

ROLEX, AMAZON, SONY, LEGO AND HALLMARK TOP REPUTATION INSTITUTE'S 2017 US REPTRAK® 100 – THE LARGEST STUDY OF THE MOST HIGHLY REGARDED COMPANIES IN THE US

Insights show that the company behind the product matters more than ever before

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS (March 28, 2017) – Reputation Institute (RI), the world's leading provider of stakeholder measurement, membership and management services, today announced the company's annual US RepTrak® 100 rankings. Based on more than 42,000 respondents who completed the survey in the first quarter of 2017, the survey quantifies the emotional bond stakeholders have with 800 leading companies, and how these connections drive supportive behavior like the willingness to purchase a company's products, recommend the brand, invest or even work for the company.

The top 10 companies in RI's 2017 US RepTrak® 100 are:

1. Rolex
2. Amazon.com
3. Sony
4. LEGO Group
5. Hallmark
6. Netflix
7. Kimberly-Clark
8. Hershey
9. Fruit of the Loom
10. Barnes & Noble

RI's RepTrak® System measures the general public's perception of the world's top companies on seven key rational dimensions of reputation: products and services, innovation, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership and performance. An "Excellent" reputation is represented by an overall RepTrak® Pulse score of 80 or higher. This year, 28 companies have a Pulse rating that falls into the "Excellent" range. A RepTrak® Pulse score of 70-79 is considered "Strong," while 60-69 is "Average." Outside of the top 28, the remaining 72 companies in the 2017 US RepTrak® Top 100 all have a "Strong" rating.

For 2017, Rolex emerges to displace Amazon as #1, while Lego and Hershey bounce back into the top 10, and Kimberly-Clark appears in the top 10 for the first time. In addition, seven of the top 10 are US based, while 6 can be viewed as "nostalgic, classic brands."

Overall, RI sees 6 key factors that define the top 10: strength of familiarity, they

identify with millennials, their focus on CSR, active social media activity, a strong corporate brand purpose, and an inspiring, multi-channel brand persona.

“The bar for reputation is getting higher than ever before. The key to earning an excellent reputation for any company requires a strong focus on delivering high quality products and services, and assurances of good governance coupled with a commitment to good corporate citizenship,” said Stephen Hahn-Griffiths, RI vice president and managing director for the US and Canada.

Big Movers

Several brands stand out in the 2017 US RepTrak® 100:

Kimberly-Clark appears in the top 10 for the first time (#7), increasing this year by 6.9 points to a score of 82.1. Gains across all dimensions of reputation, notably citizenship and products, helped to drive this move. The company’s strong focus on CSR with key initiatives around sourcing sustainability and product donations, plus product innovation, also helped to drive Kimberly-Clark’s Excellent rating.

In the tech sector, *Google* was a big mover (to #17), increasing 4.6 points to a score of 80.6. The company saw a notable increase in the CSR dimensions (governance, citizenship and workplace) as Google focused on sustainability and donations to charity in lieu of employee bonus driving positive perceptions. Meanwhile the company continues to show strong gains in performance (+6.3) and leadership (+7.1) under CEO Sundar Pichai.

As part of an overall upward trend among “nostalgic, classic brands,” *Levi Strauss & Co.* moved to #25 with an increase of 2.9 points to a score of 80.2. Several quality of work initiatives, including increased paid parental leave and the CEO’s accessibility, contributed to an impressive double digit (+10.0) increase in the workplace dimension score.

On the downside, *Samsung* dropped from #3 to #63, after the company was challenged by its Galaxy Note 7 recall. Yet, the company’s overall Pulse score remained in Strong range (77.8), highlighting that brand strength can provide a buffer during a crisis.

Other companies taking a step back in reputation this year include *American Express*, which saw its score drop by 4.4 points to 72.7, and *Yahoo!*, which saw one of the largest drops of 10.6 points to 60.8, as delays in the closing of Verizon’s acquisition plus a series of data breaches served to undermine confidence in the brand.

“The most successful firms have a proactive, 360-degree focus on reputation, engaging its leadership to drive and actively communicate both product and corporate reputation initiatives,” said Brad Hecht, RI vice president and chief research officer. “Whether it is successfully building reputation capital, as shown by Kimberly-Clark’s positive reputational gains in 2017, or creating a reputation buffer, which served Samsung well during its 2017

crisis, having a strong reputation is critical to both ensure customer loyalty and maintain stakeholder trust.”

Ranking by Industry – Consumer Goods Remain on Top

When looking at industry reputations, consumer companies remain the most highly regarded (due to relatability), while the energy sector is the weakest.

The top ranked industries in RI’s 2017 US RepTrak® 100 are:

1. Consumer
2. Food & Beverage
3. Transport
4. Automotive
5. Airlines
6. Industrial
7. Retail
8. Technology
9. Information
10. Pharmaceuticals
11. Hospitality
12. Services
13. Financial
14. Healthcare
15. Telecommunication
16. Energy

Across industries, the products, services and governance dimensions remain key drivers of overall reputation, while in Technology, leadership is uniquely important vs. other sectors. Also Retail, Financial, and Hospitality are impacted by lower scores on innovation and citizenship, while Hospitality gets Average scores on workplace.

In terms of supportive behavior, the general public is more likely to support Consumer companies, while the Financial industry’s lower scores for citizenship and governance detract from the support they receive.

Overall, industries that are viewed as open and transparent generate more support. Higher levels of transparency increase likelihood of “saying something positive,” but transparency does not as readily yield higher reputation in the Financial industry.

Learn More and Get Your Company’s Pulse Score

On an annual basis, RI measures the reputation of thousands of companies using our RepTrak® framework, and for its Global RepTrak® 100 study measures the most highly regarded and familiar multinational companies in 15 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan,



Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

To access the full list of the most reputable companies in the US please visit:

<https://www.reputationinstitute.com/research/RepTrak-in-Country/US-RepTrak-100.aspx>

To get your company's 2017 score and learn how you can improve your ranking and grow your stakeholder support, just ask us at:

<https://www.reputationinstitute.com/about/Contact-Us>

About Reputation Institute

Founded in 1997, Reputation Institute (RI) is the world's leading provider of stakeholder measurement, membership and management services, working with more than 400 of the top Global 1000 companies. Serving corporate communications and marketing executives and their teams, RI delivers our data, insights and best practices through subscription services, hands-on consulting, and our RLN events and executive training. RI's proprietary RepTrak® System is the gold standard for analyzing reputations across industries, geographies and stakeholders, and powers our Global, National, Country and CSR studies.

Learn more at: <http://www.reputationinstitute.com>