

The Big Health Tech Communications Report – PART 2

Decoding communication strategies in health tech: Insights from NHS health tech professionals and influencers



Introduction

In an era where the intersection of healthcare and technology is increasingly critical, understanding how to communicate with decision makers, influencers and end users is key. As health services continue to evolve, grappling with challenges such as workforce shortages, care backlogs, lack of funds and a looming General Election, the role of effective communication strategies become critical in reaching target audiences with the right message at the right time.

A competitive marketplace in the UK means that more than 5,000 health tech companies are fighting for share of voice. Many companies will struggle to be heard, resulting in negative consequences for the NHS, which desperately needs innovation to be sustainable.

Silver Buck conducted two comprehensive surveys, taken by over 100 health tech decision makers and suppliers. These surveys aimed to shed light on the prevailing communication channels, marketing strategies, and the challenges faced in effectively reaching and engaging with key stakeholders in the health tech sector.

This report aims to distil the results of the second survey completed by NHS professionals and influencers. The insight contained within will help suppliers understand the best way to reach, inform and engage with decision makers.

Decision makers Survey Insights

Summary: We surveyed 50 NHS health tech decision makers and influencers to understand their preferred sources for health tech and digital health information.

The majority of respondents (64%) rely on trade publications for keeping up to date with health tech developments, with policy influencers (91%) favouring these more than NHS professionals (56%).

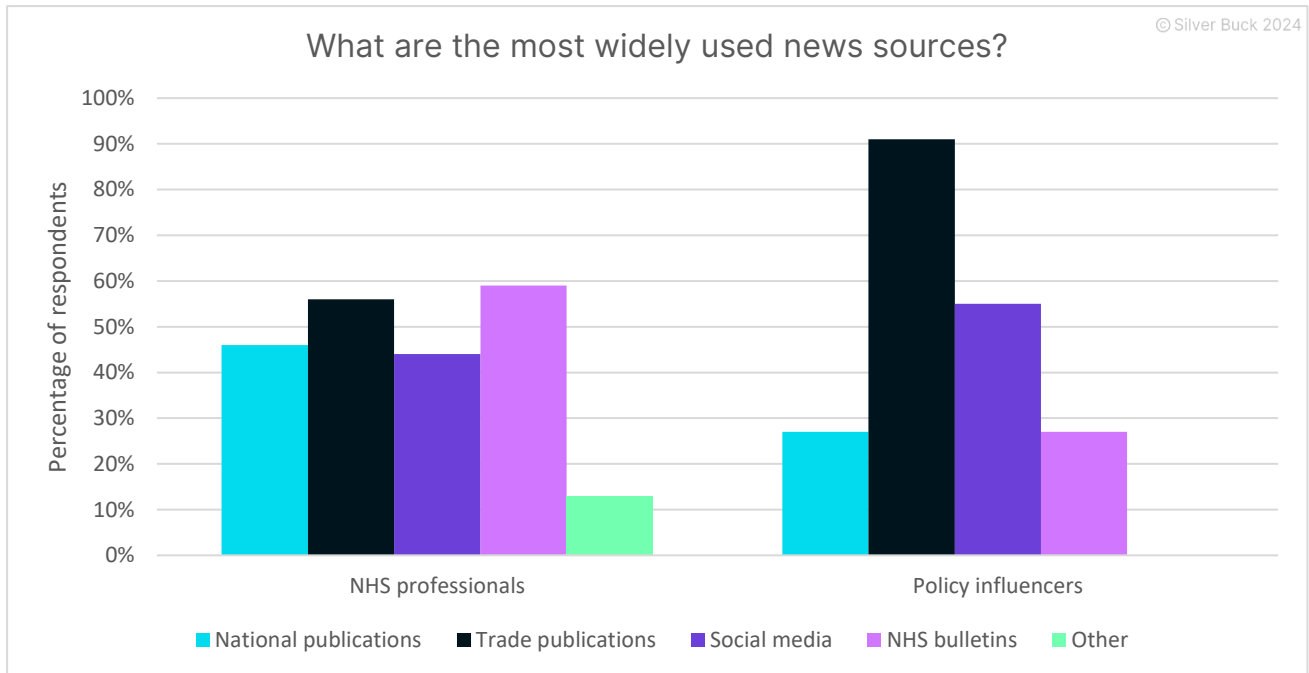
LinkedIn is the dominant social media platform, used by 92% of respondents, highlighting its value in professional networking.

