Ipsos Global Reputation Centre

THE REPUTATION COUNCIL

LATEST FINDINGS FROM THE TENTH SITTING

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE REPUTATION IN A TRANSPARENT WORLD

THE FUTURE INFLUENCE OF NGOS

MANAGING REPUTATION PROACTIVELY

BRAND VS. REPUTATION – WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

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THE REPUTATION COUNCIL

WELCOME TO THE LATEST BRIEFING OF THE REPUTATION COUNCIL. OUR TENTH SITTING HAS SEEN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS BASED IN 17 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES WITH INDUSTRY EXPERTS FROM PAKISTAN AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TAKING PART FOR THE FIRST TIME.

There is little doubt that reputation remains a key strategic issue at board level. Corporate communicators around the world have never had greater access to the very top tier of senior management. However this status means that the spotlight on reputation has never been greater and reputation management, like other corporate activities, needs to demonstrate a return on investment.

This edition focuses on the challenges of achieving a differentiated reputation in a crowded communications landscape. Council members consider the importance of articulating a unique value proposition as a part of the relationship building process.

We also talked to council members about the distinction between reputation and brand – two words that have become increasingly interchangeable as ways to express a company's standing and purpose. We explore the relationship between the two and the role of the communicator in ensuring that they are aligned across all corporate functions.

Though it is often a balancing act, Reputation council members find themselves striving to spend more time on proactive activities (such as strategy and campaign development) rather than focusing only on reactive news driven tasks. We examine the ways council members work towards this goal with the implications for resource planning and investment.

The role of NGOs in the corporate space is constantly evolving and council members discuss the importance of this stakeholder group and the way in which their influence has increased in line with the power of social media and the internet.
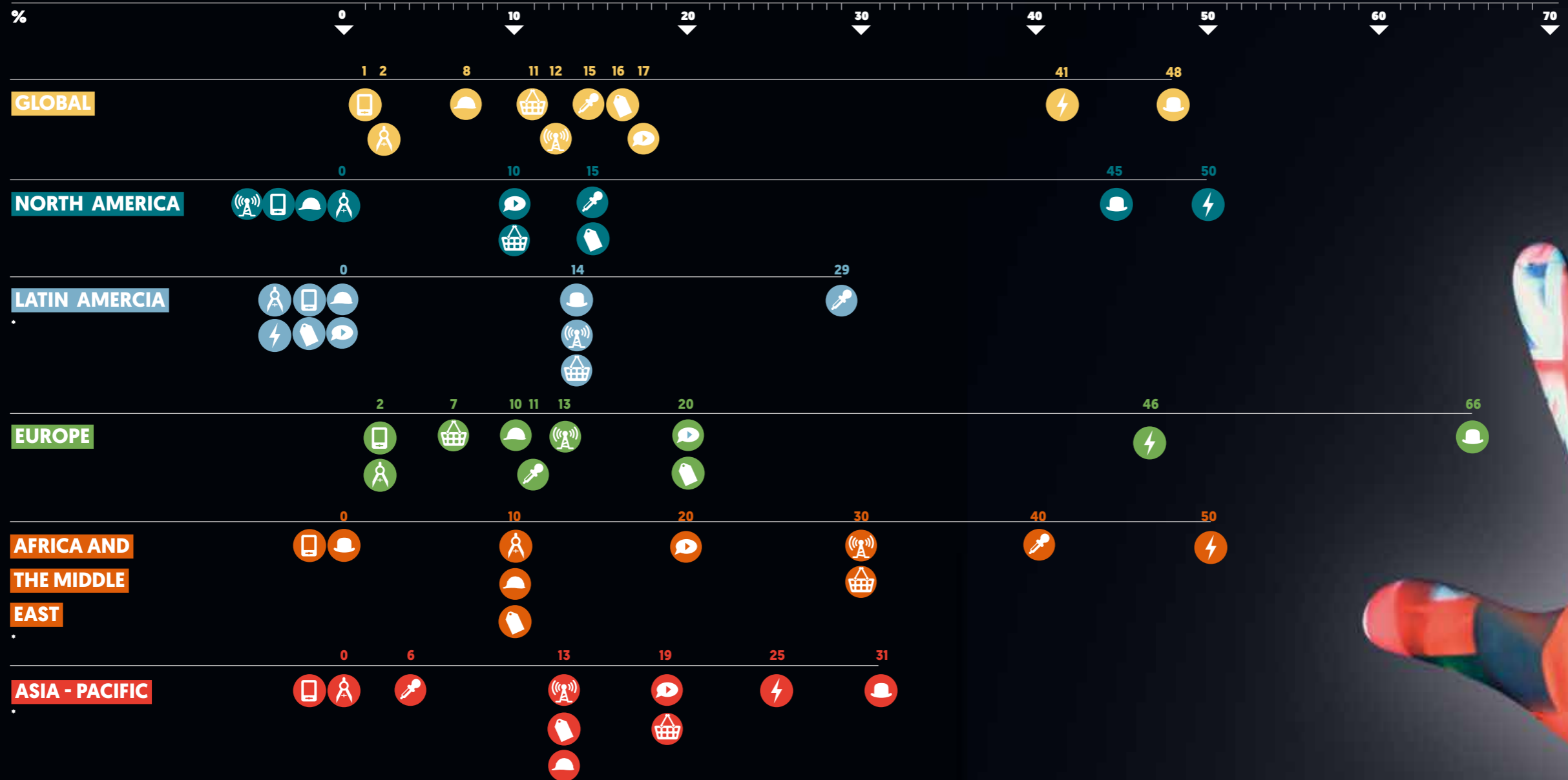
As ever please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like more information on any of the issues covered in this briefing, or would like to find out more about the work we do in the field of reputation research.

Milorad Ajder   **Trent Ross**

1. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECTOR REPUTATIONS

FMCG | Pharmaceuticals | Media | Construction | Telecommunications | Finance | Energy | Engineering | Retail | Mobile

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING INDUSTRIES ARE FACING THE GREATEST REPUTATION CHALLENGES AT THE MOMENT?

%   0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70

GLOBAL
1 2   8   11 12   15 16 17   41   48

NORTH AMERICA
0   10   15   45   50

LATIN AMERCIA
0   14   29

EUROPE
2   7   10 11 13   20   46   66

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST
0   10   20   30   40   50

ASIA - PACIFIC
0   6   13   19   25   31

NORTH AMERICA:

As in past years, the financial and energy sectors come in for by far the greatest deal of scrutiny. **Financial** sector issues remain rooted in the 2008 crisis. Council members feel that the industry has not been transparent enough to regain trust and that periodic issues with data breaches compound the issue. **Energy** sector concerns focus on environmental and community impacts. **Pharmaceuticals** and **Retail** come in for a few mentions. The data breaches that have had a negative impact on the financial services industry also have a negative impact in the retail space.

EUROPE:

While there are fewer mentions of **financial services** and **energy** than in the previous two years, these industries remain the most likely to be perceived as having reputational challenges. The financial services industry is seen as recovering, but the recovery is slowed by fresh revelations of past behaviour.

That is not going to go away quickly. They are in a better place than last year but still have a long way to go and are still under huge scrutiny. The difficulty is that it is going to take a long period of time because actually you are still getting historical skeletons in the closet... until you have had that total clearout I don't know whether they will be able to move completely forward.

APAC

The **financial services** and **energy sectors** are also the most often mentioned sectors in Asia Pacific, though not to the extent seen in other regions. As in North America, the issues impacting the financial services industry are a combination of lingering effects from the financial crisis and the impact of data breaches. Concerns around the financial services and FMCG sectors are primarily driven by council members from Australia and New Zealand – 60% for financial services and 30% for FMCG. For the FMCG sector there is a sense among many of our experts that attitudes toward food and beverage are converging and becoming similar to the way people have viewed tobacco and alcohol in the last 20 years.

LATIN AMERICA:

Is the only region where the **energy** sector is not seen as under reputational threat. However, the mining industry is perceived to have major challenges.

Because of the impact of mining projects on communities where they are conducted; it is a potentially polluting industry. Incidents causing serious pollution have taken place on recent dates. There is disagreement, not just in Mexico, but around the world concerning mining companies, beyond the environmental issues, they represent a latent danger: in recent years, we have witnessed very unfortunate incidents and accidents with mining industries partners around the world that now are dead.

