Bowen Craggs & Co

INDEX OF ONLINE EXCELLENCE

The 10 best corporate online communicators in the world

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Bowen Craggs & Co

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Overview of the top 10

About the Index

The Bowen Craggs Index of Online Excellence is a unique guide to the best in internet corporate communications.

Our ranking is the result of a thorough sifting of the 200 biggest companies by market cap to find the 30 best. Here we present the top 10.

For information on the full Index, please visit: www.bowencraggs.com

See Appendix: Methodology to find out why this is the gold standard for measuring online digital communications.

What the best performers show is how to spend both money and time well

The Index highlights the best communicators across the entire online 'estate' – main website, country sites, social media channels, apps, etc. It's not really about communications, however; it's about marketing – but marketing the entire enterprise, not just the things or services it sells. If you want people to work for you, to invest in you, to write nice things about you – and also to buy your stuff because they think well of you – group level marketing matters.

Scorecard: The top 10

An elite – at the top of our Index – are those that have considered what they need from online communications and done it well.

Rank	Score	Company	Construction	Message	Contact	Serving society	Serving investors	Serving media	Serving jobseekers	Serving customers
1	216	Nestle	45	39	11	27	26	26	21	21
2	211	Bayer	49	39	9	26	24	25	20	19
3	209	Eni	46	37	10	28	26	21	21	20
4	208	BP	47	37	7	26	27	20	21	23
5	207	GSK	46	38	10	26	22	20	23	22
5	207	Novo Nordisk	48	37	10	23	18	23	25	23
5	207	Roche	41	41	9	26	21	21	25	23
5	207	Shell	41	36	7	24	28	21	24	26
9	206	BASF	41	37	8	23	24	22	26	25
9	206	Maersk	39	43	9	23	23	20	26	23

Source: Bowen Craggs & Co, 2016

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The Index – many rankings in one

Construction:
Evaluation includes: overall usability, navigation between country and brand sites, the internal search engine and social media visibility.

Message:
Evaluation includes: strength of the global home page, visual impact, how well the estate conveys internationalism and company information across the estate (how the organization explains itself to the world).

Contact:
Evaluation includes: how well contact information is signposted, how appropriate it is and the quality of FAQs.

Serving society:
Evaluation includes: clarity and quality of corporate governance information, how well CSR performance data is presented and how the company uses all of its online channels to enhance its reputation among stakeholders.

Serving investors:
Evaluation includes: service for analysts that know the company, analysts researching the company and private shareholders.

The Index – and the subscription database underlying it – is not one ranking but many. Organizations are benchmarked in eight categories, each of which has multiple sub-metrics.
(only the main metrics are shown here, please ask for a full breakdown of the methodology)

Score is in the 1st 25 percentile | Score is in the 2nd 25 percentile | Score is in the 3rd or 4th 25 percentile

Metric / Submetric [max score]	score										
Construction [60]	45	35	41	49	47	46	46	39	48	41	41
Message [48]	39	36	37	39	37	37	38	43	37	41	36
Contact [12]	11	8	8	9	7	10	10	9	10	9	7
Serving society [32]	27	23	23	26	26	28	26	23	23	26	24
Serving investors [32]	26	26	24	24	27	26	22	23	18	21	28
Serving media [32]	26	17	22	25	20	21	20	20	23	21	21
Serving jobseekers [32]	21	25	26	20	21	21	23	26	25	25	24
Serving customers [32]	21	22	25	19	23	20	22	23	23	23	26

Serving media:
Evaluation includes: usefulness of the press release service, quality of journalist contact information and alerts, richness of background information and quality of the image library.

Serving customers:
Evaluation includes: a number of test customer journeys – are there clear routes to product and service information? Is decision-making material comprehensive and well presented? Can customers buy online where appropriate, and if not is there detailed onward contact information?

Serving jobseekers:
Evaluation includes: quality and comprehensiveness of the online job search, how well the company sells itself to jobseekers, how well it uses LinkedIn, and to what extent it employs innovation such as interactivity and multimedia.

