Explain Yourself 2023 Transcript

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INTRODUCTION

Dan Drury : Hello everybody and welcome to Explain Yourself 2023. I'm Dan Drury, Chief Commercial Officer of Bowen Craggs and I'm joined by Jason Sumner.

Bowen Craggs has published an Explain Yourself report every other year since 2017. And since then, the information landscape the companies operate in has only gotten more complicated. Soon I'll hand on over to Jason, our Head of Editorial and author of The Explain Yourself report to tell us more.

But first, I just want to tell you a little bit about Bowen Craggs. You can see us all there in cartoon form. We are probably at the intersection of digital experience and corporate communications. Our team has extensive experience from a range of disciplines and backgrounds such as business journalism, data science, website editing, agency professionals, and of course, ex-corporate web managers. We're based in London and New York, and we advise clients all over the world.
Bowen Craggs offer something that's exceedingly rare in the digital space: unbiased expert advice. We're not an agency, we don't sell technical, editorial or design services. So, our advice is trusted and independent. Our business is rooted in a deep understanding of what corporate stakeholders really want and expect, and it's backed up by two decades of experience, over a million website visitor survey responses, and our well-known leader board of digital comms excellence: the Bowen Craggs Index.
What you're seeing on the screen right now is a screenshot from the Bowen Craggs Hub. It's the live index that our clients log into. And over the twenty years the index has been around, its earned gold standard status. It evolves continually to track the improving standards in digital corporate communications. And as you'll see, it's not just a set of scores. Behind each of the Index's twenty-six metrics that cover usability, accessibility, engagement and content, you will find examples of how to serve all of your audiences well.

Today, we're going to focus on three of the engagement and content metrics: company information, reputation communications and non-financial information.
Together, these metrics as Jason will explain, underpin the Explain Yourself report.

But first a word on why this matters. What you're looking at here is data from our website visitor research. It's showing you all of the different audiences that visit the "About Us" section of a website. And as you can see, we have job seekers at thirty percent, customers about another third, employees around eight to ten percent. And of course, media, IR and ESG professionals, the corporate audiences, they're very small in number, but very, very important.
And from this kind of visitor research, we have proven that a visit to corporate website has the opportunity to change hearts and minds, like no other channel available to corporate communicators. We asked our website visitors "as a result of visiting the website.com, does it create a change in the brand perception?", and the data shows that on average, brand perception can be improved for almost two thirds of visitors. But only if you get it right.
The impact of not getting it right, we call that goal failure, is striking. As I just said the

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average uplift amongst our clients in brand perception is around sixty five percent. But that is the average across all visitors and all our clients' sites. If you look only at those visitors that failed their goal, then that better average plummets by half and the worse perception triples. So doing a good job really matters. I will show you more evidence later. But first, here's Jason to show you what good looks like.

WHAT IS EXPLAIN YOURSELF?

Jason Sumner : Thank you, Dan.
Hello.
Explain yourself has two meanings. The first meaning is to explain yourself in terms of who you are as a company, who you are and what you do, your values and your purpose in the world.
And the second meaning is who you are in response to a demand in the way that a parent might ask a misbehaving child, explain yourself. You've done something wrong.

What we want to achieve today is to show you our view of who is best at the reputation and explanatory content that explains who you are as a company, your positive impact on the world, but also some of the trickier things. When things go wrong, when the issues are complex, and when you are under fire, and what you can and should do on digital channels to address those times and those issues.

And what we would like you to take away today is our latest thinking on reputation content, some of the trends to watch and of course lots and lots of examples for ideas and inspiration from our view of who is the best at explaining themselves right now on corporate digital channels.
I am going to share my screen and we are not going to use slides today. We're going to just use the corporate web to do this presentation. And what I would like to do is show you, we're going to run through these links. And there are a few of them that I promise to move through at a brisk pace. What we're looking at here is the title page of the report that will be available to you following the presentation.

Now a bit about what I'm going to cover today. We're going to cover some context first, so quickly talk about how it's a dangerous world of misinformation. There's a lot of extreme opinions out there, and cancellations and deep fakes and generative AI make it even more difficult to know what is real and what is fake. And no one, if we're being cynical, no one believes anything anymore.
So, the question for corporates is why say anything anymore? Why put yourself through it? And in other words, why can't we all be like Warren Buffett and his company Berkshire Hathaway, and say the absolute minimum on corporate digital as we are looking at his website, which has been this way for many, many years?