Case studies are considered crucial for NHS professionals when making procurement decisions, underlining the importance of evidence in decision-making. The survey also reveals challenges in accessing information, with NHS professionals facing time constraints and policy makers seeking credible, high-quality content.



Majority of respondents, especially policy influencers, rely on trade publications for health tech information

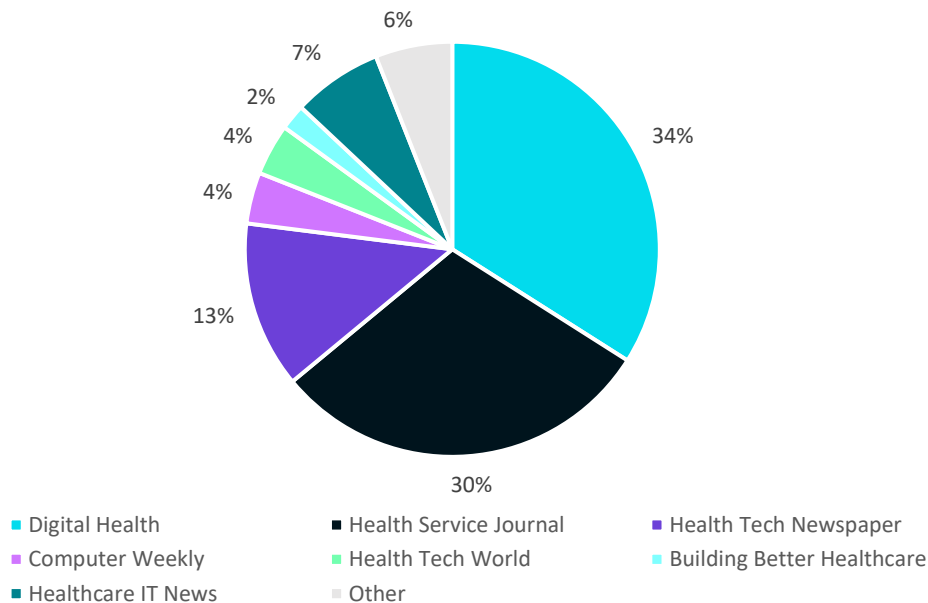
The majority of respondents (64%) said they rely on trade publications for information, with a notable preference among policy influencers (91%) compared to NHS professionals (56%). This spotlights the critical role of specialised trade publications in shaping opinions and decisions in the health tech sector.



The most read publication is Digital Health

The preference for specific publications like Digital Health and the Health Service Journal (HSJ) further illustrates the targeted approach of professionals in seeking information. Digital Health emerges as the most read publication, with HSJ being equally popular among policy influencers. The lower engagement with international news sources like Healthcare IT News, predominantly by policy makers, suggests a focused interest in national or regional developments over global trends.