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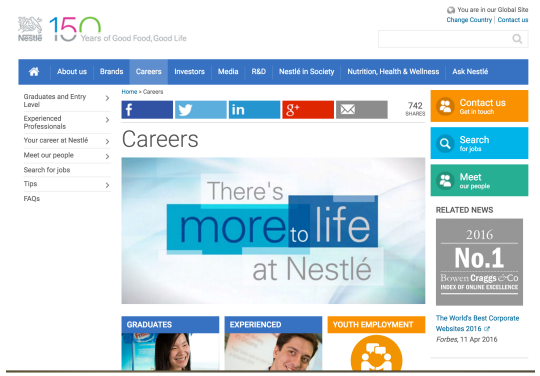
1st – Nestlé

'Once known for being rather secretive, the company has in recent years used its online estate to embrace openness to dialogue and transparency about its positions.'

Overall score: 216 *[280 maximum]*

With its strong focus on dialogue and openness, Nestlé's is currently the best corporate online presence in the world.



Nestlé has made a spate of visual enhancements to its global and country sites in recent months, helping to maintain and increase the sites' visual impact, despite the fact it has been some time since the last major redesign. The web estate does a good job of translating the Nestlé corporate brand online, through bright colours and (mostly) strong imagery.

The global site employs responsive design, though there is no tablet option, and yet maintains conventional left navigation throughout. This slightly knocks visual impact, in that it stops the company from adopting the sweeping full-bleed web design that Shell and others have adopted. But in our view the compromise is wholly justified, and a better option than compromising the user experience for the sake of good looks.

Ask Nestlé

Nestlé has many critics, due to past controversies and accusations. Once known for being rather secretive, the company has in recent years used its online estate to embrace openness to dialogue and transparency about its positions.
Ask Nestlé, the company's extensive FAQs feature, has been elevated to a primary section, where it can serve as a magnet for visitors with questions or concerns about the company. It is regularly updated with thorough and conversational statements about current criticisms and crises. Few companies go this far in airing critical topics at such a high level of the web presence.

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2nd – Bayer

'An excellent internal search engine helps hold the estate together, while a new set of global links on all business sites helps counter the fragmented feel.'

Overall score: 211 *[280 maximum]*

A complex web estate that is remarkably well managed and transmits a real sense of excitement about the group.

Bayer has been reorganized, and its online estate has been revamped to reflect that. It has a huge federation of sites – most belonging to its four main businesses. They include corporate, country and brand sites, as well as some excellent magazine-style microsites. This fragmentation reflects the decentralised nature of the company, but causes huge challenges that are in general remarkably well met.

Countering fragmentation

A sophisticated tool on every Bayer.com page helps people find their way around the estate. An excellent internal search engine also helps to hold the estate together, while a new set of global links on all business sites helps to counter the fragmented feel. Inevitably though, its sheer size and complexity means that it does not work as smoothly as a controlled centralized system.

Bayer.com employs responsive design. The site retains good-quality navigation at desktop level, and does not follow the responsive trend to uniform 'blockiness' (though the new Pharma site is an exception). The social media estate is extensive but poorly connected, and management of the different channels varies greatly. The location of a wide-ranging social media directory in the Media section is hard to understand.

There are also many videos, some high-quality, held partly on the site but mainly on YouTube. The fragmentation of YouTube channels and poor signposting from the site means they are much less effective than they could be.

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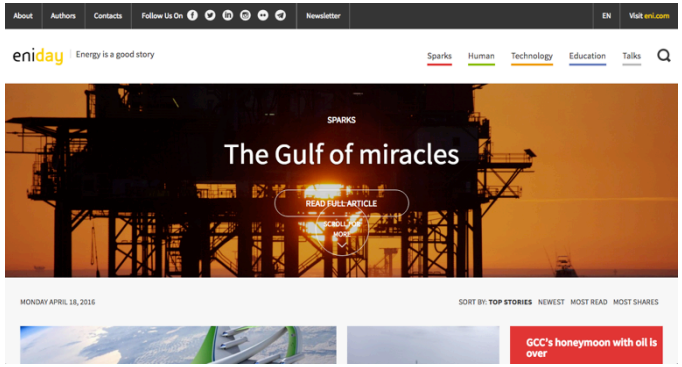
3rd – Eni

'A key strength is Eni's approach to Contacts, which incorporates a large number of corporate contact options and customer options.'

Overall score: 209 *[280 maximum]*

A number of online innovations across the online estate, including a bold step into modern storytelling with its new 'Eniday' blog site.



The new 'Eniday' blog site features engaging content from independent journalists. It is an exceptionally well put together blog and a good example of 'storytelling' as a corporate communications device. Though it would perhaps be more impactful if more of the featured stories dealt with Eni's own initiatives and innovations, rather than those of inspiring third parties.