Well, the answer comes down to a few fundamentals that are still very relevant for all of us, and I'll have a quick reminder of those. And then I'll move on to the practicalities and how companies should be explaining themselves on digital. I'll look through the Explain Yourself metrics.
I'll explain what we mean by these and just go into a bit more detail on how we evaluate those metrics. And then look at who is the best right now in those metrics, and then some of the fundamental elements that make up our valuation. Then we move on to two issues in more detail that we hear from clients all the time right now. And the first is on innovation communications. And the second is how to avoid greenwashing. And we'll look at some

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examples in those two paragraphs. And then I'll conclude by leaving you with some just really good examples of content that we've seen over the last 12 months.

So first, some context. Why say anything anymore? It's a scary world out there. When it comes to reputation. Reputations can be blown at any moment. And if we were going to categorise the risks at this particular moment, I put them into three categories:

conventional risk, newly frightening and just random. And the conventional is what we would call the usual business problem, the conventional crisis. Now this is not conventional in terms of the content of this crisis, which was existential for Silicon Valley Bank. But conventional in the sense that it's a reputation problem that derives directly from corporate behaviour, and this can strike at any time. The newly frightening comes down to being caught in the middle of political attacks, and these can happen at any time as well, but not just from the left, but increasingly from all sides of the political spectrum.

And this is just an example of this kind of attack and issue and this is Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, spearheading the backlash against ESG in the United States. But this is happening in different forms around the world, perhaps with more focus in the US, of course.
And finally, something random.
And this is a story from late last year, which was KFC in Germany caused a storm, caused a reputation problem, by tweeting out promotion that also compared the fried chicken to the Kristallnacht event, and it caused some lots and lots of problems.
So the response to all of this could be retrieved behind corporate walls, do risk management and effectively shut down communications. And yet, as we know, that really isn't a response either, and this story articulates it very well from the Financial Times.
You cannot be a black box in response to all of this. So, the message really is a mixed one, be an open book, be transparent on one hand, but be very careful, don't say anything that will get you cancelled, or indeed put you out of business.

So how do organisations navigate this very modern fine line that they have to walk these days? Well, let's start to answer that question.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

It's a very big question. I want to come back to some fundamentals. And the first is general to companies and the second fundamental is more specific to the web presence. And I'm going to use that as a launchpad to get into some of the examples that we've prepared for you today.

The first fundamental is that explaining yourself as an organisation is a business imperative. If you do not, then someone else will and just because it is complex does not mean that you do not engage with the topic and the issues.
And this is actually inspiring some new thinking at a strategic level in organisations. Deciding when to speak out and when not to speak out, coming up with internal parameters and even explaining these to external audiences as to when a company or a CEO will or will not speak out on an issue.
And actually, some of this involves ignoring crises until they blow over. So that is all very, very complex.

But we're here because we run the corporate web presence, or at least we're responsible for some part of it. So, what does this mean for us?

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Well, the website has a crucial role in all of this. It's not the only role but it has a fundamental and important part to play in explaining yourself as an organisation and it comes down to a question that we still get asked. Now even more than ever, and I think this question, recurs. We've been in business for 20 years as Bowen Craggs. And this question becomes more intense at certain times, and I think it's in times of uncertainty, but that question is, "what is the website for?", and believe it or not, we still have people approaching us having a fundamental thing inside their organisation and wondering what they should use the corporate website for.

Well, there's a few different answers to that. But one key answer that concerns us today is that the website is a place, and in some ways, the only place, to explain yourself how you want to on a channel that you completely own.

And I wanted to show you nestle.com and their home page, and this is the current leader in the Bowen Craggs Index. And it's a great example to see how the website can be used to explain yourself on digital and Nestle takes full advantage of this channel in the way that they communicate with stakeholders, both giving them information, but also putting across their own messages.

And what they want to point out about Nestle to their stakeholders. And indeed, if you look at any of the top 10 overall in the Index, you will have your answer in terms of what the website is for. Now, there are other ways to communicate this inside the organisation. We've seen our clients have success by talking about the website in the context of being owned media and being the company's biggest owned media channel. And that also means to fit in with paid channels, earned and campaigns, and often that language will help speak to other colleagues in the organisation, those from marketing and those from the media team. Another way that we've been describing for some time is that it's still after all these years likely to be your biggest publication as a company.

HOW DO YOU START TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF?

So, let's get even more practical now. How do you start to explain yourself; how do you think about explaining yourself using the corporate web presence as your main channel?

And I want to talk about the Explain Yourself metrics, explain a little bit more about what we mean by this and the evaluation that goes into the Explain Yourself metrics. And what I am showing you here is the scorecard. And we see actually the scorecard for the number one company in the Index which is Nestle, and you see their scores along the left and then their peers are also listed and competitors and peers that they compare themselves against are along the top. There are lots of metrics here in numbers. I want to break it down for you a bit more making this easier to understand.
We're looking at eight main metrics in the Bowen Craggs Index. And each of these has a few different sub metrics. So overall, there's twenty-six different measurement points that we evaluate the web presence on.

