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The BOWEN CRAGGS *Index report 2021*

Corporate digital communication gets bolder
and sharper under fire

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Credits

Editor: **Jason Sumner** | jsumner@bowencraggs.com

Design and production: **Karen Le Marquand** | klemarquand@bowencraggs.com

Editorial contributor: **Georgia Barrett** | gbarrett@bowencraggs.com

Ranking, benchmarking and analysis: **Bowen Craggs team**

Overview: Corporations under fire left, right and centre

By Jason Sumner, Bowen Craggs & Co

Read the news, watch a film, read a book, listen to a podcast, and it would seem that corporations have never been more unpopular. Their attempts to wade into the big issues of our time such as climate change and race relations are mocked from all sides of the political spectrum.

Greta Thunberg dismisses “net zero” as nothing more than “empty words and promises” and “blah blah blah”. Douglas Murray, a commentator on Fox News in the US, warns darkly that “woke corporations... do this to cover over things that are much more concerning.” One US-based political expert observed in September: “I don’t know what happened to America where ‘corporation’ is now the meanest thing you can say... People just hate the word corporation.”

In the course of compiling this annual Index report highlighting the very best in corporate

“I don’t know what happened to America where ‘corporation’ is now the meanest thing you can say...”

digital communications, we have observed that far from withdrawing from the experience of being regularly and rigorously criticized, the very best online communicators are getting bolder and sharper in their response.

Look at Verizon, the US telecommunications and technology company, which rose three places in the Index this year to joint fourth. In August, a US journalist alleged that the company supports ‘defunding’ the police, to which Verizon released the statement: “This is completely false and absolutely absurd” – a rare level of directness, but more importantly, effective. (The publication changed the article in response to Verizon’s statement.)

Nestlé, which is tied for first place in the table, has made its ‘net zero’ communications transparent, evidence-based and substantive – an approach that has won support from campaigners and investors, and which is clear and well presented on its corporate website and social media channels.

Index 2021: Who went up, who went down and who are the rising stars?

There is a tie at the top of the Index this year between BP and Nestlé, and these two companies have also established a clear 12-point gap with third-place GSK.

THE TOP TEN 2021

Position	Company	Total score
1	BP	226
1	Nestlé	226
3	GSK	214
4	HSBC	212
5	Unilever	210
5	Verizon	210
7	Bosch	208
7	ING	208
9	Bayer	207
9	Siemens	207

The joint leaders increased their scores from last year (BP by two points and Nestlé by three points), ending on 226 out of a maximum of 280 by continuing to polish and refine their already excellent web estates. (See page 11, ‘Lessons from the leaders’ for more detail on the Index performances of BP and Nestlé.)

Overview *continued*

Five more companies in the top 10 increased their positions and scores:

- **HSBC**
Up four points to fourth place with improvements in ESG reporting material and governance messaging.
- **Verizon**
Up three points to joint fifth place with improvements in company information, ESG data, press background materials and customer decision-making content.
- **Bosch**
Up five points to joint seventh place with improvements in navigation menus, user orientation and page layouts.
- **ING**
Up three points to joint seventh place with improvements in ESG reporting materials, job search, jobseeker information, the image library for journalists and search engine visibility.
- **Siemens**
Up four points to joint ninth place with improvements in innovation for jobseekers, the service for journalists and navigation.

Three of the companies in the top 10 saw their overall scores go down – GSK, Unilever and Bayer. These remain outstanding in the context of the Index pool of the largest 200 companies in the

“‘The best get better’ was a key trend in our 2020 index report, and this upward trend in performance has continued in 2021”

world by market capitalisation, but momentum has stalled, or perhaps developments are yet to go live.

There are four ‘rising stars’ – all new entries in the top 30:

- **Hydro**
Enters the top 30 at 20th place on 198 points by adding an impressive thought leadership section and other incremental improvements.
- **Aramco**
Appears at joint 23rd place on 196 points, with an excellent company history, strong company information and good use of social media to raise the visibility of material on the corporate website.
- **Aviva**
Arrives at joint 23rd place on 196 points by

making advances in usability and messaging, and improving the online experience for most audience groups.

- **Lilly**
Comes in at joint 23rd place on 196 points through the addition of excellent ESG data and exceptional handling of the relationship between global and local sites.

‘The best get better’ was a key trend in our 2020 Index report, and this upward trend in performance has continued in 2021.

Not only has the overall top score increased by two points, the threshold to be included in the top 30 corporate digital communicators in the world has also risen by three points, from 191 to 194.

The raising of the Index floor edged out the likes of Tetra Pak, Vinci and IBM, all of whom were in the top 30 for a period during the past 12 months.