Like most of the company's online innovations in recent years (Eni's History, Eni in the World and you@eni on the jobseekers estate, for example), Eniday sits apart from the main Eni site and employs responsive design.

A distinctive and appropriate desktop site

Navigation on the desktop site remains highly conventional at upper levels, although the number of pages that have no visible home in the navigation structure appears to be increasing, which is bad for orientation.

Visually, some of the special features mentioned above have a more up-to-date look than the Eni desktop site, though the desktop site remains distinctive and broadly appropriate for an Italian (and therefore design-conscious) oil company, at least at upper levels.

A key strength is Eni's approach to contacts. Not only is the main Contacts feature impressively broad and deep, incorporating a large number of corporate contact options as well as customer options, but also the company provides many named contacts in areas such as Sustainability and Jobs & Careers, where most companies do not.

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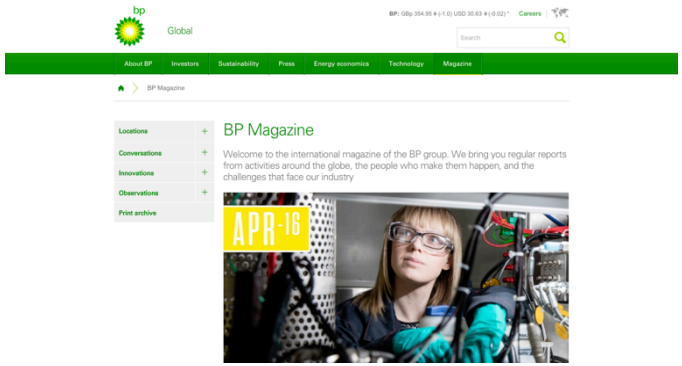
4th – BP

'The most radical move has been the opposite of a move – keeping left menus when the fashion is strongly against them.'

Overall score: 208 *[280 maximum]*

A carefully relaunched corporate site resists temptations to follow fashion, with strong magazine content complemented by well-managed social media channels.



The BP web estate has been substantially overhauled. Most changes are incremental, and the majority are for the better. The most radical move has been the opposite of a move – keeping left menus when the fashion is strongly against them. This gives BP's sites much better usability than most other corporate sites, with no real loss in visual appeal. Small but important improvements include the reinstatement of left menus on section landing pages.

The main navigational weakness remains the lack of visibility for related links, though they are less critical than they were in the previous site.

A tilt towards magazine-style content

Another shift that could cause problems is some increase in fragmentation – the careers section is now a separate site, while a new 'tools' site includes functionality that belongs within bp.com. As well as causing some usability problems, it could be a sign of weaker central governance that will inevitably lead to a loss of coherence.

The overall feel of BP.com has been tilted away from customers – 'Products & services' has been demoted to become a secondary section – and a higher profile has been given to engaging magazine-style material. The Magazine and Technology sections are now main links, as is the data-packed Energy Economics.

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Joint 5th – GSK

'On social media, we found the company to be using its channels with gusto, especially Twitter.'

Overall score: 207 *[280 maximum]*

The online estate is helping to reintroduce GSK as a healthcare company by taking visitors 'Behind the science'.

Since the relaunch of the global website around a year earlier as a highly contemporary responsive site, the group has made many confident moves, large and small, to further enhance the global online presence. It has also made good progress in rolling out the new look across many of its country sites – resulting in an increasingly cohesive online estate with a useful hub navigation menu connecting these sites together intelligently.

A sharpened sense of purpose

On social media, we found the company to be using its channels with gusto, especially Twitter. In this sense, GSK does a very good job of leveraging social media to engagingly promote responsibility stories and innovative web content, such as new employee and graduate video blogs.

A new magazine-style section on the global site, 'Behind the science', represents a successful reshaping of the company's 'story' content, and a strong foundation to continue building an editorial rather than purely informational relationship with stakeholders.

GSK's sharpened-up sense of purpose as a global healthcare company that wants to help people 'do more, feel better, live longer' comes across with increasing clarity on the global site, especially in a selection of new videos in About us, Responsibility and Careers.