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST:

The concerns in the Middle East are focused on the energy sector. **FMCG** and **Pharmaceutical** industries are also perceived as facing major reputational challenges in the Middle East.

No industry is exempt from issues and challenges but FMCGs perhaps are the most prone. The nature of this business demands constant need to innovate, improve and ensure products of the highest quality. Since most of these goods are consumed frequently, consumers remain keen on having informed choices and need to know more about the traits of the brand which they are consuming.

FINANCIAL SERVICES IN THE REGULATORY CROSSHAIRS

The reputation management professionals on the Ipsos Reputation Council clearly see the financial services industry as an industry under siege. The fallout from the 2008 financial crisis is perceived as strong in the minds of consumers and regulators alike. The industry's challenges are compounded by governance issues that continue to come to light and by additional missteps from the industry in customer service and data protection.
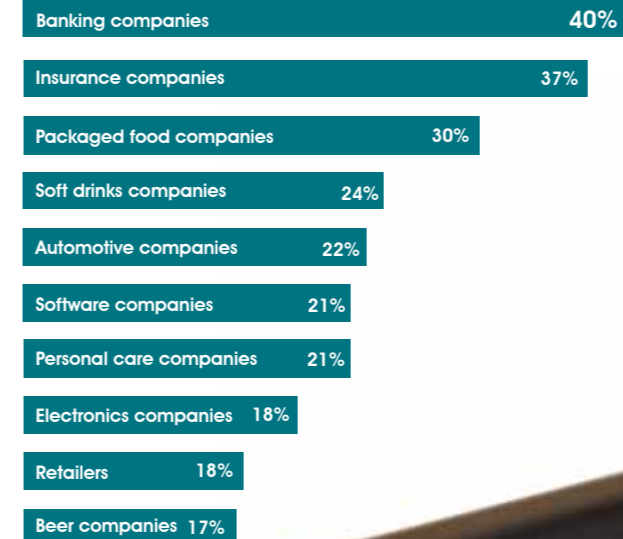
The outcome of this poor reputation is an increased appetite for regulation. The professionals in our study see government as emboldened by the industry's miscues.

> There are still stories going on, the most recent one is the big fines which have been levied by the regulators in the US on many banks, even in Europe, so that is a continuing thing.

> There is still damage from the 2008 economic collapse, and a sense that financial services companies are not forthcoming with disclosures and information.

In a similar vein, our research among consumers indicates that there will be little pushback if governments want to increase regulation of the industry. Globally (across 25 countries in the Ipsos Global @dvisor survey) 40% of people believe there is too little regulation of banking companies and 37% believe there is too little regulation of insurance companies. These industries are significantly more likely than others to be singled out for regulation. The perception that banks are too lightly regulated spans nearly every market in the survey with between one half and one third of respondents saying banks have too little regulation. Japan is the sole exception.

"They have got a lot to regroup through and the financial services companies are going to be continually penalised under this government (UK) and the majority of the public will think that is the right thing to do."

GLOBAL AVERAGE

■ % too little regulation

Banking companies	40%
Insurance companies	37%
Packaged food companies	30%
Soft drinks companies	24%
Automotive companies	22%
Software companies	21%
Personal care companies	21%
Electronics companies	18%
Retailers	18%
Beer companies	17%

BY COUNTRY

■ % too little regulation of banks

53%	51%	50%	49%	47%	45%	44%	44%
Great Britain	Italy	Hungary	Spain	Germany	Belgium	Sweden	France
40%	39%	38%	38%	34%	32%	32%	11%
Israel	Australia	Argentina	Poland	South Korea	Canada	America	Japan

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE DATA SECURITY ISSUE

A common theme that emerges across industries is the negative impact of data security issues. These issues are mentioned in connection with reputational challenges for financial services, retailers, technology, telecommunications and government. The reputation challenges associated with data security are only in part caused by breaches. In addition, there is a sense of unease about what government and corporations are doing with all of the data that they collect.

●● *Privacy and data integrity are becoming the big issues and we think about it a lot as a financial organisation. The challenge is facing all industries that are consumer facing and have the potential for information to be leaked to the public. Retailers and telecos are affected by this as well, it just cuts really broadly and the issues are becoming very generic, it is a sign of the interconnected world we live in.* ●●

●● *(Technology and retail face) challenges on privacy and data use. Nothing is sacred.* ●●

●● *(Retailers are faced with) security breaches - margins are tight, services are not what they used to be.* ●●

●● *Internet organisations have got challenges on a number of different levels reputationally. Some of the big players have created twin challenges of knowing too much and being able to influence too much. So there is a growing distrust of big tech.* ●●

"Everything is moving much faster today and customer behaviour is rapidly changing. All this is of course due to digitalisation. Trust depends heavily on IT security and we need to manage it to live up to it. The industries that are facing the biggest challenges concerning their reputation are industries that affect many people, where digitalisation is a strong driver and where customer demand for new services is strong."

2. BUILDING A REPUTATION THAT LOOKS GOOD UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

KEY POINTS ▼

▲ Increased availability of information among stakeholders has placed corporate reputations under a high degree of scrutiny

▲ In response to this, Reputation Council members are increasingly focused on narrowing the gap between what their organisations say and what they do

▲ Narrowing this gap and building a sustainable reputation starts with the internal processes of the organisation

The proliferation of social media in recent years, coupled with increased access to information through the internet, has greatly expanded the interface between corporations and their stakeholders. The inner workings of corporations are on show like never before and stakeholders increasingly place a premium on those organisations which communicate and deliver upon a set of values that are aligned with their sense of what is right and wrong:

●● *That dynamic of how consumers use social media is changing consumers' knowledge. Ten years ago people just used to read the front of pack, now they flip over and read the ingredients, they read back of pack, they want to understand the company behind the brand that they buy and whether that company has child labour or is good about its supply chain.* ●●

In this era of access, corporate communicators increasingly face the challenge that there will be times when stakeholders receive information on a corporation's actions as quickly as the corporation's communicators. This makes it very difficult to control the narrative on an organisation through reactionary communications or actions, with communicators instead having to be one step ahead at all times through proactive reputation management:

●● *Corporate reputation now goes hand in hand with transparency and transparency goes hand in hand with the internet, whether it is videos, whether it is people on the ground posting blogs, whatever it is. Often people who don't like what we are doing, they will know more about what we are doing on the ground than we will and it is our job to stay one step ahead so we can make the right decision.* ●●

For corporate communicators this environment creates a powerful mix of opportunity and risk – good reputations have never been more visible, while sustaining a good reputation has never been more difficult.

Increased access to information and channels of communication have also facilitated greater voice for stakeholders. As a result, corporate communicators often find themselves competing to shape the message around their organisation. In absence of a strong reputation, conflicting points of view from vocal and influential stakeholders are given credence, placing an organisation in a defensive communication stance:

●● *We have seen a tremendous amount of negative press coverage as a business and what you are seeing is that because we are not as well-known as we could be and because people don't have a sense of the business in a human way it makes it easier for us to be a target of negative campaigns, even when they are not based in fact.* ●●

However, alongside these risks, there are also many benefits and in cases where organisations have a strong reputation, council members note that this has led to increased licence to operate, the ability to attract and retain the best talent, enhanced customer trust and loyalty and, very importantly in this era of access, the benefit of the doubt in cases where things go wrong:

"Reputation is equity in the bank. Sometimes things happen and you need to be viewed as responsible and having a strong reputation so that you can tap into some of that equity you've built."

In recognition of these opportunities and risks, corporate communicators often now have a seat at the top table in their organisation, and though having this level of influence is a key first step in building a sustainable reputation, council members highlight that there are several other processes that should be followed:

1. NARROW THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU DO

"If there is a dichotomy between what you say and what you do, you are going to have problems. So in the end the messaging has to be authentic and the stories have to be authentic and if you are saying one thing and doing another you will end up in Private Eye, which is a bad thing. There is a big internal communications effort to make sure there isn't a gap between the rhetoric and the reality."

