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Forbes

The World's Best Corporate Websites 2019: What Makes Them Effective (forbes.com)



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In today's digitally driven world, a company's website is often the first place that consumers, investors and job seekers go to learn more about an organization. The site should convey the company's values and explain what it does. Design, functionality and navigation all play a major role in how a company is portrayed. A poorly designed or badly functioning site can cast a company in a very negative light. The site has to tell a persuasive, engaging story about who the company is. And of course, some companies do this far more effectively than others.

Bowen Craggs & Co., a London-based corporate communications research and consultancy, has, since 2007, ranked the effectiveness of the websites of the world's largest corporations. This week it published its [annual list](#) of the best corporate websites—a top 30 narrowed down from a universe of 200 sites.

The ranking is compiled by starting with a list of the world's 200 largest companies, based on market capitalization; Bowen Craggs then rates each company's website in a variety of

categories. The companies are graded in eight areas: construction, message, contact, usefulness to society, investors, media, job seekers and customers. (For more information on the methodology, click [here](#).)

Topping this year's list is Switzerland-based food and beverage company Nestlé, which was in a three-way tie for second place in last year's ranking. Bowen Craggs cofounder David Bowen says Nestlé has faced a great deal of criticism over the years but manages it well. He notes that one of the company's strengths is its "Ask Nestlé" page, where the public can find answers to questions about Nestlé's brands, policies and products. "That's a rather remarkable section that they've had for a few years, but they keep on polishing it," says Bowen. "They take those questions on quite straight, they don't try and avoid them."

Several companies tied for the index's top 10 spots. British oil and gas giant BP and GSK, a British pharmaceutical company, tied for second place. (Bowen Craggs doesn't include a third-place ranking, since two companies tied for second place.) Bayer, the German pharmaceutical and life sciences company, captured fourth place, while fifth place was another tie, with the spot shared by Italian oil and gas company Eni and British-Dutch consumer goods company Unilever. (Again, Bowen Craggs doesn't list a sixth-place spot because of the fifth-place tie.) Seventh place, another tie, goes to Swiss healthcare company Roche and British-Dutch oil and gas company Shell (which means that there is no eighth position on the list). Tied for ninth place is BASF, the German chemical company, and ING, a Dutch banking and financial services corporation.

Five of the best-known companies on the lists—Nestlé, BP, Bayer, BASF and HSBC—relaunched their websites in the past year and managed to increase their scores at the same time, which is "unprecedented," according to Bowen. In the past, when a company relaunched its website, its score would go down because there tended to be bugs and other issues. "These companies have become so professional that they make sure that things don't go wrong when they relaunch, and they're able to constantly polish," Bowen says.

User experience is impacted by the type of device used to access a site. According to Bowen Craggs, 58% of traffic to corporate websites comes through desktops or laptops. Mobile accounts for 36%, while tablets make up 6%. Bowen says that a majority of people prefer using bigger screens to look at corporate websites because they are so complex.

What is it that makes for an effective corporate website? According to Nestlé's Ferhat Soygenis, head of content and digital for corporate communications, a good site results from the collaboration and teamwork of various departments within an organization. "Everyone has to be aligned behind the same vision for the website and work towards it as one team," he says. Different corporations have differing goals for their websites. Nestlé's aim "is to help build trust in the company and positively impact its reputation," Soygenis says, adding that contemporary consumers want greater transparency. "Our website is a way to respond to this by offering a window into Nestlé."

Of the top 30 companies on the list, four are based in the U.S. while the rest are European. Most U.S. companies are more decentralized and therefore less consistent in their web presence. The highest ranking American company in the top 30 is telecommunications giant Verizon, which sits at No. 13 on the list in a tie with German software corporation SAP; Verizon was ranked No. 21 in a four-way tie on last year's list. Bowen notes that Verizon is catching up to European-based companies—its corporate pages, including its careers and investors page, are closely coordinated, work well together and are polished, says Bowen.

Lynne Freeman, a back-end website content strategist at Verizon, is responsible for the company website's About section. "We're not a strictly consumer audience and when a consumer comes to our website, it's usually not with intent to buy," she explains. "It's an intent of, 'Do I want to do business with this company? Do I agree with their values?'"

Veteran creative director and website designer Melanie McLaughlin observes that the key to an effective website is storytelling and user experience. A poorly designed website will create an experience in which the user gets bogged down by a too-small font or too many dropdown menus. A site's design has a great impact on its audience. It's crucial because "it's branding, messaging and the voice of a company." All rolled into one.

To read the full list of Bowen Craggs' best corporate websites, see the full report [here](#).

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