See ‘Top 30’ on page 8 for the full ranking.

Over the past 12 months, Bowen Craggs’ team of consultants has identified numerous examples of innovation and best practice in the eight main metrics we cover in the Index: construction, message, contact, serving society, serving investors, serving journalists, serving jobseekers and employees, and serving customers.

Overview *continued*

Some of these are from companies outside the top 30 for overall score: see Tesla's visual and design innovation; Allianz's CFO interviews with Bloomberg and CNBC; and Procter and Gamble's excellent contacts page.

All of those examples and many more are available online for Bowen Craggs Club members, in addition to detailed reports on each company in the Index.

This report has a wider lens, and focuses on three key corporate digital communications trends in 2021. These can be summed up in three words: trust, substance and community.

Trend 1

Your stakeholders trust business more than you think. This is a reputation-building opportunity

This report started with bad news for corporations: they swim in the same sea of public mistrust along with other institutions, with criticism coming from all sides of the political spectrum. But the good news is that your stakeholders may trust companies more than you think, and this is a reputation-building opportunity.

According to the global 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer, major institutions including business

“Corporations swim in the same sea of public mistrust, with criticism coming from all sides of the political spectrum”

are operating in “an environment of information bankruptcy”. However, ‘business’ is the most trusted type of institution among the four it looked at. Business, with a 61% trust level, beat out government, the media and non-governmental organizations. Business, according to Edelman, is “the only institution seen as both ethical and competent”.

A US-based study for PwC showed that consumers and employees trust business more now than before the Covid-19 pandemic, and 86% of respondents said that they ‘expect’ CEOs to speak out about issues that matter, from the pandemic to societal issues, community issues and job automation. 68% per cent of respondents agreed that “CEOs should step in when government does not fix societal problems”. In other words, there is public support for what some would call ‘woke’ business.

Bowen Craggs visitor research, conducted with a number of large corporations over several years and amounting to over 750,000 responses, confirms that corporate website audiences support companies that contribute meaningfully to sustainability and employee wellbeing. “The vision of the company, and how they are driving purpose and profit,” said one respondent in June 2021, when asked what they ‘like’ about their visit. “I liked the attention towards sustainability and climate change is so integrated into the company,” said another.

The Index leaders are using corporate digital channels to speak directly to these audiences about issues that they care about, despite the critics, because they know that they are speaking to people who, in general, start with a favourable opinion of the company and are open to being persuaded by convincing corporate communications. They take

“Your stakeholders may trust companies more than you think, and this is a reputation-building opportunity”

Overview *continued*

advantage of this foundation of trust to improve perceptions even more.

There is a further opportunity inside the company for corporate digital communications teams to take this granular understanding of the audience – with data that is based on a model of ‘reinforce, convert and turnaround’ – and use it to build relationships with their colleagues in marketing.

There were signs in 2021 that enlightened marketing departments are open to this kind of relationship with corporate communications. Frank Cooper III, the global chief marketing officer of Blackrock, said in July: “(Marketing and communications) have to come together because people are saying: ‘I want a brand that actually has a great product and is culturally relevant. But I also want to look behind that brand and understand the company that’s associated with it.’”

“Companies are making inroads on trust, but corporate digital output still too often comes across as shallow or glib”

Trend 2

Using style to drive substance

Companies are making inroads on trust, especially at the top of the Index, but corporate digital output across the more than 200 companies we evaluate still too often comes across as shallow or glib. This has shown up in 2021 as poorly supported ‘net zero’ and diversity pledges, which are easily characterised as not doing enough (Greta Thunberg’s “blah blah blah”) or as empty ‘woke’ virtue-signalling.

A recent survey of executives in the US and Europe showed that most think their own companies’ ESG programs fall short and that they are launched “on the back of a spreadsheet and a prayer”.

The companies at the top of the Index have always used the very best techniques in corporate digital communications – the style – but they are increasingly putting these design and editorial skills to work to show that real, substantive action is being taken to address huge societal issues such as climate change and diversity and inclusion. See for example the two Index leaders – BP and Nestlé – and HSBC, Verizon, Lilly and ING, all of which gained points for bolstering ESG on their web estates.

“Companies are putting design and editorial skills to work to show that real, substantive action is being taken to address huge societal issues”

Not only does this build credibility (and better corporate digital communications), but it is a chance to go beyond just communications and focus the company’s attention on the issues that matter to stakeholders; and potentially convince the company’s senior leadership to go even further.

