Charity No. 1042733

Be part of it www.mediatrust.org