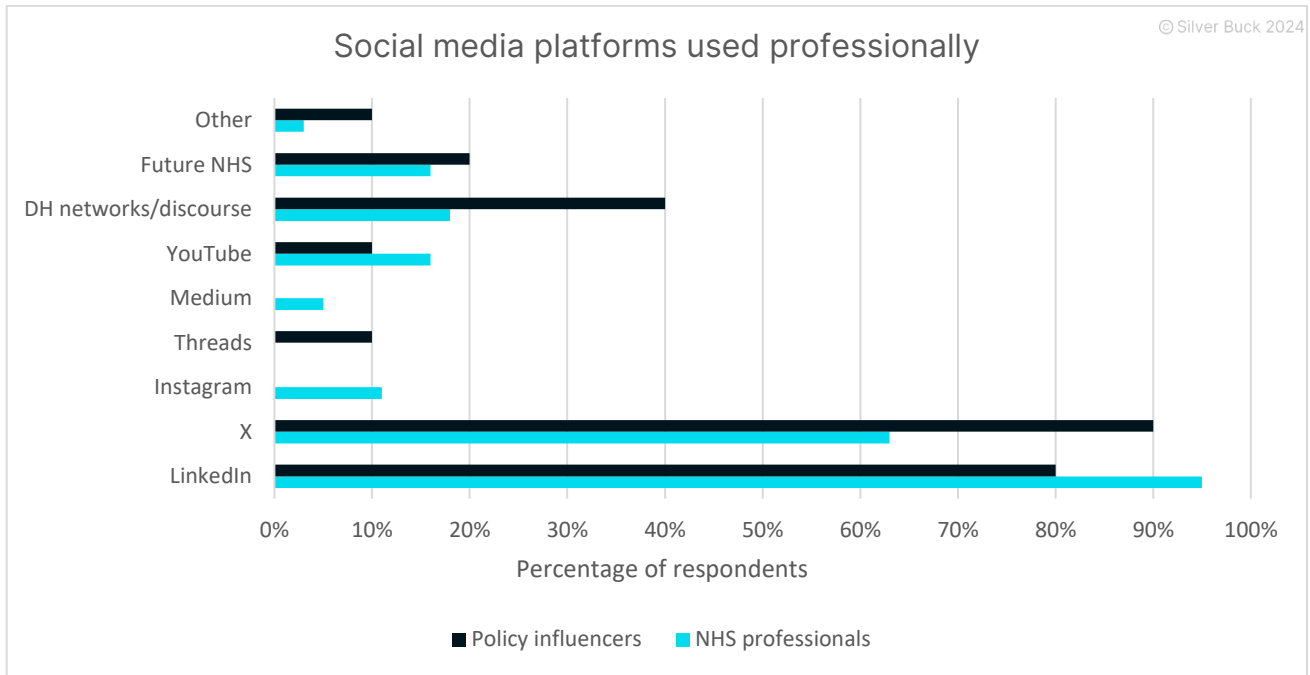
Most read trade publication



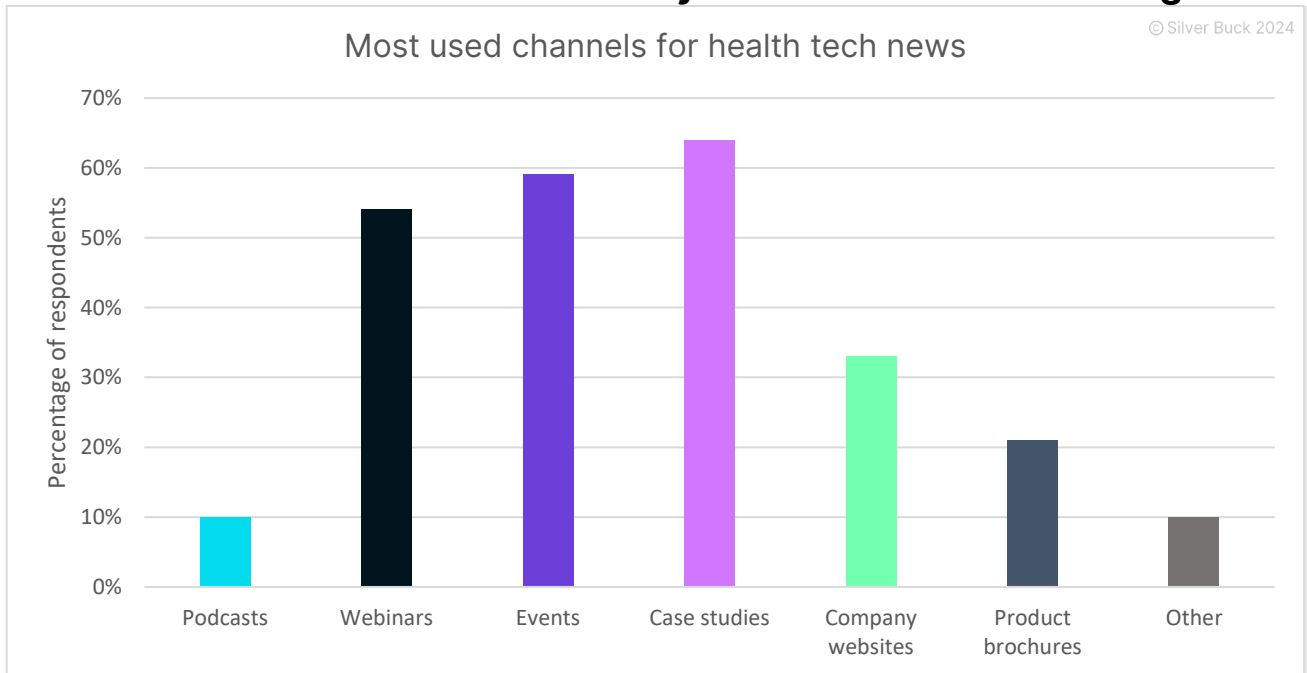
LinkedIn dominates in health tech networking, while newer platforms struggle to gain credibility