If we think about these metrics, this group of metrics in three parts is the easiest, really. So, the first is how is it all put together? How does the web presence fit together, how do people move around and how does it fit in with the overall digital ecosystem of the company? And that's really covered in the construction metrics.

And then there are metrics about what we would call transactions and services for each of the

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stakeholder groups listed here at the bottom. Investors, media, jobseekers, employees and customers. One of the ways you're using this channel in order to interact with them, give them what they need, what they come to you to find whether that is press releases, or financial results for investors.

And then the third is metrics that cover engagement and content. And this is where you as the company, get your message across and answer those questions that we talked about at the top. Explain yourself.
Maybe you've misbehaved and explained yourself as a company. So, we're looking at company information, which is in the message metric, and that's worth twelve points for our evaluation.
And then we have reputation communication, which is in the serving society metric, building reputation for responsibility, and then also what is called serving the CSR profession, but in reality is providing non-financial data and evidence. This is the data and evidence that backs up the stories that you are telling, both in the reputation metric and the company information metric.

So, I'm going to show you who is leading, we're going to now look at each of these metrics. We're going to see who the leaders are and also show you some of the best practice right now for companies who are performing well in these metrics. One further word about the scorecard is there's a lot of numbers here, of course, but if you were to click into any one of these numbers, such as the sixteen, the perfect score from Nestle, you will actually find a wealth of analysis and comments behind each of these numbers describing the strengths and weaknesses of the company in that particular metric.

So, let's look now at company information. And you're looking now at the leaders in this particular metric. And this list shows leaders in the metric as a whole and these are all worth looking at, or ideas for how to improve your company information. So, the leader of the metric is Nestle with a maximum of twelve out of twelve points, followed by BP followed by Eni and Unilever. What I'd like to do though is, there are a number of other companies that make up the Index and they may not be the overall leaders in this metric, but they're doing things that are worth looking at individually. In some of the individual elements, some of the questions that we asked to come up with a score such as "how are you describing yourself as a company?", "what is your company description like?", "how are you describing your purpose and values, is that effective?", and also the company history.

The first example I want to show you is from **GSK**, the pharmaceutical company, and this is their "Purpose and strategy" page. And what they do is they of course talk about their purpose here, but they then mention their purpose in each of their specific sections. So, on the innovation landing page, they talk about the purpose, on the responsibility landing page, they talk about the purpose and on careers, but crucially, they don't simply repeat it. They make sure that it's in the context of that particular message. And they also use lots and lots of real-world examples from employees to show how they're putting the purpose into place, not simply beating people over the head with the purpose statement.

The next example is from **Glencore**, the mining company, and they illustrate their purpose very well with again this idea of show not tell when it comes to purpose, with employee profile videos. And these are really unique and different from the normal run of the mill employee video profiles that we would normally see. They get into some personal topics, they show family life, they even show employees talking about some of their more difficult moments and their mental well-being and they really come across as authentic and real and

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give prospective job seekers, and even employees at the company, a sense that the company cares for them as people.

The next example is from **Volkswagen**, which has actually one of the best online history sections that we know about. And it has a particularly well-designed interactive timeline. It draws heavily on the company's photographic archive and other archives that it has. And it really manages to communicate controversies and the fact that the company has been innovating for many, many years, giving a sense of being open and transparent. So, the history is not just a bolt on, it's actually part of the entire communications effort that's coming across on the website. So that was the company information metric.

I want to now show you the leaders in the reputation metric, and do the same thing and just show you some of the best practice that's happening right now when it comes to reputation communication, as well as non-financial and showing the evidence that backs up some of these claims.

I'll show a couple of those examples in a moment. What we're looking at here, though, is just like we did with the company information metric, these are the overall leaders in building a reputation for responsibility. You'll see a familiar name at the top, Nestle, which also scores maximum points in this metric. This is followed by BP, Goldman Sachs, Target, and again, Unilever, and again, you can get lots and lots of ideas about how to use your digital channels to communicate reputation by looking at any one of these companies.

But I want to look again at other companies in the Index that are excelling at individual elements of the questions that we ask, which are about controversies, how well you're handling controversies, how well you're handling and communicating your community initiatives and then as I said, I'll look at some of the ways that companies are communicating data and sustainability governance, some of that legal side of things for the professional audience. But also, crucially, it is the evidence that backs up those claims that maybe are flashy or get more attention, but you have the one version of the truth through your data and evidence.