At a time when all corporate messages and actions are examined in great detail by a growing group of influential stakeholders, it is increasingly important that corporations are what they say they are. Authenticity is a quality that stakeholders feel is increasingly rare and greatly in demand – therefore creating a significant advantage for those that can achieve it:

As noted below, this process must start from within the organisation, with external messaging being formed around the actions taken and outputs delivered:

•• *Words are cheap and easy to say and many companies over many years have used words that they don't follow through with actions. For us we want to make sure we are doing the right thing and the external protection of us as an organisation will only really be formed properly by the actions that we do and not the words that we use.* ••

Creating greater organisational alignment has recently been an area of focus for the Ipsos Global Reputation Centre. As indicated by the schematic below, one of the core aspects of reputation building is ensuring that there is complete alignment between the four pillars of internal communications, internal behaviour, external communications and external behaviour.

ALIGNMENT TO DELIVER REPUTATION VALUE

Our advice and guidance focuses on the greater alignment of activities that drive reputation value

- **Internal brand definition**
- **Core values**
- **Brand/business KPIs**

Internal Comms

- **Corporate marketing and communications**

External Comms

All within the context of issues facing the industry

Internal Behaviour

- **Employee brand engagement**
- **Culture and practice**

External Behaviour

- **Delivering on brand promise**
- **Living the brand**

Ipsos Global Reputation Centre

2. LONG TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING

Supported almost unanimously by Reputation Council members is the need to ensure a long term strategic approach to reputation building. This requires reputation to be built into the overall organisational strategy, which is increasingly facilitated by the growing influence of reputation at the board level:

●● *The core of it is the business strategy you agree in the management team and the ways in which you are going to bring that to life through your brand and through the way you behave as a business. So we've spent a huge amount of time, as a management team, over the past 5 years really thinking through how we communicate the business strategy clearly and simply to the whole company.* ●●

This level of strategic planning will help ensure that all parts of the business are aligned with the reputation vision of the organisation and that there is the broader internal commitment to achieving the objectives set.

3. INTERNAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Support structures are required to implement the reputation vision outlined in the corporate strategy. These structures help to ensure that the actions required to build a sustainable reputation become ingrained in everyday working life. The integration of reputation goals with departmental planning is seen as an important part of this process:

"Our reputational trust strategy is fully integrated into our business plan so it lives and breathes in what we are doing and being seen to be doing in many different parts of our organisation. It is a key part of our plans, so right down to each individual unit has its own plans and there will be a trust building element to those plans and it has a governance structure internally."

Strong and effective governance structures can also play a key role in safeguarding an organisation's reputation by ensuring that different functions within the business stay on track in meeting their reputation objectives.

●● *We do spend a lot of time trying to keep people focused and aligned. We have a pretty good internal governance process that binds in a lot of senior stakeholders so if you go to our procurement team, for instance, they kind of get a lot of this stuff anyway and it is built into what they do. If you go into the factories that would be the same.* ●●

4. EMPLOYEE ACTIVATION

Though strategic planning and internal support structures are key components in reputation building, employee motivation and ability will be required to ensure a deeply embedded and sustainable reputation. Employees are not only a key reputation stakeholder, through the importance of reputation in retaining and motivating staff, but they are also a key reputation actor, based on their ability to shape reputation through their actions. In light of this, best practice organisations put in place mechanisms to galvanise employees around the reputational goals of the company. These cover a range of different areas including training, internal ambassador programs and reward systems.

●● *We have a very strong internal ambassador program that we have been running for two years now that uses written communication, email, roadshows, workshops, training, face-to-face meetings, competitions, a whole raft of programmes to really help people get a lot of what we are trying to do.* ●●

5. REPUTATION MEASUREMENT

Measuring the attitudes and opinions of influential stakeholder groups plays a key part in the reputation management strategy of the majority of council members. Reputation data enables communicators to monitor performance and helps guide decision making around reputation strategy:

"We have measurements in place, it is a key brand metric, both at a headline level and that headline is then broken down into different drivers of trust. So it is a key metric which is reviewed on a regular basis, at board level and more deeply within the organisation."

Succinct and powerful data is also an important tool in communicating with board level directors, where time pressures may not allow for the more nuanced discussion around reputation that takes place at the departmental level:

●● *We are research based - we have a reputation dashboard that we present to the CEO and the heads of all the businesses to track our reputation.* ●●

CONCLUSION

Responding to the challenge posed by increasingly informed and influential stakeholders, corporate communicators are taking strides to create alignment between what their organisations say and do. Achieving the perception of authenticity requires sustained commitment over a number of years; however, the experiences of some council members would suggest that by following the toolkit outlined earlier it is possible to develop a reputation that looks good even when put under the microscope.

3. GETTING NOTICED IN THE CROWD: IS IT ALWAYS A GOOD THING?

KEY POINTS ▼

▲ **Achieving a differentiated reputation is a key goal for the majority of Reputation Council members**

▲ **Despite this, only two-thirds of council members report being at least fairly satisfied with the level of differentiation they have achieved for their organisation**

▲ **Within an increasingly crowded communications landscape, achieving meaningful differentiation requires the ability to offer and articulate something of unique value to your stakeholders**

Some concepts just seem accepted as best for business. The concept of differentiation is one. Companies should strive to create distinct corporate identities; brands that stand out from the crowd. Yet, how many companies are successful and is this differentiation worth pursuing?

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU SATISFIED THAT YOUR COMPANY HAS SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISHED A DISTINCT IDENTITY FROM ITS COMPETITORS?

● Very satisfied
● Fairly satisfied
● Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
● Fairly dissatisfied
● Very dissatisfied

14%
35%
19%
31%
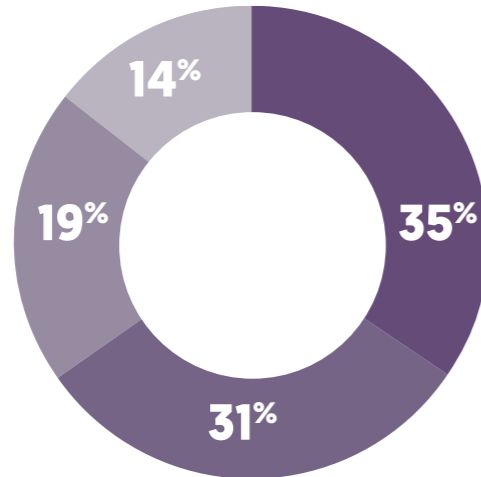
66%

of this year's Reputation Council members report being 'satisfied' (either very or mainly) that their company has successfully established acorporate identity distinct to its competitors.

Base: All Reputation Council members who answered question (94)

"It is everything from business development and growth through to the credit that you get around licence to operate and customer loyalty, customer retention, part of the employee proposition... it just means you are much more competitive if you are more distinct."

When we asked Reputation Council members what the benefits of having a distinct corporate identity were the answers flowed freely – such companies will attract good employees, key investments and many customers.

Having a distinct corporate identity can go beyond simply securing a company's financial future or giving a competitive edge in the marketplace. Carving out a distinctive reputation and brand can open doors to interactions with key stakeholders, and allow companies to be a respected voice in such conversations. It can even provide companies with the necessary credentials to take the lead in setting the agenda for the industry:

●● *We are able to sit at the table with people who determine our future and... have something tangible to leverage, we have a story... the way that we act and behave and operate is our reputation story. And having that gives us the access to these people, it gives us the ability to sit at the table and, certainly not decide on, but to discuss our own future as a business.* ●●

However, some Reputation Council members identify potential drawbacks to developing a distinct corporate identity, particularly if a company positions themselves as an industry leader:

●● *The leader also faces the challenge of being the one to take the first step, to be the most exposed and the one to take on the challenge.* ●●

If companies become particularly distinctive they can become not just the market leader of an industry, but the recognisable face of that industry. While this has its perks, it can also be a weight around the neck:

●● *The drawback [of] being a market leader is that you can get blamed for wrongdoings made by other actors within the industry.* ●●

●● *I would rather be the brand that people want to talk about or talk to than the one they don't, because from a customer/opinion former perspective it gives me an opportunity to differentiate.* ●●

HOW EASY IS IT IS FOR YOUR STAKEHOLDERS TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN DIFFERENT CORPORATE BRANDS IN YOUR SECTOR?