In terms of social media, LinkedIn dominates as the preferred platform for professional purposes, used by 92% of respondents. This highlights LinkedIn's effectiveness in professional networking and information dissemination within the health tech community. Interestingly, the Digital Health Discourse Forum is preferred to the NHS owned Future Forum, indicating a preference for independent platforms over official ones. Despite controversies arising from its recent acquisition by Elon Musk, X/Twitter continues to be the second most popular social media platform among professionals, with 69% of overall respondents using it professionally. It is particularly favoured by policy influencers, with 90% of them indicating professional use of X.

Additionally, newer content platforms like Threads and Instagram are not widely used by policy influencers or NHS professionals, with only two respondents using Threads and eight using Instagram, suggesting these platforms have yet to establish themselves as credible or useful sources in the health tech sector.



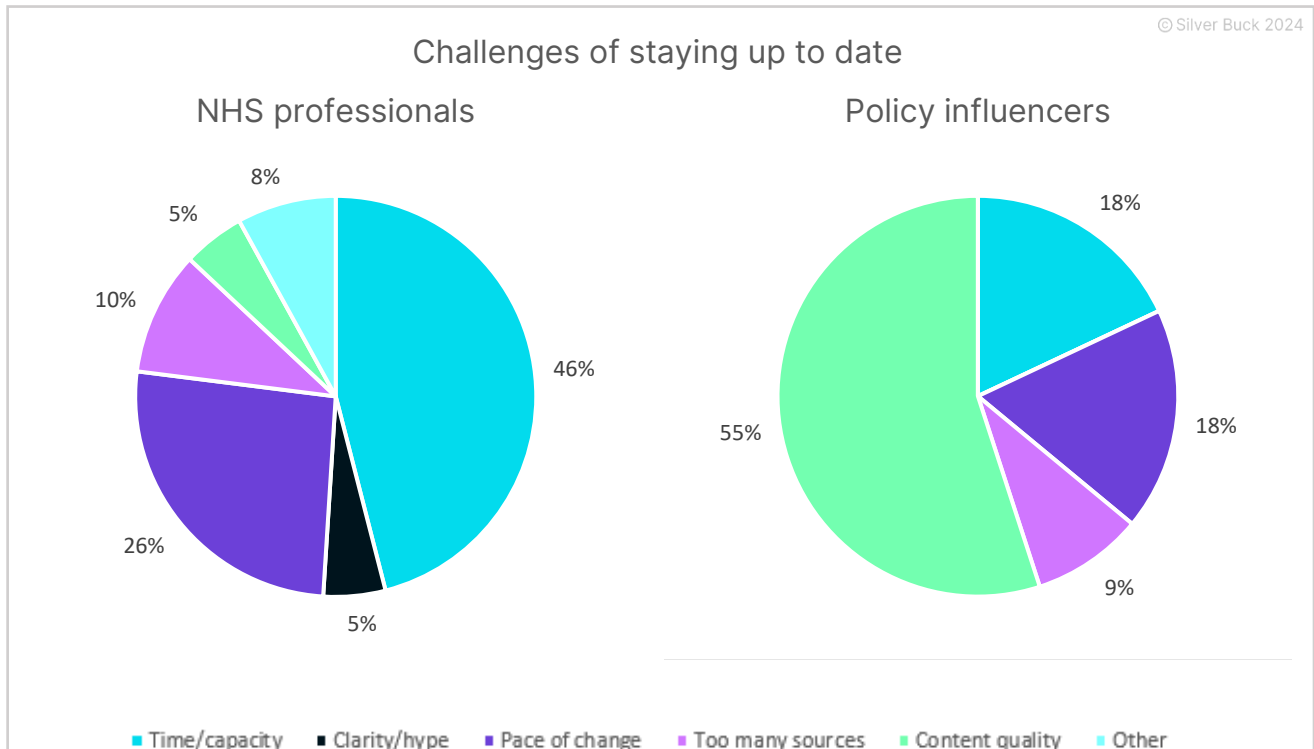
Case studies and evidence will be key for 2024 decision-making