So the example that I want to show you with controversies is from **Glencore** again, and they do one of the best examples that we've seen something that a lot of people, a lot of companies are exploring or have implemented recently, and that is the so called A to Z, the ESG A to Z, where you talk about the different issues, send visitors to different places on the website according to the issue that they are interested in. Now, what makes this better than most is that it just overall has a nice visual design. There are lots of good quick links. It's easy to browse, the fact that they put some really important issues along the top makes you think that they actually do want you to explore what Glencore's position on these issues is and actually if you dig into this, almost all of them, at least the ones that we have checked, you get a short summary of the issue and a link that invites you to read more, and these actually lead on to fully fledged pages, which genuinely do have more information and it's all presented in a very clear way.

The next example comes from **Goldman Sachs** in the way that they communicate their thought leadership and their community initiatives. All of what we would call the positive impact, the kind of easier stories to tell about a company's influence and impact in the world. And these are really well realised in a wide range of formats from printed to video, q&a, expert interviews, and they draw on their particular wealth of expertise. And all of the content complements each other, all the other pieces of content. And it's clear that Goldman Sachs is

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an institution that knows the value of online in terms of maintaining their reputation. So, one thing you can tell by looking through the Goldman Sachs site is that these are expensive pieces of content. And Goldman Sachs obviously has a big budget to spend on this type of editorial, not every company that we work with is in this situation for sure. But there are things that you can learn from these content pieces in terms of how it all fits together, and the themes that it talks about, that you can take into your own situation and your own planning when you're looking at populating your website with content like this.

So, coming on to the data side of things and the evidence that backs all of this up. I wanted to point out a couple of examples on this. And the first one is on data. And this comes from **Lilly**, the pharmaceutical company, and the way that they present their ESG report and the data that backs this up, all the information for professional audiences mainly. They do theirs usually completely as a microsite with no PDF alternative. We don't necessarily recommend this approach for you. We recommend looking at your own situation and whether it makes sense because many professional audiences including investors still do prefer a PDF. But if you are going to do the microsite this is a really good example to look at. They keep the same navigational structure as on the main site and it's easy to move around using drop down panels combined with tabs. And there's just a good deal of really clear explanation as well as data tables and charts and you can manipulate that data in any which way that you want to through the charts that they provide.

The next example is on the governance side and explaining the governance and there will be a limited audience for this, but it is an important audience. And this kind of section risks becoming really dull, really legalistic, it could have a number of footnotes or asterisks and looking like came out of encyclopaedia, but not this page. Now of course you do need to be interested in the topic for this not to come across as dull, but for those who are interested in the topic, it is just really clear and a good example of straightforward and well written language when it comes to governance. So those are the leaders in the three metrics that make up Explain yourself, reputation, company information and the non-financial information.

I want to spend a bit of time talking about now the two issues that we see a lot with clients at the moment, in the last six months. The first is innovation, and the second is avoiding greenwashing.

INNOVATION

First, covering innovation communications. This is really where a company should be able to hit a reputation homerun. It's a chance where you can prove your value to society because if a company is doing nothing else, it should be innovative. It should be contributing innovation, whether that is innovation in its own operations and what it's doing and its own products. Or taking innovation from elsewhere and then scaling it up. And the question is how do you demonstrate innovation as a corporation on your website with how potentially just doing this everywhere? I want to share a few standout examples that go beyond just showing the random person in virtual reality glasses. And I've got a few examples lined up for you.

First, the first example comes from **Deutsche Telekom**. And there's a few things to say about this and what makes it good, is first of all, it's located in the company section. And the company section is the section that our own visitor research shows has the biggest audience from visitors and so it makes sense to locate it there where it will be seen the most. This page is also made for non-experts and experts alike. You could see customers and job seekers coming here for example, watching the video, browsing some of the really engaging

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headlines, just to get a sense of how Deutsche Telekom enables innovation in the world. And it gets beyond some of the problems that we see in these sections so often, such as setting it up as maybe just a formal request for proposal, or lots and lots of links to external sites with no discussion of innovation at the company itself.

The next example is from **Aramco** and the technology development section. And there are a lot of good features in this section. They're very well written, very specific. They often read like you might find in Popular Science online magazine, and they also do a really good job with their Global Technology Centres map. This is something that we see a lot of in various contexts, but this is particularly well done. It's easy to use, and it has lots of information that is at a click. The rest of the section just uses a lot of good formats such as infographics, short videos, no more than a minute, to bring the company's technology capability to life. So, innovation sections are often easier for engineering companies, companies that make things in the world. What about companies that don't do that? It can be easy to think, well, we shouldn't talk about innovation.

