

Companies must play by the Wikipedia rules

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As if companies didn't have enough trouble just keeping their own websites in order – now, they are now being urged to look after their Wikipedia pages, too.

Wikipedia has become an important part of a company's profile: the Wikipedia website regularly appears second or third in a list of search engine results and for many people will be the most accessible way of learning about a business.

Yet companies fight shy of interfering with what is said about them on Wikipedia – a global online encyclopedia written and edited by its users – following high-profile incidents in which organisations have amended their entries to be more favourable. Reputations were damaged once the changes were discovered and made public.

Advice on how to manage such a delicate relationship with the website, which insists on its independence and neutrality, comes from Lundquist, an Italian communications consultancy.

It has conducted research into how businesses are presented on Wikipedia. It ranked the world's largest 500 companies according to how much information was included on the encyclopedia's pages, its presentation and ease of navigation.

Apple came top of the list, followed by BT, Nokia, Royal Dutch Shell, Ford and Toyota.

Lundquist suggests ways in which companies can improve their Wikipedia profile without running the risk of breaking the rules when editing their own entries.

It says the popularity of social media means it is now vital that organisations take an active role in monitoring what is said about them; they must abide by Wikipedia's rules of openness; when updating a Wikipedia entry, they should leave a note explaining the changes made; and they should engage with and help editors interested in their subjects.

"It is not recommended that companies make longer substantial edits themselves. But users can engage with a variety of groups on Wikipedia in order to solicit help with their article," says the Lundquist advice.

www.lundquist.it