

## Lundquist Research Series: May 2009

### Executive Summary

# The coverage of Italian companies on Wikipedia

Companies must engage with Wikipedia in order to improve their online profile. Survey by Lundquist assesses the quality of articles on Italian companies and provides a guide as to how they can improve

Wikipedia has now become one of the world's most important sources of information online. It accounts for 8% of global internet traffic receiving around 60 million unique visitors a month. The website is fundamental to an online profile of the company, and appears right next to company websites in search engine rankings. The site plays a key role in the public perception of the company.

The challenge for corporate communicators is to understand how the website works and to find a way of representing themselves effectively on it. A variety of corporate scandals have scared companies off making any attempt to engage with users of the site. However, as Wikipedia has become such a well established source, this engagement is increasingly necessary.

As our survey demonstrates, this is a challenge that very few companies are meeting. We found that even though all of the companies except **Snam Rete Gas** had dedicated articles on Wikipedia, the amount of information contained on each article was generally quite scarce. Out of a maximum of 18 points on our scale the article for the average company of the S&P/Mib40 was 8.4. The most detailed articles on Wikipedia from our survey group were **Fiat, Pirelli & C.** and **Eni**.

In order to confront this challenge companies need to change their conception of public relations to an approach that speaks directly to communities, rather than to individuals in the traditional media. It demands an understanding of the rules, dynamics and culture of different communities in order to communicate with them effectively.

In terms of Wikipedia, this means avoiding editing your own articles, except to update easily verifiable statistics, and representing your company using the appropriate channels such as article talk pages. Companies should also provide Wikipedia editors with copyright free photos to use on articles.

Effective public relations with online communities has had proven success. In our survey, we found that **Fiat** had actively sought to have a dialogue with the editors of its page and to provide them assistance. They were also the top performing company in our survey.

#### Lundquist Srl's top five tips for effective engagement with Wikipedia

1. Respect the Wikipedia community and its rules, seek to understand how the website works
2. Only make edits to your article when they concern independently verifiable facts and figures such as the number of employees, market cap, etc.
3. Do make available copyright free images and media available for Wikipedians to use
4. Do use discussion pages to interact with Wikipedia editors and express your opinion
5. Monitor your Wikipedia article for updates and vandalism.

#### Top 10 most covered Italian (S&P/Mib 40) companies on Wikipedia

1.	Fiat	94%
2.	Pirelli & C.	93%
3.	Eni	78%
3.	STM	78%
3.	UniCredit Group	78%
3.	Finmeccanica	78%
3.	Mondadori	78%
8.	Impregilo	75%
9.	Parmalat	72%
9.	Bulgari	72%

#### Top 10 most viewed Italian company Wikipedia articles (February 2009)

1.	Fiat
2.	Bulgari
3.	STM
4.	Pirelli & C.
5.	Eni
6.	Parmalat
7.	Luxottica
8.	Finmeccanica
9.	UniCredit Group
10.	Telecom Italia

*“Companies should not be afraid to speak to the Wikipedia Community. If they approach it in the right way and demonstrate that they intend to help the community, they will be welcomed”*

- George Turner, Head of the research

## The importance to Wikipedia to companies

Wikipedia is important to companies for the following reasons:

- Contains articles on a great number of companies, including all but one of the S&P/Mib 40
- 60 million unique visitors a month, the site is currently the 8th most popular site in the world.
- 9,142,010 registered user accounts.
- Very high search engine ranking, 61% of its page views come from Google.
- In the 2008 H&H Webranking Questionnaire 75% of business journalists, analysts and investors confirmed that they use Wikipedia

## The risks of Wikipedia to companies

There are many risks to companies associated with the open contributions policy of Wikipedia, and the fact that information on Wikipedia is widely distributed. One risk is that companies, failing to properly understand the rules of the encyclopaedia, will attempt to directly edit their entries themselves. The edits will be reverted and frequently the attempt will be picked up by the press resulting in bad publicity for the company. This happened with **Wal-Mart**. Someone working at the company changed the Wal-Mart Wikipedia entry from stating that the company's wages were on average 20% less than other major US retailers to being double the federal minimum wage. This was then published in the New York Times article, *Seeing Corporate Fingerprints in Wikipedia Edits* of 19 August 2007.

Another risk comes from the fact that someone from a competitor may use the encyclopaedia in order to try to damage the company brand. This happened when Ford, on 15 April 2005 changed the article on the Dodge Rampage, a car produced by rival Chrysler in order to say that the car was ugly and unpopular.

## The research

Our research was designed to measure the presence of Italian companies on the English language version of Wikipedia and how well they were covered by the encyclopaedia. We conducted this research in February of 2009 and covered all of the companies of the S&P/Mib 40. Our criteria looked at both how the articles were presented, the information displayed within them and their popularity through the number of page views. However, we did not check the accuracy of the information on the article.

In order to give some context to our research we also evaluated the Wikipedia articles of the global top 20 companies from the FT 500 index using the same criteria as for the Italian companies. To assess the relative coverage of Wikipedia in relation to other encyclopaedias, we looked to see what kind of coverage the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Microsoft's Encarta gave to Italian companies.

*The most important thing for companies is to realise that Wikipedia can boost their international profile.*

- Joakim Lundquist, founding partner of Lundquist Srl.

## The results

- All companies had an article on Wikipedia, except **Snam Rete Gas**, which redirected to the article on Eni.
- In comparison only four companies had entries on the Encyclopaedia Britannica and only two on Microsoft Encarta.
- The average number of points scored for Italian companies using our scale was 8.4 points, out of a maximum of 18. This was in comparison to 16.1 for the top 20 world companies.
- The least frequently found information on Italian company Wikipedia pages were photographs of the company, the market capitalisation, management profiles and links to external websites.