But I wanted to show you this example from **Barclays**. And it's when you're not a technology company or not an engineering company, they bring stories about the innovation that they're financing to life, and how they're financing the technologies of the future. So, if you look hard enough in your company, there's likely to be an angle of how the company's products and services are supporting innovation in the world. So that's innovation, which is an example of pretty much can't lose communication if you do it right.

AVOIDING GREENWASHING

Let's turn now to an issue that is far from simple, far from cut and dried, but certainly on your minds, if our clients are anything to go by in the last six months to a year, and that's avoiding greenwashing. And it's worth setting some context before we get into a few of the examples that I prepared. And the first thing to say about this is that regulations, regulators on both sides of the Atlantic, from the US and the EU, are cracking down on the so-called greenwashing language.

This is a story about **Goldman Sachs** and their ESG funds. And in Europe, the EU is also getting very specific in terms of words and language that they are calling greenwashing and that should not be used. And then finally, of course regulators are onto this, certain members of the investment community, but crucially, stakeholders, all stakeholders have an interest in this, have a rising interest, and that comes across in our research that we do with corporate website visitors.

So, one other thing before I get into the examples is that ESG the term itself, especially in the US is really uncertain right now. It's very polarised. And we actually wonder if we will be using ESG this acronym in the future for very long. No matter what it's called, though, what is fundamental about this is the need to explain yourself as an organisation and how it impacts the world - that is not going away. And in fact, that's getting more and more important and will only get more so. So, you have to backup these promises with evidence of how you're putting policies into practice, and why these policies are good for customers, employees and the world at large. But you also actually have to satisfy your internal voices that maybe are calling for more risk management, maybe you don't say enough, where you're watering everything down, even when you're doing something positive. So, it really is a difficult path to tread.

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Now bringing this back to websites, I want to show you a few examples of the way we're seeing companies build trust with their reputation, communications.

There are a number of basics to this, and I uncovered some of them in the reputation metric. So, I'm looking at some of the innovation here that we're seeing and one of them is to actually link good behaviour and good programmes and impact with the communication and **Unilever** does a great job of this. Where they have a policy where they're implementing traceable supply chains, talking about an actual transparency. And it's a way that this policy can actually reinforce the communications and they can work together for a reputational benefit because it's innovative, it is practical. It has really impact and after all of that it's a really great story.

The other theme that's coming back again and again is partnerships, and this is partnerships with external organisations, but also partnerships between corporations. And the first is one example of many in this thing that we've seen. And this is **Vodafone**, working with the WWF. So partnering up with an NGO, or for credibility lends the extra credibility, it actually lends rigour if you are partnering up with the right NGO who has really rigorous standards, it forces the organisation like with **Unilever** to actually change its behaviour for the better, which is always of course the fundamental thing. If you're going to have a good communications programme.

Corporations are also partnering with each other which has an interesting way of reinforcing each other and building trust. So, this is an example between **Deloitte** and **Shell**, which have collaborated on a number of NetZero reports for the key industries that they're interested in. So concrete and steel, for example. There's lots of journeys back and forth across the two companies, they're sharing stories and they have coordinated, this is the Shell site talking about the same thing. They also have coordinated social media campaigns to talk about the partnership. So, I've spoken about the need to explain yourself on digital channels, why it's more important than ever, some of the context around that.

We've talked about the fundamentals of doing this well when it comes to company information. When it comes to talking about the trickier things, the reputation communications, but beyond all of this good editorial is just fundamental to doing this right.

Are you simply telling your story well?

TELLING YOUR STORY - EXAMPLES OF GREAT CONTENT

And I want to conclude before handing back to Dan and opening this up to questions, conclude with a just three great content examples that we've seen.

And the first is from **Vodafone** in the format of a podcast, and these are employee stories, employee podcast and coming back to the Glencore example I showed earlier, they really like a radio programme with a guest, they delve into really interesting personal issues, and the kind of thing that you might listen to even if you weren't looking for a job at Vodafone or an employee. They're interesting.

The second is a printed article, text article, from **Bayer** talking about DNA, and it builds upon their expertise but also hits upon the trend to find out about our ancestry and our DNA. A really interesting story.

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And then finally, a new take on the corporate video. This isn't just a CEO speaking to camera, which has a time and place. But if you really going into engage audiences, this is something to look at where the two CEOs from **H&M** and **IKEA** are talking about how how, what sustainability means to them. It's really well done and worth a look. So, I will hand back now to Dan, thank you very much. I hope that was useful.

Dan Drury : Thank you, Jason. Great work.

