

FTSE 100 companies and their use of Twitter

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Summary

This research was carried out on the 21st April 2010 as a small part of a larger University of Brighton research project I am managing and looked at the corporate use of Twitter by companies in the FTSE 100. The corporate websites of 97 companies were looked at (3 FTSE 100 constituents were ignored because they represented particular share issues and not corporate entities in the traditional sense).

The corporate websites of the 97 companies were explored for evidence of or links to a Twitter page associated with the company. The starting point was the home page, followed by the “media relations” and “investor relations” pages and, if no evidence was found then the search box on the websites (where it existed) was used. Only Twitter accounts linked to the corporate headquarters were looked for and Twitter accounts linked to specific brands, products, services or recruitment were ignored. The primary purpose of this exercise was to determine which of the companies were using Twitter to broadcast information about themselves at a corporate level and not at a brand/product level.

Of the 97 companies surveyed, 16 had corporate Twitter accounts which between them had 43,481 followers, followed 16,766 other Twitterers and had written 10,995 Tweets¹.

The results (see next page for full results) present several interesting observations²:

- British Airways has by far the largest number of followers; twice as many as its nearest rival, WPP. However, it is possible that the recent grounding of all UK flights due to the Icelandic ash cloud may have encouraged people to follow BA for news on when flights would resume;
- ARM Holdings is the most active Twitterer. However, these Tweets are spread over 7 accounts. Taking that into account, then BA is again the winner on the Tweet score;
- Overall, I was surprised that so few companies (16%) were using Twitter to put out corporate news bearing in mind that these are the 100 largest publicly quoted companies in the UK and all have media/press departments. I will repeat the exercise in a year to see what has changed.

¹ ARM Holdings linked to 7 Twitter accounts from its corporate website. Each of the accounts related to aspects of the overall business so have been included in the results. Pearson, the publishers, linked to 31 Twitter accounts from the corporate website but each was related to specific brands of the company. There was no single corporate Twitter account for Pearson so the company was excluded from this survey. However, in terms of engagement with social media (Facebook and Twitter) Pearson’s publishing businesses were amongst the most active I observed.

² This research takes no account of how long the company has been Twittering so a large number of Tweets and followers may, in part, be a reflection of how long the company has been on Twitter.



Survey Results (ranked by followers)

Company	Sector	Followers	Following	Tweets
British Airways	Airlines	14,363	5,758	2,339
WPP	Communications Services	7,358	26	461
Intercontinental Hotels	Hotels	4,058	4,320	147
Vodafone Group	Telecommunications	3,584	66	209
ARM Holdings	Semiconductors	3,267	1,551	4,446
Sage Group	Software	3,074	1,735	1,411
Next	Retailing	2,577	2,579	850
AstraZeneca	Pharmaceuticals	1,660	109	131
Rio Tinto	Mining	1,365	41	182
SABMiller	Brewing	922	402	147
Scottish and Southern Energy	Energy	305	25	64
United Utilities	Water	250	56	100
Centrica	Energy	240	13	273
Inmarsat	Telecommunications	199	0	89
Aviva	Insurance	160	58	117
Reed Elsevier	Publishing	99	27	29
Totals		43,481	16,766	10,995