US-based retailer Target’s diversity and inclusion section is, as we say in our Index report, “among the richest and most evidence-based on the web”. As we note further, it is a best practice example of communicating diversity, but it is also a best practice example of implementing diversity initiatives with breadth, depth and rigour:

- Partnerships with many third parties, including the US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Overview *continued*

- Evidence of philanthropy: \$1m in foundation grants to Latino-owned small businesses
- Good stories in support of this: “This Hispanic Heritage Month, Hear from Inspiring Trailblazers in this Target-sponsored Podcast”
- Data is based on a rigorous Workforce Diversity Report, and communicated on the web

The best corporate digital communicators know that audiences want evidence-based communications on these important issues. Corporate communications teams need to work with others in the business, including the C-suite, to ensure that companies have the evidence to communicate in the first place.

Trend 3

Making emotional connections with your corporate ‘communities’

The concept of ‘community’ has long been associated with the internet and corporate digital communications, with cyclical attempts to frame the digital world as one or more collections of individuals with the same social, political or professional interests. In 2021, community has been *making a comeback*, especially in *marketing circles*, driven by many factors but in part by the total reliance on digital connections during pandemic lockdowns, and the loss of trust in institutions, mentioned above.

This renewed interest is an opportunity for corporate digital communicators to look for their own ‘communities’ among audience groups; then use website and social media channels to build and reinforce emotional connections with them; and foster connections between members of the group.

Of all audiences for corporate digital communications, employees are the optimal fit with this idea of ‘community’, and a natural starting point. The *Harvard Business Review* recently implored companies to “mobilize your biggest fans” to attract jobseekers.

Many of the companies in the Index top 30 are already doing this, and finding that it builds morale internally, and is a good advertisement for jobseekers (outsiders seeking to join the employee community).

One of the best at this is AstraZeneca. As we note in our report:

- Real employees feature prominently throughout the *Careers* site
- ‘Selfie-style’ employee videos on job description pages are useful and engaging
- The company *LinkedIn* presence is rich and actively managed, with a large amount of up to date material in the Life tab, including ‘trending employee content’
- The company *Instagram* presence heavily features real employees

“Community has been making a comeback, driven in part by the total reliance on digital connections during the pandemic”

Others who excel at this are Target, with its communities based on shared race, gender and ethnicity (see page 6); and Verizon with its *Inside Verizon* channel for employees, but open to all.

Conclusion – Beyond ‘blah blah blah’

The companies at the top of the Index are effectively engaging with critics when it makes sense. They have a keen understanding of their own corporate digital audiences and use the foundation of trust that already exists with these groups to reinforce the company’s reputation through the website and social media channels. They are communicating real actions on issues such as climate change and diversity; and are fostering a sense of community among stakeholders. Those seeking to move their corporate digital communications beyond ‘blah blah blah’ should look to the Index leaders to chart the path ahead.

Top 30

Figures in [brackets] = maximum scores | ↑ Up from 2020 | ↓ Down from 2020 | * New entry to Index in 2021 | ♦ No score change from 2020

Position 2021		[280] Total score 2021		Company	Total score 2020	Position 2020	[60] Construction	[48] Message	[12] Contact	[32] Serving society	[32] Serving investors	[32] Serving the media	[32] Serving jobseekers and employees	[32] Serving customers	[280] Total score
= 1	♦	226	↑	BP	224	1	47	40	9	27	26	23	28	26	226
www.bp.com • Maintained its position at the forefront of corporate digital communications through continued improvements in 2021 to bp.com and the wider estate															
= 1	↑	226	↑	Nestlé	223	2	45	43	11	29	26	26	23	23	226
www.nestle.com • Closed the gap to the top with subtle but thorough improvements to the design of its global and country websites, and an improved service for jobseekers															
3	♦	214	↓	GSK	219	3	49	36	10	24	24	22	26	23	214
www.gsk.com • The web estate achieves high scores across our benchmarking metrics, and worth watching for new ideas and forward thinking															
4	↑	212	↑	HSBC	208	6	42	40	10	26	29	21	22	22	212
www.hsbc.com • The visually and editorially stylish corporate web presence has improved in a number of areas since 2020, including the provision of ESG material															
= 5	↓	210	↓	Unilever	217	4	50	42	9	26	24	16	21	22	210
www.unilever.com • The digital estate has a wealth of best practice ideas, especially in how it embraces sustainability in a fresh way across all channels															
= 5	↑	210	↑	Verizon Communications	207	7	41	38	5	26	23	24	29	24	210
www.verizon.com/about • Employees feature prominently across the website and social media channels, so the company's personality comes across persuasively															
= 7	↑	208	↑	Bosch	199	16	39	40	9	26	24	23	22	25	208
www.bosch.com • Material on the online estate does a good job of informing and engaging, and, rarely seen on a corporate presence, is actually entertaining															
= 7	↑	208	↑	ING	205	8	46	33	10	25	24	23	24	23	208
www.ing.com • A useful and informative corporate digital estate that achieves a remarkable level of consistency for all key audiences															
= 9	↓	207	↓	Bayer	217	4	47	37	10	25	20	25	23	20	207
www.bayer.com • Bayer.com remains a high quality estate. There has been a reduction in content, which may have saved resources, but comes at a cost to effectiveness															
= 9	↑	207	↑	Siemens	203	12	44	37	7	23	21	24	28	23	207
www.siemens.com • Siemens has a sleek, cohesive design and continued dedication to magazine-inspired corporate digital communications, with much innovation and best practice															