QUESTIONS

In the last minute there, we got a question in. So, I'm going to head straight into question time. We've got three questions to ask you. I think I'm going to save one for the end after I've spoken some more. Just to begin with, Jason. "One challenge is that sustainability is now a kind of compliance, the stories we previously could tell as examples of ESG progress and our standard company values. So how do early leaders of sustainability and communications stay ahead of the pack?".

Jason Sumner : There are two aspects to sustainability, two broad aspects to sustainability communications. One is the compliance side so make sure that you're in line with the latest regulations and what investors want from you.

I think the partnership angle is good for this. So, make sure that you are staying up to date with the different standards that you are complying with, so the Task Force on climate related disclosures for example, data and evidence side.

On the story side I think it is about setting just a continual editorial process inside the company. This is where the comparison to being a publication is really hacked so that you have a team that is preparing stories, and we're talking about the very latest things that the company are doing in this area. And I think that's a way of staying one step ahead if you were an early adopter.

Dan Drury : Thanks, Jason. And the next question is to do with some of the examples you're sharing today. Expensive. "Some of the examples look very expensive to produce, especially I think, probably the ones towards the end there. Is there any evidence that expensive content adds value?"

Jason Sumner : Yes, yes is the short answer. We have our own visitor research data that shows that this is, visitors to the corporate website, we asked them if they've seen a piece of hero content, a piece of thought leadership or case study and then measure whether their perceptions have improved in different ways. And what we found is that, seeing a really interesting, good piece of hero content can improve the metrics that we looked at, so its goal achievement, brand perception, and Net Promoter Score.

And we can actually see improvement of some cases more than ten percent in terms of perceptions. So that can be translated into pound [£ sterling] value.

Just a word about that is to start with is to know the reason why you're doing it, so the most successful companies will decide what is the reason and know clearly.

- Is it brand building, genuinely is a brand building for a specific audience like with Vodafone, we can see that it's very much focused on job seekers and employees for example.

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- Or is it relevant pipeline, is it very sales and marketing focused, for some companies that have lots of customers coming it will be.

So, it's about being clear, of course, putting measurement in place like I was talking about with the survey.

Dan Drury : Thank you, Jason. Moving on, I'm sure Jason you would agree that one of the problems that we hear about from all of our clients is not having enough resources to do all of the kinds of things that you've shown us today, and more.

So, you've all got to hit your communication goals and the goals of your visitors. And that's the effective news to use of online channels. Limited time, limited budget and limited resources.

THE BOWEN CRAGGS HUB

So, Bowen Craggs' job is to help you prioritise and make the right choices. We give you recommendations and examples of best practice that you've seen today. And this saves you time and money. But most importantly, it improves the outcomes for your audiences. And that can have a real impact on your reputation and brand perception as we've shown. Jason's already shown you the scorecard in the Bowen Craggs Hub, that's the traffic light system that our clients use to see their strengths and weaknesses across all of our metrics. And he also showed you some of what's in our best practice libraries.

I'd like to do some more inside the Bowen Craggs Hub. So, give me one second. I'm going to share my screen and show you what the Bowen Craggs Hub looks like.

I'm going to begin with the Index table. All of you know the Index table, I think. You've certainly seen our annual Index snapshots, which is a PDF that we've been publishing every year for twenty years. But all of the reviews that we do are kept up to date throughout the year and in this this system I'm about to show you.

Right now, we're looking at the top of the table. And this is typically what we publish in our snapshot every year and we can see some of those names that we've already heard about today as examples of best practice, Nestle at the very top. I should say around two thirds of the top quartile are our clients, most of the names that you see on the screen right now.

And you can see on the left-hand side we've got a green bar, we're showing now the top quartile of the Index, but the Index is much, much bigger. And not everybody can be at the top of the Index and our clients are dotted throughout this table that I'm about to reveal. And as I just slowly scroll down, you'll see that we go from the green zone, which is the top quartile into the orange zone, the second quartile. And finally, we'll reach the red zone which is people with more problems.

And as I said our clients perform at each of these levels. Either they've got something that they really know needs to be improved and they really want to get hold of it and get a head start on that. Or they're working their way up with the continuous improvement process that we promote and they're working their way to the top of the table. So, I want to show you some of the other examples of what you can do in here.

The other area that I really wanted to look at was the peer comparison, Jason showed you the scorecard already, but I'm going to go into the peer comparison.

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So, you saw that there were already peers on the scorecard, and these are the same peers, I'm actually logged in as a different company, Texas Instruments here. And if I run that company, I can now see my scores across all the eight metrics that run across the top in comparison to that peer group here in a visual ranking with all the logos and our clients tell us, so this is often really a useful view for leadership and other stakeholders and senior management.