● Very easy
● Fairly easy
● Neither easy nor challenging
● Fairly challenging
● Very challenging

13%
16%
34%
13%
23%

Base: All Reputation Council members who answered question (97)
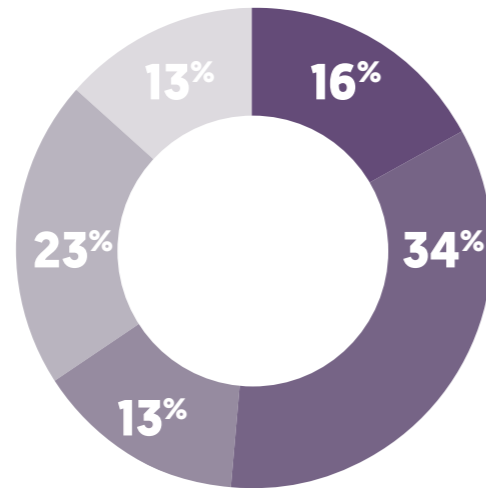
36%

think it is challenging to achieve differentiation

Despite the potential drawbacks many Reputation Council members stress that the benefits outweigh the potential drawbacks that come with the territory of being a distinctive, leading voice in the market. Ultimately, it is better to be notable, at the centre of key conversations, than an indistinguishable voice on the periphery.

However, while the vast majority of communicators would agree that it is overall beneficial to be differentiated, for the stakeholders these companies are trying to engage with, the marketplace can surely seem a cluttered place.

Though half (50%) of Reputation Council members say they think it is easy for stakeholders to distinguish between different corporate brands in their sector, a third (36%) think it is a challenge.

Indeed, it is perhaps particularly difficult to create a distinct identity in certain industries, where the differences between brands may seem imperceptible to those who are not specialists in the field:

●● *There are groups of companies in the construction sector who are very similar and it is very easy for everyone to think we all do the same thing, when actually we don't. In our own specialist way we all do different types of things.* ●●

Creating a distinct identity is harder, stress several Reputation Council members, if the end product is not particularly visible or tangible.

Despite these challenges, the majority of council members are satisfied that their company has successfully established a distinct corporate identity - with only a small minority dissatisfied.
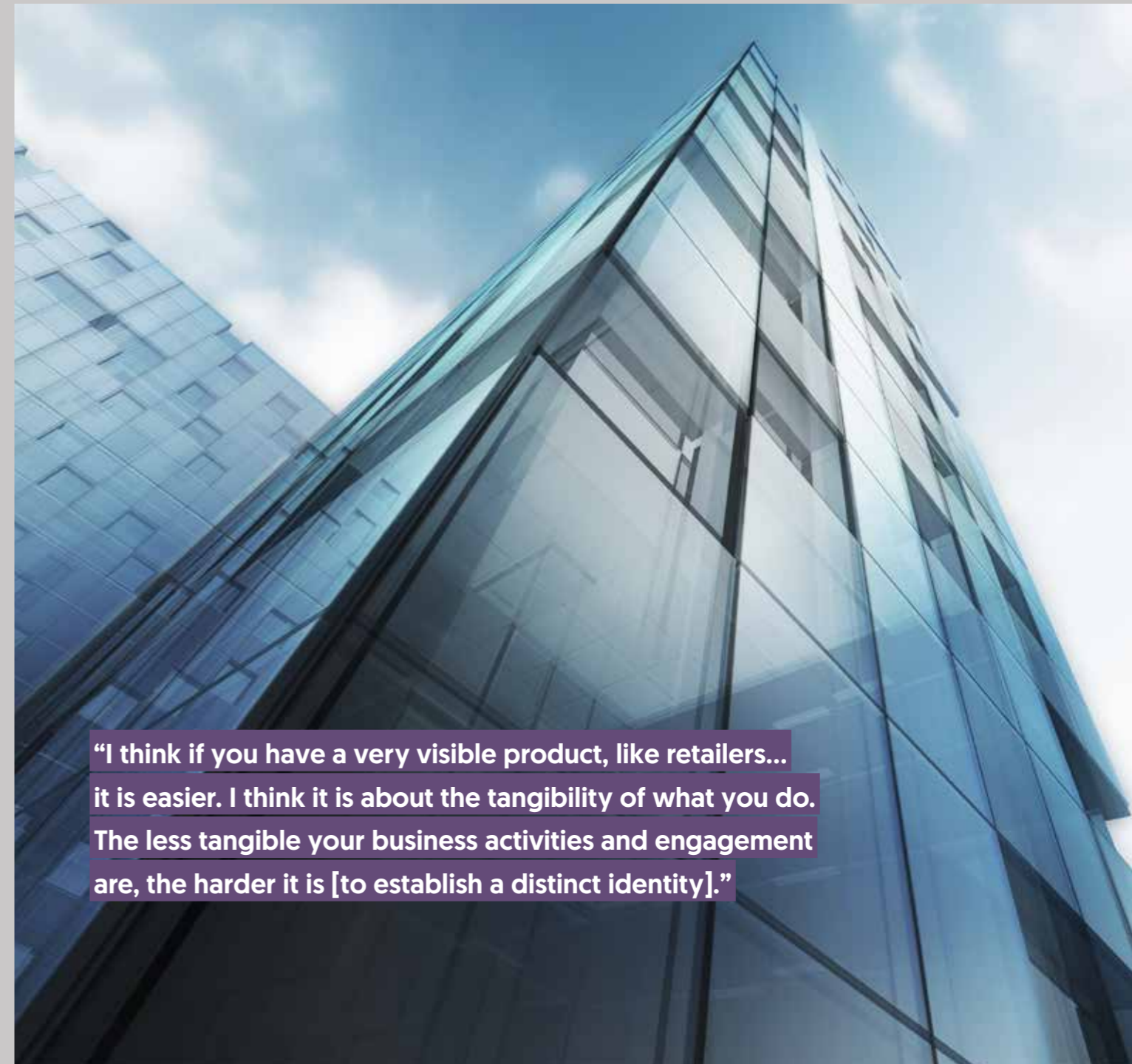
"I think if you have a very visible product, like retailers... it is easier. I think it is about the tangibility of what you do. The less tangible your business activities and engagement are, the harder it is [to establish a distinct identity]."

To achieve success in this area, several Reputation Council members stress the importance of brand commitment within a company, from the very top of the hierarchy to the bottom, in order to create the strongest possible sense of a corporate identity. If a brand is being undermined from within, the chances of it standing out in such a competitive, crowded landscape are surely diminished:

"It requires a very, very strong commitment from the entire top tier of leadership so that it can effectively trickle down… you have to live the brand purpose and it needs to then be a part of every step of the organisation."

●● *The lack of enthusiasm of employees and leaders complicates the creation of a unique corporate identity.* ●●

This is not to say that, just by ensuring employee commitment, brand distinctiveness is easy to come by. It is recognised by Reputation Council members that companies have to work hard to establish such distinctive brands, and it requires the investment of resources and consistency:

●● *It is challenging and it is difficult but, in the long term, if you want to differentiate yourself from a sector that has those reputational challenges, it is consistently to try and do the right thing and ultimately that will deliver differentiation for you in the minds of your stakeholders.*●●

Furthermore, communicators need to identify and articulate what it is about their brand that offers something of unique value to the market place:

●● *It is of course easier in some industries. It is possible to differentiate by price but a company is rarely unique when it comes to services or products. You must add something of value that is relevant and important to the customer. For my industry – financial services – it is to be at the forefront and have a high level of security.* ●●

As buzzwords, core values and CSR messages flood the market, companies have to strive ever harder to develop a unique value proposition that sets them apart:

●● *Everyone says the same thing, they are client focused, it is all about relationships… so we look at an elevator pitch type thing, what would you say in an elevator of why we are different, so we are just trying to get the narrative down and really succinct about who we are and what we do that no one else can say.* ●●

Though this would appear to be increasingly difficult, in the majority of cases council members are committed to achieving this goal. Ultimately the risks and challenges presented are overshadowed by the multitude of opportunities and benefits that being distinct can offer.

4. WHAT WORDS WOULD YOU LIKE PEOPLE TO USE WHEN DESCRIBING YOUR ORGANISATION AND CEO?

PROFESSIONAL
TRUSTWORTHY
TRUSTED
HONEST
KNOWLEDGEABLE

Trusted. As our president oftens says "a sense of trust is the best of any business"

Trusted. The most valuable thing you can have is your stakeholders trust you.