Top 30 *continued*

Position 2021		[280] Total score 2021		Company	Total score 2020	Position 2020	[60] Construction	[48] Message	[12] Contact	[32] Serving society	[32] Serving investors	[32] Serving the media	[32] Serving jobseekers	[32] Serving customers	[280] Total score
11	◆	206	↑	Shell <i>www.shell.com • The corporate web presence is excellent in a few important areas, but there is a lack of attention to organization and signposting</i>	204	11	41	36	8	25	29	18	25	24	206
12	↓	205	◆	BASF <i>www.basf.com • An editorially rich, visually contemporary and often innovative online presence, which reaches best practice standards in many areas</i>	205	8	40	37	7	24	26	25	25	21	205
= 13	↓	203	↓	Roche <i>www.roche.com • A consistently strong web presence that has maintained its effectiveness in most areas, but special features come at a cost to visitor orientation</i>	205	8	39	40	7	25	23	20	27	22	203
= 13	↑	203	↑	Target <i>corporate.target.com • A corporate digital presence that effectively communicates the company's brand, values and actions to be a force for good in the world</i>	196	19	43	37	10	25	19	21	25	23	203
15	↓	202	↑	Zurich <i>www.zurich.com • The digital estate has been given a new and distinctive look and feel designed to signal a new direction for the company</i>	201	14	43	37	9	24	26	18	22	23	202
16	↑	201	↑	NXP <i>www.nxp.com • The online estate now provides an increasingly strong service to non-customer audience groups, thanks to a range of improvements during 2021</i>	191	30	47	36	9	25	18	20	19	27	201
= 17	↓	199	↓	Eni <i>www.eni.com • Exceptionally confident use of graphic design and in a visual sense easily one of the best web presences in the world</i>	201	14	36	39	10	26	23	22	22	21	199
= 17	↑	199	↑	Rio Tinto <i>www.riotinto.com • A good looking web presence, exploiting the natural drama of many of its operations, with high quality content</i>	195	22	44	38	8	25	23	19	20	22	199
= 17	↓	199	↓	SAP <i>www.sap.com • SAP's global online presence remains polished and serves local audiences well, with customers as the clear priority</i>	203	12	38	36	9	25	21	22	23	25	199
= 20	↓	198	↑	Henkel <i>www.henkel.com • A digital provision that continues to improve, with refinements in careers, the design approach, and new material about the company culture</i>	196	19	38	36	8	25	22	24	23	22	198
= 20	✱	198	✱	Norsk Hydro <i>www.hydro.com • The new Insights section draws together several sources of thought leadership, and the company does a good job of promoting sustainability</i>	n/a	n/a	45	36	7	24	24	20	18	24	198