The companies that received the best coverage on Wikipedia were internationally recognised heavy industry brands such as **Eni**, **Pirelli**, **Fiat** and **Finmeccanica**. Non industrial companies with large international operations such as **ST Microelectronics** and **UniCredit** also did well. Surprisingly, internationally high profile consumer brands such as **Bulgari**, **Luxottica** and **Geox** were not as well covered as their industrial counterparts.

### The coverage of Italian companies on Wikipedia

Position	Company	Points (%)	Page views English February	Page views Italian February
1	Fiat	17 (94%)	50,131	19,676
2	Pirelli & C.	15 (83%)	5,807	1,584
3	Eni	14 (78%)	5,420	5,616
3	ST Microelectronics	14 (78%)	6,114	1,649
3	UniCredit Group	14 (78%)	3,752	6,260
3	Finmeccanica	14 (78%)	3,979	3,073
3	Mondadori Editore	14 (78%)	702	1,584
8	Impregilo	13.5 (75%)	605	2,530
9	Parmalat	13 (72%)	5,413	2,115
9	Bulgari	13 (72%)	9,712	1,162
11	Enel	12.5 (69%)	1,982	5,686
12	Luxottica	12 (67%)	4,720	2,338
12	Autogrill	12 (67%)	974	1,220
14	B.P. Milano	11 (61%)	664	2,129
14	Mediaset	11 (61%)	2,746	8,975
14	Banca Monte Paschi di Siena	11 (61%)	1,554	585
17	Italcementi	10.5 (58%)	537	805
17	Saipem	10.5 (58%)	1,847	1,710
17	Assicurazioni Generali	10.5 (58%)	1,467	1,799
20	Telecom Italia	10 (56%)	2,771	5,671
20	A2A	10 (56%)	781	1,275
20	Prysmian	10 (56%)	546	571
23	Intesa SanPaolo	9.5 (53%)	1,972	3,812
24	Fastweb	9 (50%)	629	5,433
24	Geox	9 (50%)	1,788	1,431
24	Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso	9 (50%)	330	1,685
27	UBI Banca	7 (39%)	334	355
27	Banco Popolare	7 (39%)	507	661
27	Tenaris	7 (39%)	1,206	878
30	Mediolanum	6 (33%)	358	289
31	Buzzi Unicem	5 (28%)	405	1,603
31	Unipol	5 (28%)	330	1,134
31	Fondiaria - Sai	5 (28%)	197	986
34	Lottomatica	4.5 (25%)	507	1,280
35	Mediobanca	4 (22%)	738	3,176
35	Alleanza Assicurazioni	4 (22%)	223	763
37	Terna	3.5 (19%)	310	1,738
38	Atlantia	3 (17%)	380	576
38	Seat Pagine Gialle	3 (17%)	549	1,288
40	Snam Rete Gas	0 (0%)	0	0

For the international articles, Chevron was the only company to score full points. Also we can clearly see that the geographic location makes a difference to the score, with UK and US companies, being much higher placed than their counterparts from other language groups, such as those companies from China. Although some companies such as Nestlé and Gazprom had good articles, these brands have a high profile in the English speaking world.

### The coverage of the top 20 companies from the FT 150 on Wikipedia

Position	Company	Points (%)	Page views in February
1	<b>Chevron (US)</b>	18 (100%)	17,706
2	<b>Royal Dutch Shell (UK/NL)</b>	17 (94%)	30,139
2	<b>Nestlé (Switzerland)</b>	17 (94%)	13,359
2	<b>BP (UK)</b>	17 (94%)	34,871
2	<b>General Electric (US)</b>	17 (94%)	69,029
2	<b>Gazprom (Russia)</b>	17 (94%)	13,783
2	<b>Wal-Mart Stores (US)</b>	17 (94%)	112,544
2	<b>HSBC (UK)</b>	17 (94%)	53,955
2	<b>Johnson &amp; Johnson (US)</b>	17 (94%)	23,452
2	<b>Microsoft (US)</b>	17 (94%)	366,866
2	<b>AT&amp;T (US)</b>	17 (94%)	53,527
2	<b>Total (France)</b>	17 (94%)	11,033
13	<b>Berkshire Hathaway (US)</b>	16 (89%)	71,119
13	<b>Exxon Mobil (US)</b>	16 (89%)	24,464
13	<b>Petrobras (Brazil)</b>	16 (89%)	6,477
16	<b>Procter &amp; Gamble (US)</b>	15 (83%)	46,147
17	<b>China Mobile (Hong Kong)</b>	14 (78%)	9,759
17	<b>PetroChina (China)</b>	14 (78%)	4,492
17	<b>Indl &amp; Coml Bank of China (China)</b>	14 (78%)	4,288
20	<b>China Construction Bank (China)</b>	12 (67%)	2,463

## Advice for companies

Successful engagement with Wikipedia and other social media sites involves embracing a new concept of public relations based on communicating with entire communities rather than individual representatives. In Wikipedia, messages are left on public notice boards for any member of the community to take action. There is no editorial board or central contact point. This demands that communications experts understand the community and respect its rules. They must seek to understand the culture of the community they are speaking to in order to be accepted and to be understood.

The goal of the company in its relations with Wikipedia should be to help Wikipedia editors to write better articles with more content. There are several positive steps a company can do to fulfil this goal. Firstly the company can provide copyright free images and logos for the editors to use. The company can also provide links to further information and even suggest new sections and supply sample texts, as long as this is done on the article discussion page, a space where editors can discuss potential edits before they are made.

## About Lundquist Srl

Lundquist Srl is an international strategic communications consultancy, based in Milan, Italy. The company specialises in online corporate communications. This report forms part of the Lundquist research series that examines how companies can best take advantage of new trends in web communications.