

## Online sustainability reporting study lambasts companies' refusal to engage with stakeholders

While corporates are accused of a "dismal" response to social media opportunities, the Guardian is commended for its openness

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Just a week after the Guardian was commended for the interactivity of its [sustainability reporting website](#), a new study shows that very few companies are following its lead.

The CSR 'Global Leaders' report found that most major corporations remain locked in a once-a-year reporting mentality, failing to keep stakeholders updated in an engaging, dynamic and ongoing manner.

The online reporting probe by communications consultancy [Lundquist](#) concluded that corporations in general are not keeping pace with the needs of a sceptical audience for dialogue and engagement on the internet – from setting up effective feedback channels to adopting social media.

In contrast, the Guardian's interactive '[living our values](#)' website was visited by 85,309 unique users in its first year and a review by its independent auditors [Two Tomorrows](#) concluded: "A vast majority of the posts on the sustainability site were open for comment and we welcome this approach. Additionally, many posts did get comments, and in some a lively debate followed, creating a genuine sense of engagement, with the Guardian providing open responses to many comments.

## Guardian.co.uk

Date: 19 October 2010

Page: -

Subject: Lundquist CSR Online Awards 2010 – 1/2

"We also noted that posts were being followed on Twitter and other networks, creating a wider opportunity for engagement.....Overall we have noted a very positive level of interaction, far higher than most companies achieve when trying to get feedback on their sustainability reports."

The Lundquist study of the websites of 91 members of the [Dow Jones Sustainability Index](#) found that companies performed best in the 'user experience' section and performance was adequate in the 'content' section.

However, the results for 'ongoing engagement' were "dismal," with a dearth of interactive functionality, blogs, news, events and contact information.

In fact, more than two-thirds of the sites evaluated do not enable sharing of content on social media, more than 80% failed to indicate when their website pages were last updated and 39% had no CSR-related press releases or news items.

"Our research shows clearly that companies are failing to exploit the internet's potential and are missing out on a series of advantages provided by the web: the ability to make messages and exchanges more personal, keep stakeholders constantly updated and seek feedback and debate," said Sara Troiano, CSR researcher at Lundquist. "These are all elements that can enhance credibility on corporate responsibility issues."

Each website was assessed using a set of 77 evaluation criteria, drawn up on the basis of a survey of more than 250 CSR professionals and sector experts from almost 30 different countries.

British companies perform well on average, along with the Dutch and Swiss, but US companies continue to perform below average. Industries with major environmental impacts continue to do best, such as utilities and energy companies with financial and telecommunications companies faring worst.