Top 30 continued

Position 2021		[280] Total score 2021		Company	Total score 2020	Position 2020	[60] Construction	[48] Message	[12] Contact	[32] Serving society	[32] Serving investors	[32] Serving the media	[32] Serving jobseekers	[32] Serving customers	[280] Total score
22	◆	197	↑	Daimler <i>www.daimler.com • There have been few changes since 2020, but Daimler's online communications remain slick and full of useful information</i>	195	22	40	36	6	26	21	24	25	19	197
= 23	✱	196	✱	Aramco <i>www.aramco.com • Key strengths of this fast-improving web estate include strong company information, helpful navigation features and good use of social media</i>	n/a	n/a	46	39	9	22	23	19	19	19	196
= 23	↓	196	↓	Astra Zeneca <i>www.astrazeneca.com • Effectively communicates the company's science-led approach, including work on Covid-19 and the cutting-edge nature of its research</i>	198	17	38	36	7	25	24	19	26	21	196
= 23	✱	196	✱	Aviva <i>www.aviva.com • Far-reaching advances mean the web estate does most things well, excels in some areas and has few outright weaknesses</i>	n/a	n/a	40	32	9	24	24	21	23	23	196
= 23	✱	196	✱	Eli Lilly & Co <i>www.lilly.com • The Lilly web estate is an impressively coordinated global effort, with good looks and strong responsibility messaging</i>	n/a	n/a	37	36	9	27	25	16	23	23	196
= 27	↓	195	↓	British American Tobacco <i>www.bat.com • BAT uses its entire corporate digital estate to promote the message that it is sustainable, ethical and responsibly run</i>	196	19	42	32	8	26	25	18	22	22	195
= 27	↑	195	↑	Statkraft <i>www.statkraft.com • Statkraft has implemented a number of improvements, from better design and usability, to more cohesive messages and country site refinements</i>	191	30	44	37	8	22	20	21	22	21	195
= 27	↓	195	↓	TotalEnergies <i>www.totalenergies.com • A name change has been accompanied by a reskin of the global site, but the underlying strengths and weaknesses remain largely unchanged</i>	197	18	42	35	5	27	25	21	19	21	195
= 30	↓	194	↓	Coca-Cola <i>www.coca-colacompany.com • Strongly branded and well-designed corporate web presence with a firm focus on sustainability concerns and global community initiatives</i>	195	22	41	41	8	25	26	11	21	21	194
= 30	↓	194	↑	Vodafone <i>www.vodafone.com • Responsibility is a key theme that runs through an estate that continues to evolve and adjust</i>	193	25	38	35	6	24	26	20	23	22	194

Lessons from the leaders

By Georgia Barrett, Bowen Craggs & Co

For the second time in its history the Bowen Craggs Index has joint leaders. BP, which led the Index in 2020, is joined by Nestlé, whose score rose by three points this year to 226. The last time there were joint Index leaders was in 2013 when there was a three-way tie between Siemens, Eni and BP.

This year, there is also an ever-widening gap between the two leaders and their nearest competitor, GSK, on 214 points. BP and Nestlé are a clear 'top tier' of two. How did they do it?

Although very different, Nestlé and BP have a similar approach to maintaining online excellence – resisting the strategy of wiping the slate clean with a full relaunch. Instead, they have dedicated themselves to continued incremental improvements.

For BP, these are apparent in its more consistent and compelling narrative around its sustainability strategy. For Nestlé, this can be seen through the thorough, if subtle, changes to the design of its global and country websites.

Last year, we noted that, not coincidentally, none of the top five companies in the Index had undertaken a major relaunch, and it is clear from our current leaders that building on existing strengths continues to be key.

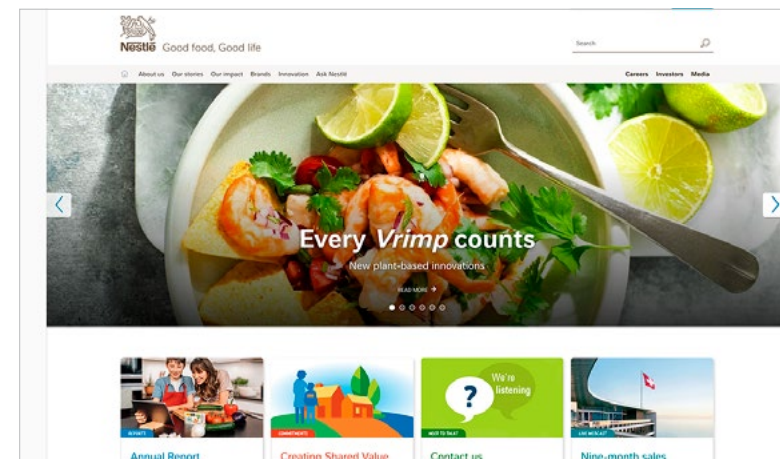
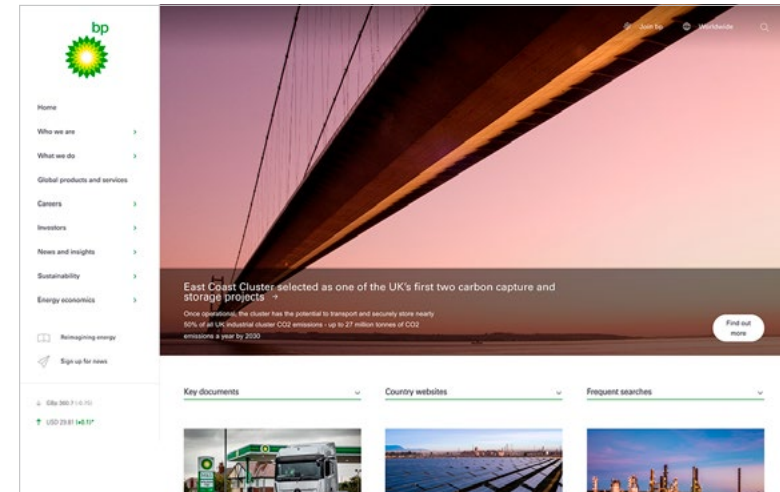
Small improvements, big changes

BP and Nestlé appeal to a wide range of audiences across their estates, without alienating any specific groups. Small improvements to Nestlé's press release service pushed the company's score up in the media metric. The magazine style of general news makes it more approachable and engaging for general readers – without alienating journalists who might land on these pages instead.