5. CORPORATE BRAND VS. CORPORATE REPUTATION: PROMISE VS. REALITY?

The convergence of reputation with the concept of corporate branding has become increasingly prevalent as companies seek to endorse or link their corporate identity with the products or services they produce. This evolution of brand from something that is customer centric and product orientated to a broader construct that also encompasses a company's values and purpose (the corporate brand) is clearly established in the minds of most Reputation Council members:

Brand values need to be aligned with corporate messages.

Council members see this change as a challenge to the traditional view within companies that anything concerning brand falls exclusively into the domain of the marketing function whilst reputation sits squarely in corporate affairs. To many this is counterproductive and a more integrated approach is preferred:

Looking historically we have seen them as reasonably separate things, the brand is the thing that marketing owns and reputation is the thing that corporate affairs owns which I think is a really unhelpful way of looking at it. I think it would be more helpful if we use them more interchangeably.

Indeed many council members feel that what a company stands for and what it sells need to be so aligned as to make any discussions regarding differences between reputation and brand almost redundant:

[The difference] between corporate brand and corporate reputation is becoming less and less important, the concepts are becoming more and more synonymous. For instance, before you bought Nike shoes because they looked nice. Now they also have to be produced in a good way.

Practically there is very little distinction between the two as both are directly related to each other. Strong reputation can lead to a strong brand and vice versa. The task of selling your brand becomes much easier if you are carrying a strong organisational reputation behind you.

However, with further probing, a strong sense of differentiation between brand and reputation emerges. This is based on the concept that the corporate brand is in effect an articulation of what a company stands for - a promise to stakeholders about the way the company will behave. Reputation, on the other hand, is formed when an individual compares this promise with their experience of a company's behaviour:

I would say corporate reputation is the second order condition that is... what their perception and belief about the organisation actually is.

"Expectation versus experience."

This concept would seem to be at the heart of the communications management process and is a key consideration that needs to run through most communication strategies.

This is because a promise by definition creates expectations, and expectations become the benchmark against which a company is judged. It's therefore important that a company's communications activities (PR programmes, advertising, internal communications etc) do not articulate and promote a corporate brand promise that is not aligned with its ability to deliver. A good communications strategy will therefore in part be built on a clear understanding of the expectations being placed on an organisation (and in many cases the industry in which it operates) in order to have a clear understanding of what it needs to deliver:

"Operationally we have got to be able to deliver to what the brand stands for and I think that is what builds our reputation."

It's therefore equally important that where promises are explicitly made that there is a high degree of alignment with employee behaviour. The phrase 'living the brand' is much over used but at its core lies an essential truth; an organisation's ability to deliver on the promises it makes is predominantly determined by the performance of the individuals who work within it. Virtually all council members recognise this fact and try to guide employee behaviour by talking about their core values; the characteristics and behaviours they believe employees need to understand and practice:

We rely on our 'employee code of conduct' to guide and align our collective behaviour when we make business decisions, as it outlines our values and supports our commitment to ethical and honest conduct.

The brand is perhaps one of your biggest tools in your reputation but so are the behaviour and the actions of your management. They are all demonstrative elements of your reputation. So for me reputation is the output – the brand is one of the inputs as are employees.

The danger from a reputation perspective is where employees are not aligned to core values and the corporate brand promise becomes out of kilter with reality. For example, creating a corporate advertising campaign around customer service when employees have received little appropriate training or promoting supply chain transparency when your senior managers are using companies outside your approved supplier list.

As one member put it:

Brand is what you would like to be, reputation is what is.

The challenge for communicators is therefore to help ensure that both roads lead to the same destination.

6. GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT: PROACTIVE VS. REACTIVE COMMUNICATION

KEY POINTS ▼

▲ **Though it is often a balancing act, Reputation Council members find themselves striving to spend their time on proactive, rather than reactive, reputation building**

▲ **Council members currently spend the majority of their time (65% on average) on proactive reputation building; however, there is a desire to increase this further**

▲ **Creating the space for proactive reputation management is achieved in a number of ways including, strategic planning, division of labour among the communications team and long-term investment**

As one council member eloquently observes, "communications is hard". At a time when there is an increasing push to create narratives and tell stories, the available space for doing so is being squeezed. Creating an authentic voice for a brand takes time, but attention spans are declining. Moreover, the accelerating pace of discourse and information sharing means that the space in which these stories are being told is in a state of constant flux. Well-worn tropes begin to sound trite, convincing claims can start to ring hollow, and new innovations may leave yesterday's market leader struggling to match the pace.

So how do you position a business so that it can take advantage of the opportunities and avoid the pitfalls? How do you strike the balance between maintaining a consistent message and responding to the vagaries of a volatile business climate? That is exactly what we approached council members to find out.

One of the first things that leaps out when we speak to council members about how they balance the proactive and reactive elements of reputation management is the sheer variety of responses. Some describe their role as entirely proactive and say that 100% of the work they undertake is pre-emptive; concerned with positioning their brand in the marketplace, engaging with stakeholders and articulating brand values. Others put the figure as low as 10%, explaining that the majority of their work focuses on responding and reacting to events and capitalising on opportunities as they occur.

In many ways, the range of responses speaks of the diversity of activities that constitute 'reputation management' in today's business environment. No doubt they also reflect the breadth of expertise and experience represented in the Reputation Council. Some emphasise the need to react to events and contribute to the media conversation as events unfold. Others see more value in working to shape the parameters of the conversation itself, setting its tone and managing the expectations of key players.

WHAT PROPORTION OF THE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT WORK THAT YOU CURRENTLY CARRY OUT WOULD YOU DESCRIBE AS "PROACTIVE"?

CURRENT PRACTICE

Proactive

76-100% 35:

AVG
65%

51-75% 28:

26-50% 22:

0-25% 9:
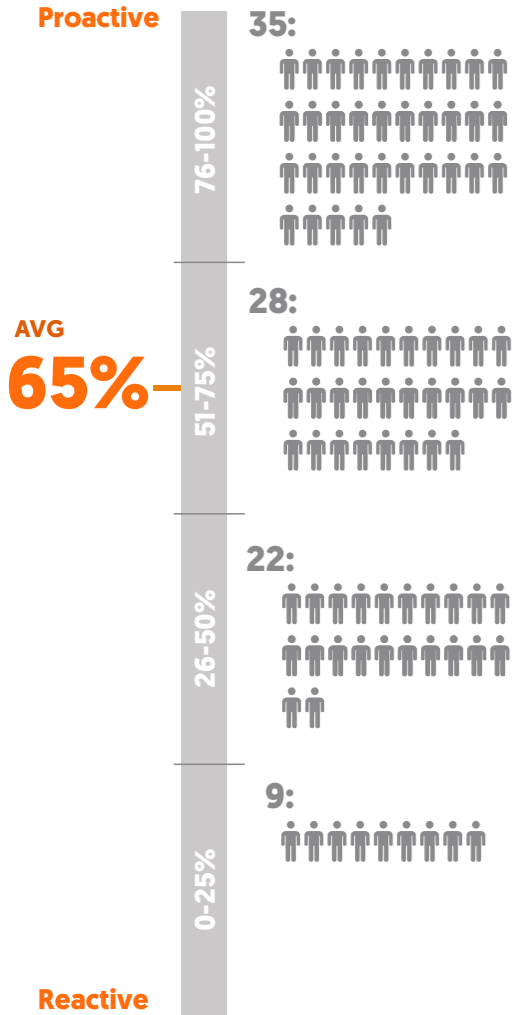
Reactive

On average council members estimate that 65% of the reputation management that they do is proactive. While this figure hides an extremely varied range of individual responses, it is perhaps more revealing when we put it in the context of where corporate communicators' aspirations lie. For when we ask them to consider what this figure would be in an ideal world, responses average out at 77%, indicating that communications professionals want to recalibrate the balance in favour of a more proactive stance. Which is all very well of course, but how do you go about achieving this shift?