It's very visual, and it really gives you an idea of how a particular company is doing compared to a peer group across a bunch of metrics. And the peer group we would typically recommend people to choose would be some of their close competitors. So, Texas Instruments will be monitoring carefully companies like NXP and Intel and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) but they're also interested in Apple, who also make chips in our technology company and other technology companies like Amazon as well. There's something that they can learn from all of these.

And most importantly, we believe we're putting in there the top almost like Nestle and like BP, who are really great examples of doing this job well. So, our clients get access to this kind of report that shows your colleagues and leaders exactly how well you're doing or which areas you need to improve. Once we've got them into a conversation, and getting them to see all these examples, and I think it's time to look at some visitor research.

VISITOR RESEARCH

So, I'm just going to swap out to Tableau, which is where we show people the data that we collect from visitor surveys across all of our client websites.

What we're looking at right now is the visitor research all gathered together aggregated more than a million responses over the years. And it shows us that, as you probably know, job seekers are always the biggest group to the corporate website.

But what is less well known is that customers tend to come to the corporate website a lot, a quarter of all visits are often customers. We've got those corporate groups down here, very small numbers, but very, very important to serve them well.

And over here are the reasons that people come and without web analytics alone, and you need this kind of information to understand who's coming and why they're coming. Obviously, job search is one of the biggest reasons because we have an awful lot of job seekers.
You can start to interact with this chart and filter down and say well, why are customers coming? And then we can see over on the right that they're coming for things like customer service and specific product information and to find out about the company, all that explaining yourself that Jason was just talking about.

And for these businesses, we also track some key performance indicators. And down here we look at goal achievement, brand perception, net promoter score, and some ratings for ease of use, useful content and visual design.

So, this is invaluable information to start holding conversations with your leaders and other stakeholders about who's coming to the website and why, and most importantly, understanding how well they're doing, and if their goals are being achieved, and if it's helping or hindering your reputation.

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We could for example, see that on average, goal achievement is just under half. But if we look at customers, they tend to be poorly served on a corporate website, and that goes down to forty-one percent. So maybe it's time for you to find out what visitors are coming to your website and why and get some idea of your numbers.

Because the other feature that we offer with our visitor research survey is benchmarking, just as we do with the Index, and I just want to quickly show you that.
So here are those key metrics with companies compared with each other. So, the metrics are here: goal, achievement, perception and so on. And each little dot is one of our clients, and the big dot - the big red dot - is the client we're currently focused on.

So, this company, company 33, because this is an anonymous benchmarking, they can see that their goal achievement is pretty much the average. But many, many companies do much better. And there's some aspiration to improve there. Brand perception, they're not doing quite so well. This could be due to external influences, but it could also be to do with what content is on the website, and how easy it is to find. However, we can see that the ease of use and useful content, the visual design of the site, is pretty good. The Net Promoter Score is on average. So, lots and lots of opportunities for this particular company to take these numbers, decide what to do about it, combine it with the qualitative information from the Bowen Craggs Hub and really work on getting these numbers up.

I'll show you one final thing in visitor research before we go back to the Hub, as this is how a visit to the corporate website can impact brand perception.
Jason and I both said earlier that the corporate website is a really, really important channel. It's the biggest publication you own, probably the most read, most engaged with. And it's really important that you get it right because as I'm about to show you it has a huge impact on the brand perception and the reputation of your company.

On the left here, we see a chart as the question we ask when people arrive at the website, "how do you feel about the company at the beginning of your visit?", and as you can see most people visiting are generally favourable and that's probably no surprise because they're job seekers, they're customers, they're employees, people who already have some kind of affiliation towards you.

But we do get people who are coming to find out about you, and this is the kind of core explain yourself group, people turning up to try and find out what the company or you have got to say about yourselves. And then trying to make up your own opinion. And we see very few people who tend to dislike you. They want to get their information elsewhere. But they do come to the corporate website.
And especially in times of crisis we see these two numbers go up quite significantly. If you're in the news for bad reasons, people will come to your website to find out what you've got to say for yourself.

We then ask people at the end of the visit, how did the brand perception change? And as I said right at the beginning, the corporate website is an amazing vehicle for changing brand perception for the better. Almost two thirds of all visitors are going to get a better feeling after the visit to the corporate website.

What if we correlate these two pieces of information together? We get a table like the one down here and I want to draw your attention to this number in particular. So, remember, I was talking about the neutral, no opinion visitors, and they're the kind of fence sitters, the

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floating voters, the people that you probably really trying to target with your corporate communications and it can be seen that a corporate website can convert around a quarter of those to better brand perception. So, multiply that by all visitors that you have to your website which is usually in the many millions for our clients. And you can see the corporate site can have a massive impact on all kinds of different visitor groups. I'm going to go back to the Bowen Craggs Hub now and just wrap up with what else is in here. You've seen some of the Index and you've seen the score card and this peer comparison.