Similarly, BP's service for financial analysts who know the company also improved this year, due to the rounded nature of its results service. Results materials include internal announcements and summary stories to ensure wider audiences can understand the company's financial performance and outlook, while still offering a detailed provision for experts. Nestlé, by contrast, did not include any of these extra, welcoming features for analysts.

A joint flair for innovation

Both companies innovated their Careers sections this year. Nestlé's promising chatbot, 'Olivia', is a signal that Nestlé is investing in new ideas, and is dedicated to appearing friendly and welcoming to jobseekers. BP is a trailblazer at using internal communications externally to reveal culture and thinking – an innovation that features employee voices of all levels, including messages from



the CEO – something Nestlé has yet to do in a comprehensive way.

Overall, Nestlé and BP are leaders because of their commitment to continuous improvement, which includes large innovations and small changes that add up to (as yet) unassailable results in the Index in 2021.

BP and Nestlé tie for the top spot in 2021, as they extend their lead over the rest of the field

Want some good news? Visit a corporate website

By Bowen Craggs Consultants

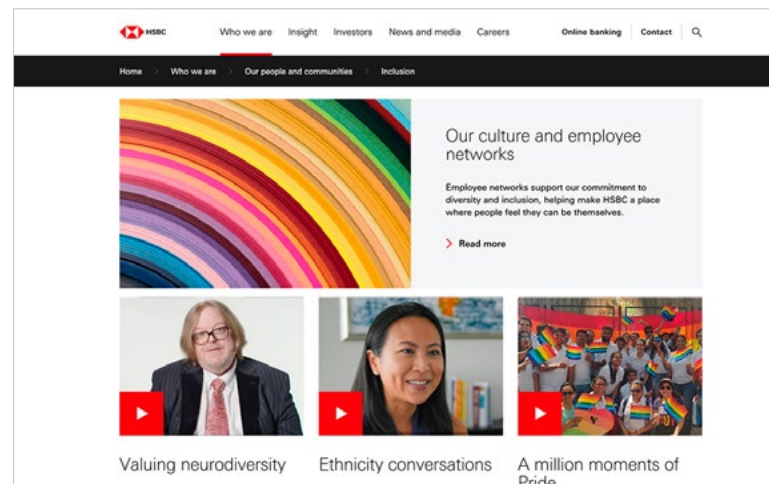
The Bowen Craggs team spends a lot of time reading and viewing corporate digital communications (so you don't have to), in order to create the Bowen Craggs Index.

Increasingly and pleasingly, we come across stories and videos that break with 'corporate' convention, and are unexpectedly amusing, moving, educational or otherwise inspiring.



Live sustainable #LikeABosch: Quirky and memorable

The video on [this page](#), released in 2021, is like Marmite (you either love it or hate it), but distinctive amid the forest of samey corporate responsibility messaging. The fact that it features the CEO taking the time to do something unconventional and out of character is also notable.



Valuing neurodiversity at HSBC: Inspiring

A video on [this page](#) features three people on the autism spectrum talking about working at HSBC. The production style is straightforward. One thing that is notable is that it is pleasingly short – 44 seconds – ensuring that key messages hit home even to impatient visitors.