Key to understanding how corporate communicators are stepping up to this challenge is the language they use in framing the issue. Some members discuss the decision of where to strike the balance between proactive and reactive in terms of resource allocation: to what extent do you invest your resources in the brand's reputation up front, and how much do you leave in the war chest for contingency? Approaching it in these terms requires a clear understanding of the drivers of reputation and confidence in the company's appraisal of the reputational risks it may encounter in future:

●● *You should always be on the front foot of how much can I invest and how much can I allocate to being proactive and if you feel that balance is wrong or going in the wrong direction then you have to make a case for why you have to increase the resources available.* ●●

One council member argues that, unless you are involved in proactively managing your company's reputation by anticipating shifts in the market or regulatory changes and fostering strong links with partners, you are fundamentally misunderstanding the value of reputation. Moreover, you risk missing valuable opportunities:

●● *If you are not out there and being proactive in managing your reputation then you are not really taking control of the business and you are letting other people form that reputation for you.* ●●

Another characterises the proactive work that they do as an iceberg – in any strategic campaign a lot of preparatory work takes place below the surface in terms of strategic planning and scenario testing.

... AND, IN AN IDEAL WORLD, WHAT PROPORTION OF THE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE "PROACTIVE"?

IDEAL PRACTICE

Proactive

76-100% 50:

AVG
77%

51-75% 17:

26-50% 11:

0-25% 2:
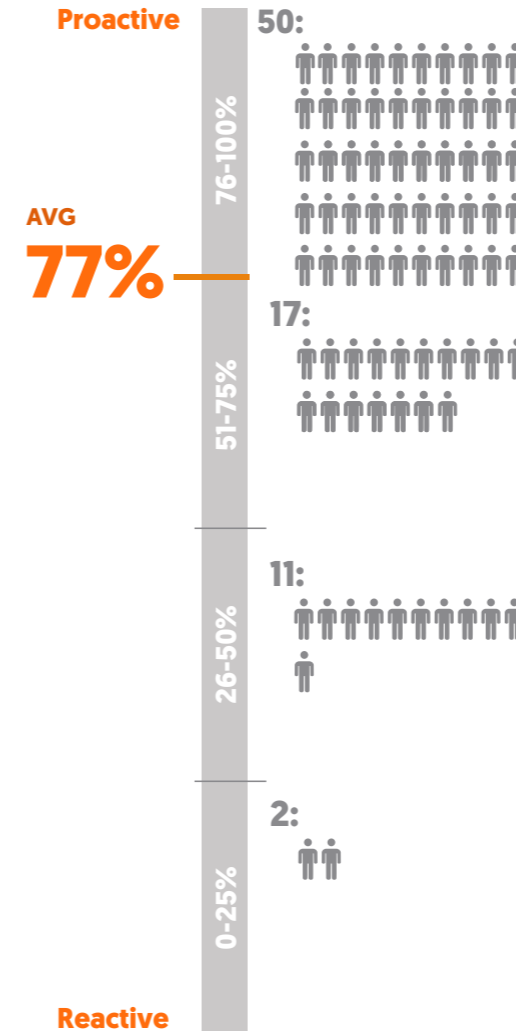
Reactive

This preparation is crucial to ensure that the campaign is strong and structured, but retains the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances:

●● *We focus on being proactive, but you need to make sure you are prepared for trouble and have the capacity for it. Get your talking points ready. If you're doing the right thing about your values and authenticity of the brand, when reactive comms are required you have much less to do because all you have left to do is reinforce what the earlier messages were. There must be clarity about what the brand stands for in the first place.* ●●

Of course, it isn't easy to split out the proactive and reactive elements of reputation management. Neither is it always useful to do so. Many of these tasks defy easy categorisation and a balance is required. But how do companies decide where to draw the line? Digging a bit deeper into the data throws up some important considerations to take into account when assessing where the point of balance lies.

For example, the pressures on a B2B corporation may be very different from those affecting a company which primarily operates in a customer-facing environment. As one Council member points out, a B2C company may have tens of thousands of small transactions with its customers every day. For a B2B operation there may be fewer transactions on a daily basis, but each one may take place on a far larger scale.

The pace at which transactions are happening, and the number of people involved in or exposed to conversations around those transactions, can have a big impact on how companies handle their corporate communications functions. Thus the balance between adopting a tactical or strategic posture may vary depending on the type of business involved:

●● *When you have a monoline focus you can be a little bit more regimented in terms of the approach that you are taking and the messaging that you are giving out and how it is conducted and the direction it is going in. We simply don't have that luxury because we have so many different channels that we go out to.* ●●

Another issue that emerges from our conversations with council members is how responsibility for the reactive and proactive elements of reputational work are divided between different specialisms within the business. This is by no means always the case and many council members argue the benefits of an integrated function which covers both forward-looking and reactive comms - for as long as the Reputation Council has been running, some council members have insisted that the job of managing the company's reputation falls to every one of its employees. However, it is clear that in some companies the responsibilities for proactive and reactive management are split between different teams.

Of course, there can be a huge amount of overlap between these roles, but it is revealing to see how different companies are responding to this challenge. Clearly there is no one-size-fits-all model. In many ways the conversations around this topic serve to underline the dual nature of reputation itself. Yes, reputation is an output; it is accrued or lost as the result of a company's actions or the experiences of its customers. Managing and responding to these interactions and demands corresponds to the need for a reactive capacity that council members identify. At the same time, reputation can also act as an input into decision-making, facilitating conversations and creating business opportunities. It is this aspect of reputation that is best serviced by proactively seeking opportunities to engage with issues and stake out a strong reputational position.

One thing that all council members agree on is the need for teams (however they are structured) to integrate these two often conflicting demands. This involves sharing information, keeping an ear to the ground and working as one to respond to them as they unfold.

They are also acutely aware of what is at stake if reputational issues are not managed effectively:

●● *The interesting thing about the proactive side is that it takes place over time, one to two years, but the reputation risk of it - we could lose all that overnight.* ●●

"The better we work with the business, the more successful we are in getting involved with things early whether they are potential issues or projects. Therefore you spend less time scrambling at the end and more time influencing the decisions being made upfront."

7. COMPANIES AND NGOS IN 10 YEARS' TIME: STILL A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?

KEY POINTS ▼

▲ **The relationship between companies and NGOs is highly variable, with roles fluctuating between adversary and partner on a seemingly regularly basis**

▲ **Despite this degree of variability, the majority of council members feel that the influence of NGOs on corporations will increase over the next ten years**

▲ **One of the driving forces behind increasing NGO influence is the growing ease with which NGOs can spread information and inspire the public into action**

Companies have a love/hate relationship with NGOs, according to feedback from the latest Reputation Council session. Council members describe two distinct roles that NGOs take with companies: sometimes they act as close, trusted advisers or partners; other times they adopt the policing roles of investigators or inspectors. Reconciling these two sorts of interactions can be problematic. Certainly, as several council members point out, when the relationship with an NGO goes bad, it can have serious reputational consequences for the company involved. So how will this company-NGO relationship evolve in the next 10 years?

Some council members describe their relationships with NGOs in ambivalent terms:

●● *We have a bit of a love/hate relationship. We love partnering with NGOs on education programs. We hate that others are looking over our shoulder because they are trying to change the agenda.* ●●

In their policing role, NGOs scrutinise companies, speaking up for vulnerable people and the planet to provide a check and balance system, with their campaigns seeking to highlight and change perceived corporate wrongdoing. Some companies now welcome this kind of input from NGOs, seeing it as a spur to more responsible ways of working, increasing their accountability:

●● *Often it is a boot up the backside that businesses need to take action.*●●

On the love side of the equation, increasingly companies and NGOs are working more closely together as partners to deliver positive social and environmental outcomes. NGOs can help companies make a real impact on the ground, and provide examples of best practice.

"We work very closely with [an NGO]. They do their thing and we do our thing and there is a lot of mutual respect and support."

If now the company-NGO relationship has become close, it seems it will get even closer in the future. In the next ten years, two-thirds of Reputation Council members expect NGOs' influence on the behaviour of major corporations either to increase, or to stay highly influential. Specifically, 57% of council members expect NGO influence to increase, while only 5% expect it to decrease. Members in Asia Pacific seem particularly confident that NGO influence will increase (80%), perhaps because some feel it is starting from a lower base than in some other regions. Comparing the findings from our 2014 Study of Global NGOs, NGOs themselves are even more optimistic than council members, with 82% saying their organisation's influence on corporate behaviour will increase in the next ten years.