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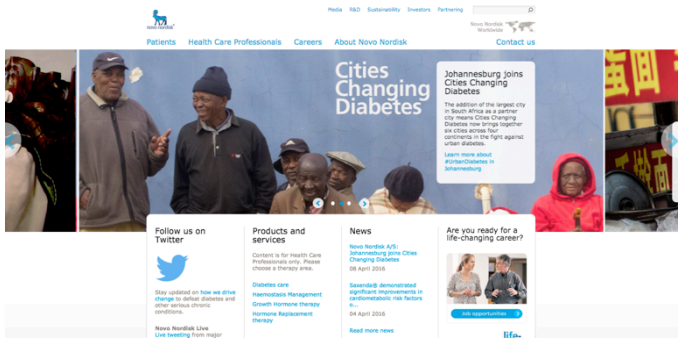
Joint 5th – Novo Nordisk

'The level of integration of more than 50 country sites, which was already high in past reviews, has been improved with the migration of most country sites to the new responsive templates.'

Overall score: 207 *[280 maximum]*

The new responsive templates and incremental improvements to content provision enhance an especially well-governed global online presence.



Novonordisk.com has relaunched, employing responsive templates, since our last review. This has improved the site experience on a smartphone, while managing to avoid two of the biggest pitfalls in many responsive redesigns: degrading the desktop navigation and losing valuable content.

Indeed, desktop navigation has actually improved. Left menus have been retained and streamlined, and overly complex menu options in the mega dropdown panels have also been streamlined, reducing clutter. That said, inconsistencies, which we have pointed out in previous reviews, still remain; with navigation lost completely in some places, such as the otherwise exceptional global office locator.

Strong governance

The new global site shows signs of strong governance. The level of integration of more than 50 country sites, which was already high in past reviews, has been improved with the migration of most country sites to the new responsive templates. Routes in both directions are clear and consistent, as are routes to and from social media channels. Local languages are used appropriately and content is being shared and adapted appropriately across the estate. Bringing country sites into line with the new design has given the entire estate a consistently polished look and feel.

There have been other incremental enhancements to service provision. An example: the internal search tool, which is now powered by Google, is much improved compared to our last two reviews.

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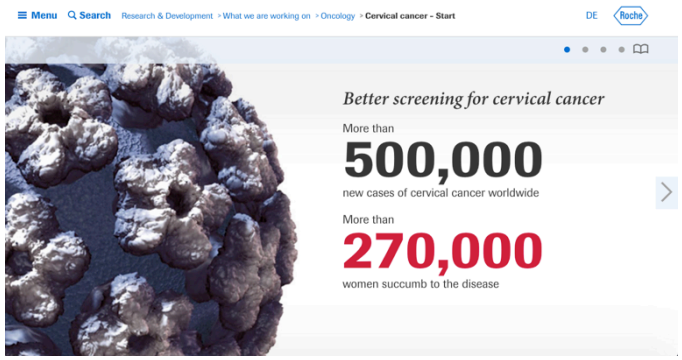
Joint 5th – Roche

'For investors, the Roche equity story demonstrates impressive editorial planning, with a look and feel based on the innovative About Roche section.'

Overall score: 207 *[280 maximum]*

New features are innovative, visually striking and mobile friendly, but come at some cost to desktop usability.



Although the design and content on Roche.com are fundamentally the same as when we reviewed the site in 2014, the company has added a few new features that are particularly effective for investors, CSR professionals and jobseekers. However, as is so often the case with modern site design, innovation has come at a cost to usability, and has had a largely neutral impact in terms of overall performance of the online estate.

Visual divide

Among the changes:

- Replacing a primary navigation bar with a 'hamburger' style menu on the desktop home page has reduced clutter but has introduced one more click for new users to find where they want to go.
- For investors, the 'Roche equity story' demonstrates impressive editorial planning, with a look and feel based on the innovative About Roche section.
- An improved, well-signposted central resource for key performance indicators, along with deeper data in issue-specific PDFs, makes Roche's CSR data provision a formidable resource.

New features are particularly visually innovative, such as a sub-section on cervical cancer screening (Research & Development > What we are working on > Oncology > Cervical cancer – Start). But many prominent images on the main site and country sites have not been updated for several years, creating a 'visual divide' between the best and worst of the estate.