Want some good news? Visit a corporate website

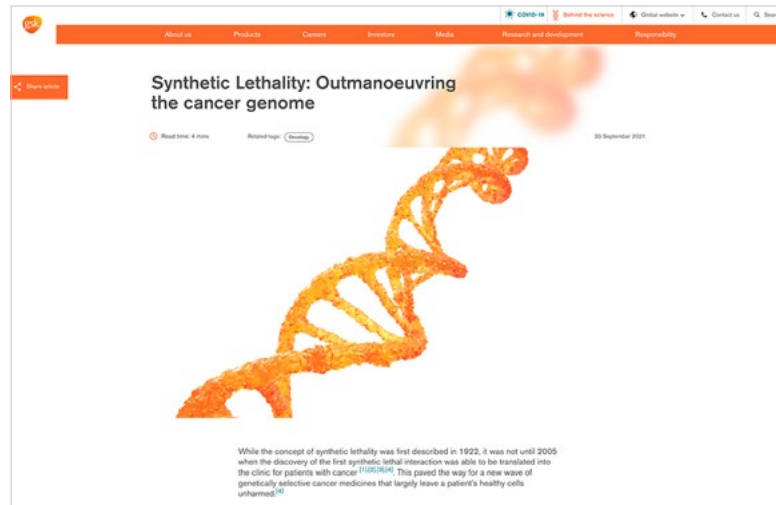
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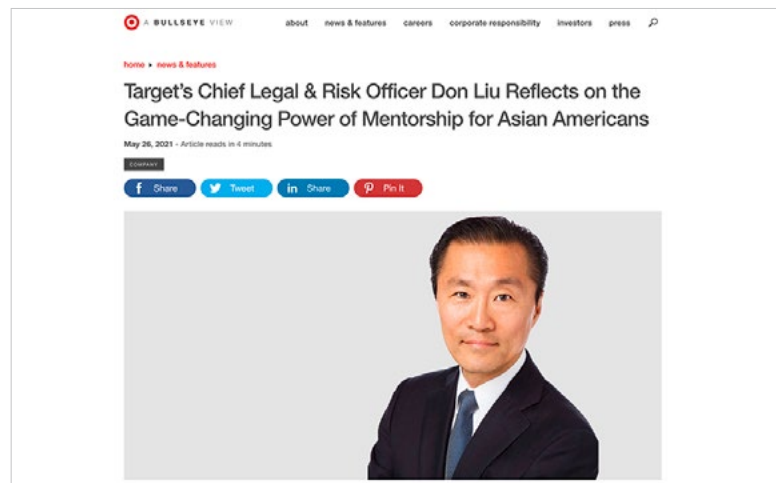
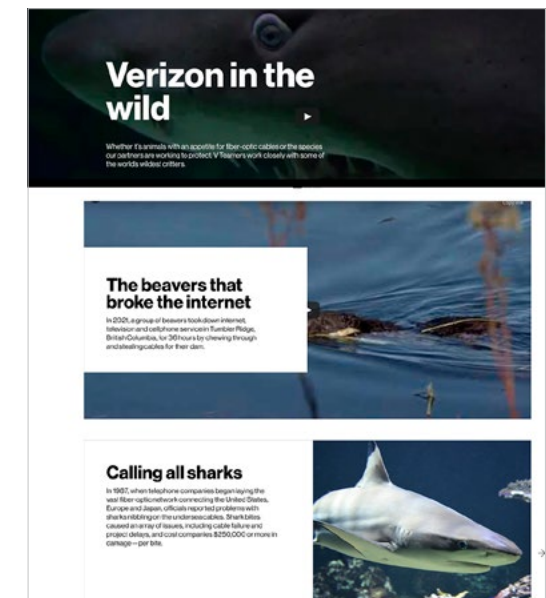
Outmanoeuvring the cancer genome at GSK: Explaining breakthrough science

This story from September in the UK pharmaceutical company's Behind the Science magazine explains the new strategy of “synthetic lethality” to fight cancer. The read time is four minutes (it may take longer for the story to sink in), but the explanations are clear for non-expert readers, with an accompanying short video.

And finally...

The beavers that broke the internet and other stories: Fun

Verizon's special feature 'Verizon in the wild' has entertaining vignettes featuring 'some of the world's wildest critters'. Catchy headlines include, 'The beavers that broke the internet', 'Calling all sharks' and 'Furizon: The secret life of pets'. A creative and engaging take on recent company history that also promotes Verizon's work to protect endangered species.



Game-changing mentorship at Target: Affecting personal view of the leadership

US retailer Target's chief legal and risk officer tells a highly personal and affecting story about combatting anti-Asian racism and violence, and what mentorship means to him.

Methodology

Our analysis methodology is tailored to the needs of corporate digital channels. Unlike most brand or news sites, corporate online estates are complex, deep and multi-functional. We put great emphasis on usability, but we also look carefully at messaging, and put ourselves into the heads of different groups of visitors to see how well they are served.

The Bowen Craggs Index is widely regarded as the gold standard for evaluating digital corporate communications for the following reasons:

- The Index measures the entire corporate digital presence: global websites, social media, country sites, brand and business sites; across desktop and mobile devices.
- The methodology was created in 2007 but constantly evolves based on relevant new trends, insights from extensive audience research and our own expertise. For example, in 2021, we added a metric for 'showcasing and engaging employees' and made changes to the metric for search engine visibility.
- There are eight main metrics in the Index covering 'construction' (navigation and usability); 'message' (design, branding and quality of content); and granular analysis of how well different audience groups are served online.
- Audience research that we draw on is unparalleled – almost a million visitor surveys conducted since 2011 exclusively on corporate websites; in addition to insights from our Google Analytics benchmarking group.
- It is immune to fashion. Our reviewers look for the hard business case behind the latest trends and ask whether they are appropriate for large organizations.
- There are no perfect scores, and criteria for 'best' gets better every year. This reflects the fact that standards continue to rise and the leading companies are moving

forward all the time. For example, a score of 11 out of 12 for visual effectiveness in 2015 is completely different from 11 out of 12 in 2021. The same is true of all other metrics.