HUB RESOURCES

I just want to show you now On Point. You may well have seen some of these articles on our website. We publish a few selected articles publicly on bowencraggs.com, but for our subscribers we offer a huge wealth of articles about all kinds of topics, all of the topics that are affecting people who run corporate digital channels.

And I should say it's not just websites that we talk about. Social media is a very important part of our methodology. And just to demonstrate, I'm going to show you an example of the search. Whenever you're going into a meeting or you're writing a PowerPoint deck to try and present some plans for your digital channels, you can go to this Bowen Craggs Hub and do a search. And in this case, imagine we were talking about whether or not Instagram was something that your company wanted to engage in. If you already are perhaps, it's something you want to do better.
And in that case, a quick search turns up lots of examples of best practice that has been created by Bowen Craggs' consultants. Loads of examples for you to see that will give you some inspiration and examples to show your colleagues.

Everybody gets a dashboard when they log in, and this is where you can directly track your peers and get through to many of our other features. And you see here our colleague Andrew Rigby is presenting at the next club event. All our subscribers, members of the Bowen Craggs Club, and that means access to monthly events.

And I'll just quickly show you the next two events that are coming up. Measurement playbook later in May. This explains our measurement system for continuous improvement in more detail, how to combine qualitative and quantitative data together to make your corporate comms better on the digital channels.

And of course, you won't be surprised to discover that generative AI is a fun topic for all of our subscribers. So, we're doing a dedicated meeting on that.

It gives you access to all of the past meeting recordings. Notably, the last meeting was how to do accessibility well. And I'm sure this is on all of your agendas. We had a presentation from Unilever who are real leaders in this field showing us what it's like to use a corporate website on a screen reader for someone who's visually impaired. And I know everybody's trying to reach some WCAG standards. But this meeting really shared a lot of resources that Unilever were kind enough to tell other members about to make their journeys easier.

So, the Bowen Craggs Hub is all about sharing and learning with people just like you, people who running corporate websites and social channels.

FINAL QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

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So, I see a couple of other questions have come in here and we have a couple of minutes left. I'll just read this one and I'll ask you Jason. "Is anyone currently using personalization to help showcase the corporate narrative?"

Jason Sumner : There's been a lot of experiments with personalization over the years, none of them has fared that well in our experience. This tends to come from trying to mirror the Amazon audibles of this world. Where it can work is if you have a site where people do come back to read content, say, thought leadership following can definitely work there. In terms of personalising the experience for the general stakeholder, it's less successful, and you're actually better off just having a really quick navigation, really good signposts for all the different kinds of stakeholders that come to a corporate site.

Dan Drury : Thanks Jason. And just wrapping up in the final minute with the most talked about thing of the year and that's artificial intelligence. We've written an article about this, and I will post it in the chat for everybody to have a look at on our public side later. But Jason, what do you think the future holds?

Jason Sumner : Yes, there has been more interest in this than other new technology that we've seen for at least the last ten years, maybe longer, even like the mobile responsive issue and the technology and when social media was rising. It's more interest than that.

And of course, it could be much more profound than that has been now for all of us.

Specifically, to bring it back to corporate communications and corporate digital. It's going to make the owned channel which I talked about in this presentation, the need to have your own place on the web. Kind of see if we're to believe some of that negative commentary on how much fakery there will be, and the potential for frauds on your own space will become even more important.

In terms of implementing, it we're still at the early stages of course, but we would say be guided by your audience and what they will accept. So, a lot on the surface and transactional side. AI could have a really good part to play but on the part where you're trying to be engaging and coming across as more human, think twice before employing a robot to do that.

And then of course just be open to potential. So, we're looking at practical examples of where people actually implementing this, where it's being integrated with software tools already. There's loads and loads of potential for communication processes. Again, that kind of transactional information, and analysing data is a big one. So, all the measurement data that you might get for a campaign for example, the ability for AI to analyse that data is going to help with the internal side of things. So those are just a few of the potentials that we are seeing at the moment.

Dan Drury : Thanks very much Jason, we have to wrap up now, but you'll receive a copy of the Explain Yourself report in PDF, look out for that later this week. And in the meantime, you can visit Bowen Craggs - I've just posted another link in the chat - if you want to download the full Index Snapshot from November of 2022, and I'd just like to thank Jason and thank all of you for joining.

And please do get in touch with us if you would like to learn more about becoming a Bowen Craggs client, see more about what's in the Bowen Craggs Hub, or just ask any of your further questions about digital corporate communications.

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