For NHS professionals, case studies are the most valuable content source when considering procuring health tech products or services, followed by events and webinars. This preference for case studies aligns with the need for substantial evidence and recommendations, which are crucial factors in choosing health tech products or services. The low value placed on podcasts suggests that more traditional, evidence-based content formats are preferred for decision-making.

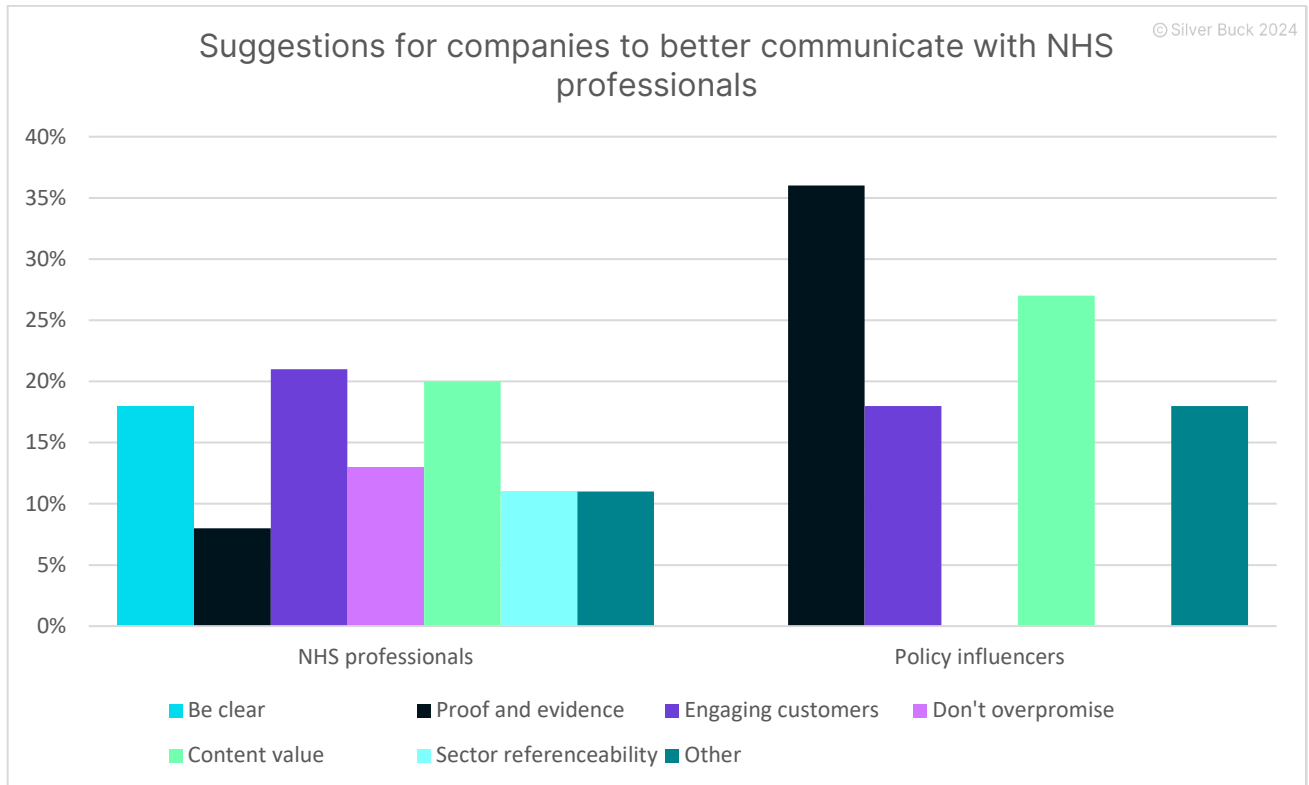
Lack of high-quality, credible content causes frustration