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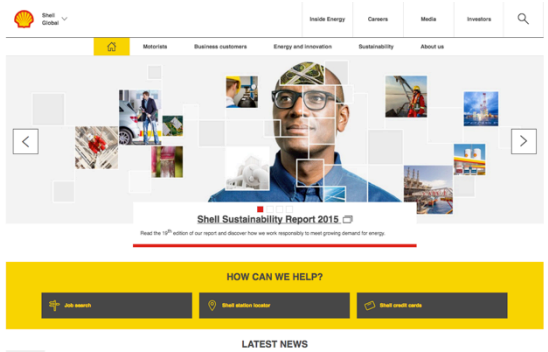
Joint 5th – Shell

'The quality of writing and editing is generally high, and in some places content is exceptionally rich.'

Overall score: 207 *[280 maximum]*

An editorially rich and visually sumptuous web estate that has been relaunched with minimalist navigation that undermines usability.



A new design, currently on Shell.com and a small number of country sites, follows the current minimalist trend in navigation, with no left menus and a heavy reliance on in-text links. Deep-level navigation is particularly difficult and related links are poorly handled. There is an over-mechanical approach to content management, which in some places – notably the home page – undermines what could be a highly engaging site.

One area of improvement is mobile usability. It is also easy to see where one is, thanks to consistent breadcrumb trails, and preparation for accessibility is very good. Navigation around the estate is easy, though only a handful of sites are on the new template.

Carefully managed images

Images are exceptionally carefully managed, with the brand red and yellow used even in unlikely compositions – the emphasis on high-quality photography is refreshing. The one exception is the home page, where image quality varies too much. The web estate is being migrated slowly to the new template. Although there is impressive sharing of content and functionality, this cost-effectiveness can lead to a lack of localisation. For example, the Nigeria careers pages are clearly not based on local needs.

The quality of writing and editing is generally high, and in some places content is exceptionally rich. Examples are in the Major Projects section in About us, and Inside Energy, which mirrors a slick tablet app.

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Joint 9th – BASF

'Seeing vacancies around the world has become much easier with a revamped 'Jobs' page and a neat global map feature that allows users to filter jobs by zooming in on the map.'

Overall score: 206 *[280 maximum]*

The relaunched, responsive templates are modern and user-friendly; and all online channels are used effectively to 'sell' BASF to new visitors.

Welcome to BASF

A new responsive redesign is visually impressive and gives the BASF global site a modern look and feel. Generally speaking, BASF has avoided two big pitfalls in 'going responsive' – making a mess of desktop usability and cutting valuable content for the sake of a minimalist template.

In fact, the modern, responsive design afforded the chance for some sections to really shine on desktop and mobile. The Careers area, in particular, has new tools and innovative features. Seeing vacancies around the world has become much easier with a revamped 'Jobs' page and a neat global map feature that allows users to filter jobs by zooming in on the map. A number of innovative multimedia features are being used to attract jobseekers.

A novel and consistent approach to desktop navigation

The new global site has improved the mobile experience. The desktop navigation has dropped left menus and instead relies on a series of cascading horizontal menu bars. The system is consistent across the main site, and is logical once understood, but some aspects can take time to learn.

A system of 'infinite scrolling' plus tags and filters is a feature of ordering content on the site, rather than more traditional search functions. In some places this works very well, in Careers for example. In others, such as press releases and investor events, the results are mixed. In general, the concept is a good one, but is let down by execution.

© Bowen Craggs & Co 2016

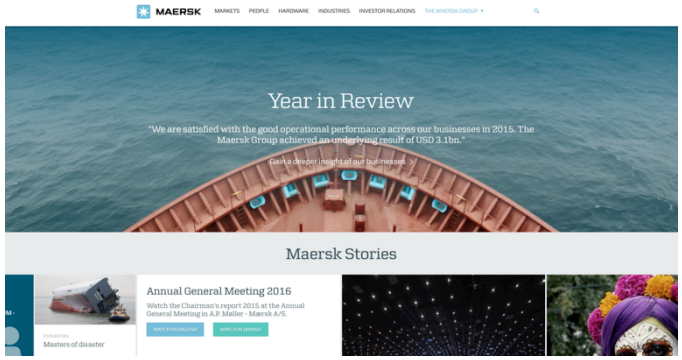
Joint 9th – Maersk

MAERSK

'On the group's home page, nearly up-to-the-minute social media content appears alongside evergreen story headlines.'

Overall score: 206 *[280 maximum]*

Storytelling content is the centrepiece of the online estate, and serves as an inspiring advertisement for Maersk as an employer.



