

ONLINE REPORTING

Top firms poor at web CSR engagement

By Robin Froggatt-Smith

A report published by Milan-based communications consultancy Lundquist finds that while disclosure of information is usually of a high standard in CSR reporting, communication and interactivity are lacking.

The most damaging result of this one-way system is that 'companies are publishing a lot of good news and avoiding the hard (sometimes uncomfortable) facts that stakeholders need if they are to judge how well a firm is performing in non-financial matters,' according to the report.

James Osborne, head of CSR communications at Lundquist, notes that while this reflects negatively on companies' interaction with investors, 'we recognize that to communicate effectively through a website is no simple thing. Corporate processes are organized around reporting and

disclosure. CSR in particular has evolved from environmental, health and safety practice, which, even internally, is a report-based process. A move toward web interaction will be a real culture shift.'

To test communication, Lundquist's fictitious private investor emailed CSR inquiries to various companies, but more than half (48) failed to respond. More companies (17) took longer than three days than took less than 24 hours (15) to respond, and 35

percent of companies provided no contact details for CSR.

As the report points out, the internet has brought about higher expectations for corporate response. Initially, these rising expectations were concerned with effective reporting; since the rise of social media, however, the pressure for a dialogue has increased.

'The same issue then arises for CSR reporting,' Osborne explains. 'Companies are worried about how they can control it.' ■

TOP PERFORMERS

CSR policy	Eni
Reporting	Eni, Shell
Community	ANZ Banking Group, AstraZeneca
SRI	Axa, Kingfisher, Swiss Re
Visual communications and language	UBS, Sanofi-aventis, Caterpillar, Rio Tinto
Navigability	IBM
Staff and contacts	Eni, Aviva

Source: Lundquist