Council members see their companies' relationships with NGOs changing in several ways. Many envisage more co-operation, more dialogue and more positive ways of working together. Others expect a drive to increase positive social and environmental impacts, achieving better outcomes from joint programmes:

We will have a different relationship with the NGOs... working more closely together with the NGOs [on] different kinds of issues.
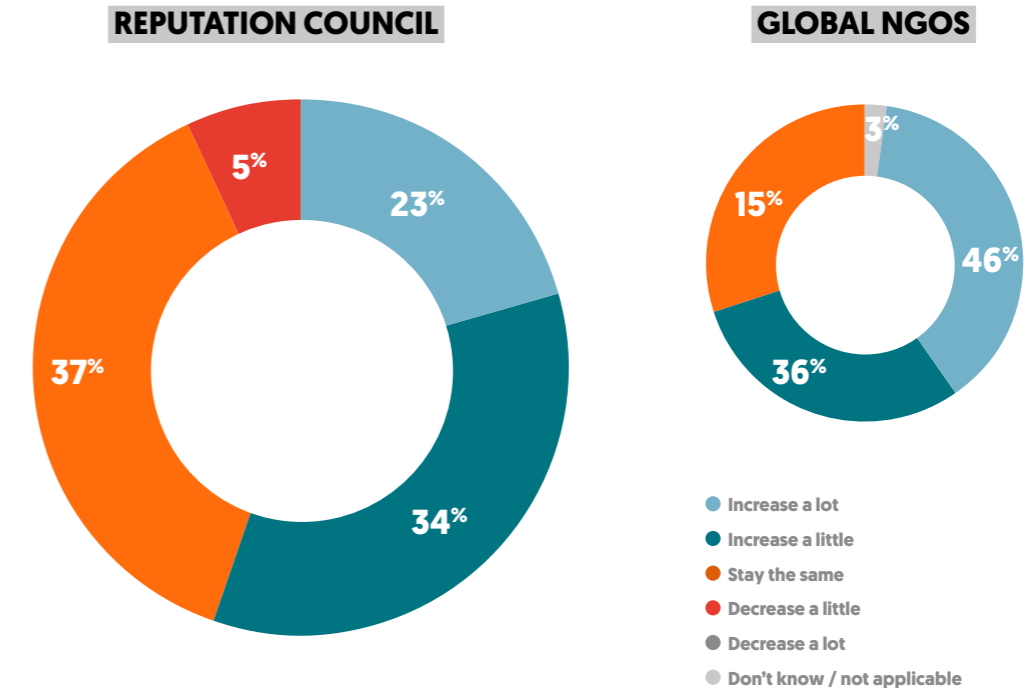
There are also seen to be some challenges hampering companies and NGOs from working more closely together. Some members point to a lack of mutual understanding, which makes it difficult to identify opportunities to address common goals. Companies and NGOs need to be well-matched for a partnership to flourish, working on a similar scale towards agreed objectives. Some council members also point to the conduct of some NGOs, such as attention-seeking stunts, attempts to entrap companies and other opportunist tactics, which make it difficult to establish constructive relationships:

I think NGO trust is suffering because they sometimes pick fights just to get attention... I am all for NGOs as long as they are honest about their purposes and they don't try and play games.

Despite these barriers, other council members are optimistic about the prospects for developing deeper partnerships with NGOs, even if their association begins with antagonism.

"In the future, we need to deal with NGOs in a proactive manner. We will partner with NGOs on [some key] issues. These relationships can start from a negative [situation], but progress to understanding"

Q: Now thinking about the next ten years, to what extent do you expect the impact of NGOs on the behaviour of major corporations to increase, decrease or stay the same?

REPUTATION COUNCIL

- 23%
- 34%
- 37%
- 5%

GLOBAL NGOS

- 3%
- 46%
- 36%
- 15%

- Increase a lot
- Increase a little
- Stay the same
- Decrease a little
- Decrease a lot
- Don't know / not applicable

"NGOs are getting smarter and working more effectively. They are learning how to build groundswells of support via social media. This is very hard to combat, and companies can't ignore it."

Base: All Reputation Council members answering 2015 (91); All Global NGOs 2014 (102)

SO WHY ARE NGOS BECOMING MORE INFLUENTIAL ON COMPANY BEHAVIOUR? MEMBERS IDENTIFY FOUR TRENDS THAT UNDERLIE THESE SHIFTS IN THEIR COMPANIES' RELATIONSHIPS WITH NGOS:

1

NGOs are becoming more professional and more sophisticated in their marketing and campaigning, gaining greater credibility.

2

Better-informed consumers are showing more interest in NGOs and their causes (particularly the Millennial generation in developed markets, and more affluent consumers in emerging markets).

3

More companies are articulating their social purpose and making this a strategic priority, enabling more engagement with NGOs and the issues they champion. There is also more collaboration between private, public and civil sectors to achieve combined impact.

4

Social media also generates increased transparency around corporate conduct. On this last point, several members believe that NGOs are becoming better at using social media to further their aims.

"Led by the digital and social change in today's world we are more connected, there is a lot more information available … It is also easier now for any NGO to attract people to their issues and to put pressure on reputations"

The increased prevalence of digital communication leads a few members to suggest that companies won't need NGOs in the future, instead responding directly to the voices of their consumers via social media. But most council members expect their relationships with traditional NGOs to continue, alongside feedback from other sources. Several members expect companies in future to have relationships with different sorts of NGOs, including people self-organising around a cause and campaigning for changes in company behaviour primarily online:

It is no longer just the traditional NGOs – any group of people can become a virtual NGO by championing [a cause] and finding something that connects with millions of people. The definition of an NGO is blurred, but I think caused-based interest groups will continue to grow and that is something that companies need to pay attention to.

This emergence of influential groups of citizens within the general public, prompted by the rise in social media, is something that we are seeing across several strands of our corporate reputation work. Indeed, this trend has implications for reputation management more broadly, as discussed in the article titled 'Reputation under the microscope', found within this edition of the Reputation Council report.

For NGOs, the increasing influence of informed and connected groups of the general public has implications for their ability to affect corporate behaviour. They may no longer enjoy exclusive relationships with companies, and indeed we are already seeing more joint working and collaboration around key issues. It also puts the onus on NGOs to reach out to non-traditional influencer groups, and to leverage all the opportunities available to spread their message and gain traction in shaping the actions of companies.

CONCLUSION

So the corporate-NGO romance is set to continue, albeit as a persistently turbulent relationship. The love is not shared by everyone: there are a few members who expect their relationships with NGOs to become less important, or who remain suspicious of close contact, advocating a neutral stance towards NGOs. Nevertheless, the majority expect their relationships with NGOs to remain close, or become even more important than they are now. Genuinely constructive partnerships are the aspiration for many Reputation Council members, and despite some challenges, many are optimistic that previously warring parties will in the future be able to join forces for the common good:

I think the challenge now is to try and find a way to work with NGOs that is much more positive, to say we want to work with you to tackle this issue, to create a far more positive rather than negative relationship.

8. REPUTATION COUNCIL PARTICIPANTS 2015

FULL NAME	COMPANY	ROLE
Hugh Davies	3	Director of Corporate Affairs
Laura Vallis	AB Inbev	Director, Global Corporate Affairs
John McLaren	Akzo Nobel	Corporate Director of Communciations
Mike Scott	Alstom	Director of Communications
Hassan Foda	Americana Group	Regional Marketing Director
Petra Eurenius	AstraZeneca	Corporate Communications Director Nordic-Baltic
Claire Divver	BAE Systems	Group Communications Director
Galina Mitchelhill	Bank of New Zealand	Head of Market Research & Customer Insights
Karyn Munsie	Bank of Queensland (BOQ)	Group Executive, Corporate Affairs, Investor Relations & Government Relations
David Bickerton	BP	Director of Communications
Dave Stangis	Campell Soup Company	Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility
Chris Hamrick	Cancer Treatment Centers of America	Director of Corporate Communications
Kathryn Hodges	Carlton & United Breweries	Government & Industry Relations Manager
Fahad Qadir	Coca-Cola	Director Public Affairs & Communications, Pakistan & Afghanistan Region
Julian Hunt	Coca-Cola Enterprises	Vice President Public Affairs & Communications GB
Sarah Prestwood	Coca-Cola South Pacific	Public Affairs Manager
Anders Edholm	Confederation of Swedish Enterprise	Head of Strategic Campaigning
Sidney Shin-Yi Dung	Dagong Europe Credit Rating	Chief Communications Officer
Michael Neuwirth	Danone	Senior Director of Public Relations
Ulrika Åkervall Westin	Danske Bank	Head of Communications
Tom Ormsby	DeBeers	Director, External & Corporate Affairs
Caroline Rhodes	Diageo	Global Employee Engagement Director
Lisa Crane	Diageo	Head of Corporate Communications
Thomas Midteide	DNB	Head of Corporate Communications
Stefan Nerpin	DNV GL	Group Chief Communications Officer
Nick Johnson	Doosan Power Systems Ltd	Communications Director
Martin von Arronet	Electrolux	Senior Vice President Corporate Communications
Vsevolod Sementsov	EVRAZ	Vice President of Corporate Communications