Maersk Group's new website achieves a very high visual impact, through responsively designed pages that employ bold, distinctive imagery, polished graphics and embedded videos to get the company's messages across.

As the world's biggest shipping company, Maersk is constantly on the move. This comes across clearly and innovatively on the group's home page, where nearly up-to-the-minute social media content appears alongside evergreen story headlines and even a link to a map tracking the current location of Maersk vessels to give the visitor the impression of looking out across a global company's movements in real time.

Promoting magazine-style content

Most of the site's primary navigation is used for storytelling in broad topics (Markets, People, Hardware, Industries). It is an unusual approach which gives prominence to strong and well-packaged magazine style content, and lots of it. But ultimately we found these sections could work much harder to promote onward journeys to relevant corporate content, and vice versa.

We found many issues with the global site's approach to navigation. The combination of an unusual hybrid-style primary navigation system; awkward and inconsistent secondary navigation; and a lack of navigational context on deeper pages is likely to add up to frustration for many visitors to the desktop site. The desire to design for mobile consumption appears to be the main factor here.

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Appendix: Methodology

Ask us for a detailed breakdown of all our metrics and sub-metrics and overviews of what we are looking for in each case.

Get in touch – we are seeking nominations for best overall corporate communicators, and individual examples of best practice.

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The Bowen Craggs Index of Online Excellence ranks the 30 best online corporate communicators in the world. It measures the entire corporate online presence: websites, social media and other digital channels; and across all devices – computers, smartphones, tablets and others. To generate our top 30 ranking, we evaluated the online estates of the world's largest 200 companies, a far bigger pool than in past years.

Our methodology is based on the fact that large corporate web estates could hardly be more different than news, social media or government service sites. They are complex, deep, multi-functional and visited as rarely as people can get away with.

That is why the methodology behind the Bowen Craggs Index of Online Excellence is widely regarded in the corporate world as the gold standard for measuring online digital communications:

- The methodology was created in 1997 but is constantly evolving based on continuing feedback from large organizations and our own expertise. Our network of 500+ communications professionals from around the globe grows our knowledge; as does our constant audience research focused on the investment community, media professionals, policy makers, jobseekers and consumers.

- It is immune to fashion. Our reviewers look for the hard business case behind the latest trends – social media, responsive sites, etc – and ask whether they are appropriate for large organizations.

- It is rigorous but not automated or a 'check box' exercise. Every metric is judged by its relevance to the client, rather than 'is it there or is it not?' We are as much experts on how large organizations are run and managed as we are on the internet.

There is a strong emphasis on identifying clues to good web governance, the organizational glue that holds a corporate online presence together.

Bowen Craggs has a record of getting things right – we were the first to point out the flaws of responsive design; the first to advocate strong business reasons for launching social media channels; and began championing the power of editorially strong online material years before the phrases 'content strategy' and 'corporate storytelling' became ubiquitous.

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About Bowen Craggs

We review.

We measure.

We advise.

To make your website and social media channels better for your business and your customers.

Visit our website *www.bowencraggs.com* for practical advice and deep analysis for online communications professionals.

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What we do
We are experts in global online corporate communications. We help you improve the effectiveness of your websites, mobile and social channels.

You can rely on the independence of our advice because we do not build websites. What we do is help you to improve your effectiveness with clear strategy, expert benchmarking, market research, analytics, best practice and content strategy.

Our research – gathered over 14 years and used by more than 50 of the Fortune Global 500 – can help you find and maintain the right course. Every year we publish the Bowen Craggs Index of Online Excellence, which is established as the most credible ranking of large corporate online estates, and provides a deep database of best practice.

Further resources
Bowen Craggs is unique: we specialise in group-level digital communications. Here are three ways you can benefit from our knowledge and expertise:

Access research that will improve your online strategy
The world's deepest analysis of corporate online estates. Constant audience research across all stakeholder groups. A trusted and growing global knowledge-sharing network. These are the cornerstones of our research reports and bespoke consultancy.

Explore the word's most powerful resource for global web managers
Receive an **exclusive pass** to the Online Effectiveness Database – the engine for the Bowen Craggs Index. Email ddrury@bowencraggs.com for your demo login to this searchable wealth of information.

Read our weekly insight and analysis
For regular commentaries on all aspects of online corporate communications, subscribe to our **newsletter** at www.bowencraggs.com/subscribe/ and **blog** at blog.bowencraggs.com.

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