- The methodology is rigorous but not automated or a 'check box' exercise. We offer detailed editorial judgments on the quality and appropriateness of text and video content. 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 digital channels.

Bowen Craggs has commercial relationships with approximately two thirds of companies in the Index. We are confident that this does not affect our judgment and scoring:

- We are transparent in our subscriber database about the reasoning behind all scores, and the full methodology is made available to subscribers.
- We evaluate all companies, whether clients or not, on the same Index criteria.
- We conduct peer reviews to calibrate our consultants' individual judgments about client and non-client scores to ensure that the scoring is consistent and comparable.
- We do not build websites or run social media channels, and have no vested interest. Our clients value our analysis for its unvarnished honesty about strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for improvement.
- The methodology is based on audience research and analytics as well as our consultants' experience and expertise, so it captures real effectiveness. We are able to observe close correlations between the empirical satisfaction results shown by these external measurements and our own reviews.

HOW WE PRODUCE THE INDEX

The Bowen Craggs Index ranks the best digital corporate communicators in the world. The 'Top 30' ranking for 2021 has 31 companies due to tie scores in 30th position. Our starting pool is the world's largest 200 companies by market capitalisation.

Major companies outside this group are also eligible for evaluation by demonstrating best practice in digital corporate communications. Our team of consultants evaluates the digital output of these companies on a 12-month schedule of rolling reviews, to determine whether they are likely to meet the threshold for inclusion in the top 30 ranking.

The cut-off in the 2021 published Index is a score of 194 out of a maximum of 280 (but changes in real time as the rolling reviews are updated). Companies likely to meet the criteria are evaluated with reviews in the Bowen Craggs Index, and this becomes the top 30. Our database also includes best practice reviews of companies that do not meet the score threshold, but show best practice in specific areas, such as home page, press release service, or jobseeker innovation.

Top 30 scores are finalised after peer review, in which our senior consultants calibrate scores across companies to ensure that they are comparable.

Members of the Bowen Craggs Club have full online access to all scores and benchmarking reviews.

About Bowen Craggs

Why Bowen Craggs?

Excellence in corporate digital communications is hitting your communication goals and the goals of your visitors through the effective use of online channels.

We succeed when our clients achieve excellence in corporate digital communications and realize the full value it has to offer their organizations. Our clients prize the independence of our advice. We do not build websites or run social media channels.

There are many challenges to achieving excellence, but they can be overcome by developing a support network of your peers and implementing a system of continuous improvement.

To find out more about the challenges of the corporate digital landscape, visit <https://www.bowencraggs.com/our-thinking/challenges>

There are three fundamental reasons to choose Bowen Craggs:

1. The Bowen Craggs Club

The Bowen Craggs Club is a ready-made peer network for online corporate communications professionals, aimed at companies that recognize the importance of world-leading corporate digital communications. The Bowen Craggs Club provides the support network you need to achieve excellence. It is for leaders who want to stay leaders and for those with aspirations to be leaders.

To find out more about the Bowen Craggs Club, visit <https://www.bowencraggs.com/services/the-bowen-craggs-club>

2. Our data and the insights it powers

Decisions and actions should be based on great data, but this is not easy to find in the corporate digital world.

Bowen Craggs has not one, but two unique data sets that we leverage to support our international client base – the Bowen Craggs Index and Bowen Craggs visitor research.

This is the data that powers the continuous improvement process which our clients use to run high-performance corporate digital channels.

3. Our consultants

Our senior consultants have been advising companies on corporate digital communications for nearly 20 years. We come from a range of relevant disciplines and backgrounds – business journalists, website editors, corporate web managers and agency professionals. Our team understands the challenges of managing a complex corporate web estate. Clients see us as an extension of their own teams.

For our latest thinking, visit <https://www.bowencraggs.com/our-thinking/articles>

We combine these three unrivalled strengths to provide the evidence-based advice you need to make the right choices and avoid mistakes; win internal debates; save time and money; and chart the path to corporate digital excellence.

**For more information please contact Dan Drury:
e-mail: ddrury@bowencraggs.com | UK: +44 7786 707434**