FULL NAME	COMPANY	ROLE
Abigail Rodgers	ExxonMobil	Global Brand Manager
Guy Parsonage	Fluid	Managing Director
Farooq Shahid	FMC	Managing Director
Erik von Hofsten	Folksam	Head of Group Corporate Communications
Lauren More	Ford Motor Co of Canada Ltd	VP, Communications
Will Spiers	GE Capital	Global PR Director
Pablo Jiménez Zorrilla	Grupo Modelo – AB InBev Mexico	Vice President of Legal & Corporate Affairs
Faisal Malik	Haleeb Foods	CEO
Clare Harbord	Heathrow Airport Limited	Corporate Affairs Director
Sean O'Neill	Heineken	Chief Corporate Relations Officer
Ian Pascal	Hermes	Head of Marketing & Communications
Hans Daems	Hitachi	Group Public Affairs Officer, EMEA
Gustavo Gastelum	Holcim	Director of Relations & External Communication
Chris Wermann	Home Retail Group	Director Corporate Affairs
Bianca Olson	Houghton Mifflin Company	SVP Corporate Affairs
Médard Schoenmaeckers	HSBC Retail Bank & Wealth Management	Global Head of Communications
Jane Anderson	IAG	Group General Manager, Corporate Affairs
Carlos Saucedo	IBM México	Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs Manager
Susana Maldonado	IBM México	External Communications Team Leader
Eva Burén	ICA Retailers Association	Head of Communications
Thomas Osburg	Intel	Director Europe Corporate Affairs & Innovation
Holly Means	Johnson & Johnson	VP, Corporate Equity, Strategy & Sponsorships
Sarah Colamarino	Johnson & Johnson	VP Corporate Equity
Andy Roberts	Johnson & Johnson Middle East FZ-LLC	Senior Marketing Director, Middle East, North Africa & Pakistan
Jad Khairallah	Johnson & Johnson Middle East FZ-LLC	Marketing Manager MENAP, Consumer Healthcare & OTC
Nicola Marsden	Keir Group	Director of Group Communications
Rupert Maitland-Titterton	Kelloggs	Senior Director, Corporate Communications, Public Affairs & Sustainability, EMEA
Steve Lombardo	Koch Industries	Chief Communications and Marketing Officer

FULL NAME	COMPANY	ROLE
Danielle Poblete	Leidos	Vice President, Marketing
Richard Levick	Levick	Chairman & CEO
Tom Ogburn	LexisNexis	Managing Director, Business Insights Solutions
Johan Hallin	Lindex	Concept & Marketing Director
Leela Gantman	Lion	External Relations Director for Lion Beer, Spirits & Wine Australia
Matt Young	Lloyds Banking	Group Corporate Affairs Director
James Issokson	MasterCard	Group Head, North American Communications
Nick Hindle	McDonald's	Senior Vice-President Corporate Affairs UK & North West Europe
Peter Lidov	MegaFon	Director, Public Relations
Álvaro Caballero	Metro De Santiago	Commercial Manager & Corporate Affairs
Hiroshi Someya	Mitsubishi Corporation	Deputy Director, Public Relations
Makoto Tokuda	Mitsui Fudosan	Executive Manager, Corporate Communications Department
Lorena Herrera Zahar	Nestlé México	Senior Manager Corporate Communication
Halvor Molland	Norsk Hydro	Vice President Communications & Public Affairs
Tom Ovind	Norwegian Armed Forces	Managing Director, Norwegian Armed Forces, Media Center
Nick Adams	Novo Nordisk A/S	Vice President, Corporate Branding
Clayton Ford	Orora Limited	Group Manager, Corporate Affairs
Tim Fassam	Prudential	Head of Public Affairs UK
Mike Davies	PWC	Global Director Communications
Kevin Nash	Quintiles	Senior Director, Corporate Communications
Patty O'Hayer	RB (Reckitt Benckiser)	Director, Global External Relations
Paul Abrahams	Reed Elsevier	Head of Global Corporate Communications
Guy Esnouf	RWE npower	Head of Communications
Viveka Hirdman-Ryrberg	SEB	Head Group Communications
Edvard Unsgaard	SEK, Swedish Export Credit Corporation	Head of Communications
Annie Sebelius	Skandia	Director of Communications
Juan Carlos Corvalán	SODIMAC S.A.	General Counsel & Sustainability Manager
Kai Boschmann	SOS International	Chief Marketing & Communications Officer

FULL NAME	COMPANY	ROLE
Simon Kopec	Starwood Hotels & Resorts	Global Brand Management
Jannik Lindbæk	Statoil	Vice President Media Relations
Michelle Taylor	Stockland	General Manager, Stakeholder Relations
Shuichi Yasukawa	Sumitomo Metal & Mining	Executive Officer
Henrik Olsson	Swedish Match	Director Public Affairs Nordic
Asif Peer	Systems Limited	CEO & Managing Director
Nadeem Hussain	Tameer Bank	Founder, President & CEO
Abhinav Kumar	Tata Consultancy Services	Chief Marketing & Communications Officer for Europe
Glenn Mandelid	Telenor	Vice President Communications and Head of Media Relations
Rebecca Shelley	Tesco	Group Corporate Affairs Director
Krista Scaldwell	The Coca-Cola Company	VP, Public Affairs & Communications
Mary Merrill	The Coca-Cola Company	Global Director, Sustainability Marketing
Patricia Dahl	The Eye-Bank for Sight Restoration, Inc.	Executive Director/CEO
Valeria Smagina	TUI	Head of Marketing & PR
Tim Cobb	UBS AG	Head of Group External Communications
Emma Flack	Unilever	Campaigns & Engagement Director, Global Communications & Sustainable Business
Irina Bakhtina	Unilever	Vice President of Sustainable Business Development & Corporate Affairs
Sadia Dada	Unilever Pakistan	Head of Corporate Affairs
Don Nathan	UnitedHealth Group	Chief Communications Officer
Yulia Migunova-Khegay	Valdai Club Foundation	Head of the External Relations Division
Susanna Beranova	Velux	Senior Corporate Brand Manager
Meigan Terry	Virgin Atlantic	SVP, Communications & External Affairs
Henry Sténson	Volvo Group	Executive Vice President Corporate Communications & Sustainability Affairs
Yana Egorova	VTB Group	Head of Corporate Marketing
Peter McConnell	Woolworths	Director of Corporate & Public Affairs
Esben Tuman	Yara	Vice President, Corporate Communications

9. ABOUT THE REPUTATION COUNCIL

Established in 2009, the Reputation Council brings together senior communicators from some of the most respected corporations in the world.

The Reputation Council's mission is to increase understanding of the issues and challenges facing communicators in the corporate environment, as well as capturing expert views on key trends, issues and events in the wider world. Each sitting of the Reputation Council provides a definitive guide to the latest thinking and practice in the corporate communications world. This tenth sitting of the Reputation Council involved 114 senior communicators based in 17 different countries.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE REPUTATION COUNCIL AND ITS WORK, PLEASE CONTACT
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WWW.IPSOS-MORI.COM/REPUTATIONCOUNCIL

Ipsos Global Reputation Centre

ABOUT IPSOS GLOBAL REPUTATION CENTRE

The Ipsos Global Reputation Centre provides corporate clients and not-for-profit
organisations with highly customised research that allows them to manage
and build their reputation, plan, manage, and improve strategic and crisis
communications, better understand their employees and audiences,
and oversee stakeholder relations.