Research Shows Websites of Most of the World’s 50 Largest Companies Not Ready to Do Business With Europe

Washington, D.C. & Brussels (March 28, 2002) – More than 75 percent of the world’s 50 largest companies do not have a corporate website that focuses on Europe as a regional body, according to research released by APCO Online today.

“In light of a new common European identity emerging in society and business, and the upcoming dot eu domain name change, this study shows it is time for companies operating in Europe to re-examine their corporate websites said Mark Dober, Managing Director of APCO Online. “There are now some 171.35 million Europeans online. Companies doing business in Europe need to establish a new level of dialogue – a new quality of relationship – with their stakeholders online.”

APCO Online selected the world’s 50 largest corporations by revenue and assessed their corporate websites on how they communicate to Europeans. Only one-quarter of these corporations have a European corporate website. The remaining three-quarters pursued one of three distinct approaches:

- Links to national sites (.be .fr .de) in local languages, from the corporate home site
- Overall dot com site with various language choices
- Country of origin site in native language (.co.jp for example) with English as an optional choice

APCO Online then benchmarked the websites of world’s 50 largest companies to assess how they communicate to Europeans overall on the basis of 10 key criteria from a European perspective: Language content other than English; profile on search engines; content dynamism; degree of content on corporate social responsibility issues; information relevant to key stakeholders; quality of media section; interactivity; design; navigation; and essential content.

Key findings include:

- Less than one-third of the world’s 50 largest corporations have a phone number for their European corporate headquarters on their corporate website.
- Only half of the world’s largest companies answered an e-mail request for information on their European operations within one week.
- The majority of corporate websites of the world’s 50 largest corporations fail to communicate in a language other than English.
- Of the 10 highest scoring sites, four are European companies.

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80% of Global Top 50 corporate websites only communicate in English

The above chart shows the number of corporate web sites that allow the selection of a language other than English yet only 41% of the people on the Continent speak English and only 29% speak it well enough to carry on a conversation, according to a European Commission report.

Only half of the Global Top 50 answered an e-mail request for European info within 1 week.

Length of reply by e-mail

- > 1 week or no reply: 38%
- < 1 week: 4%
- < 3 days: 4%
- < 48 hours: 2%
- < 24 hours: 40%
- bounced back: 4%
- no contact us: 7%