The survey also sheds light on the challenges faced by professionals in staying up to date with health tech developments. Time and capacity constraints are the biggest obstacles for NHS professionals, while policy makers struggle with discerning credible information and raised the lack of high-quality content available to them. This disparity in challenges indicates differing needs and priorities between these two groups.



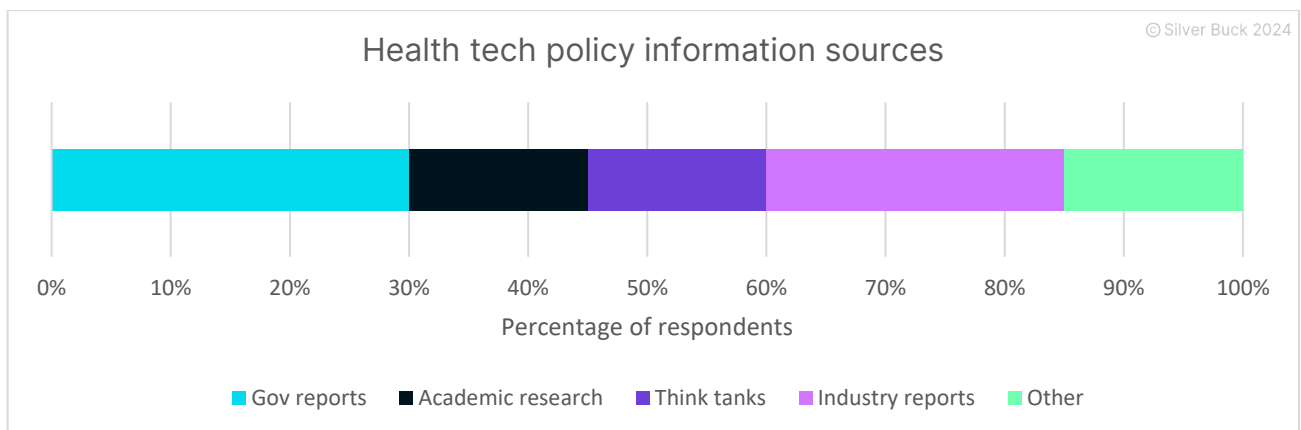
NHS professionals and policy makers seek more substantiated and impactful content from suppliers

Both NHS professionals and policy makers express a desire for more valuable content from suppliers. Policy makers, in particular, emphasise the need for stronger proof points, evidence, and benefits, reflecting a demand for more substantiated and impactful communication from suppliers.



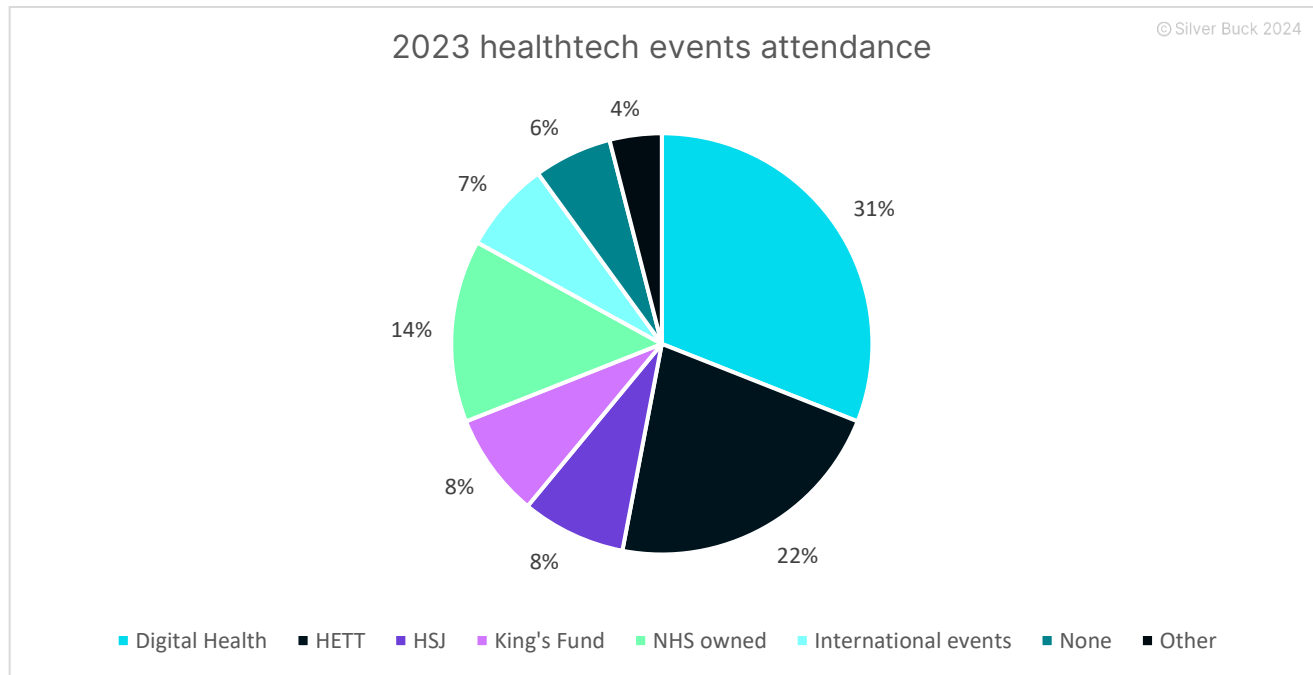
Policy influencers also rely on government and industry reports for authoritative health tech updates

For policy influencers, government reports and documents are the main sources of health tech information, followed by industry reports. This reliance on formal and authoritative sources indicates a preference for official and comprehensive information in shaping policy and influencing decisions.



Digital Health's events lead in popularity, with networking as key motive for attendance in healthcare and tech sector

Regarding healthcare and tech events, Digital Health's events are the most popular, with policy makers attending a wider variety of events, including HETT and NHS-owned events. The primary motivation for attending these events is networking and building industry contacts, highlighting the importance of personal connections and community engagement in the sector.



Conclusions

The survey outcomes portray a sector that remains grounded in tradition, where dependable content in trade publications is instrumental in maintaining professional knowledge. Furthermore, comprehensive, evidence-based content is beneficial in supporting decision-making. A focus on more established B2B social media platforms continues to grow as NHS professionals and influencers struggle to find time to engage with content that may be time-consuming.

Suppliers largely appear to be meeting their target audiences where they currently are – investing in events, content and social media, but there is still undoubtably frustration from NHS professionals in the quality of content that they can access or receive.

As capacity challenges in the workforce gets tougher, it will also be interesting to see whether attendance at events remains at its current levels or whether other forms of engagement will grow further.

The overall takeaway is that health tech remains a complex and nuanced industry, and this necessitates an informed, tailored approach to communication strategies - while emphasising the importance of understanding the specific needs and preferences of each stakeholder within the sector.

