PORTER NOVELLI

THE REPUTATION RANKING:
PURPOSE PREMIUM REPORT ™

2025

Why innovation, transparency, and social impact drive value in an age of change.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For eight years, Porter Novelli's Reputation Ranking has tracked what consumers demand from the brands they buy from, work for, and invest in. In 2025, the message is clear: purpose is back, and it's driving real business value.

KEY FINDINGS:

The Purpose Rebound:
Purpose-linked attributes' correlation to overall reputation jumped from 80% to 85%—the biggest increase since 2024. After years of companies backing away from public commitments, consumers are rewarding brands with a legacy of social and environmental action.

Reputation Scores Rise:
Overall reputational scores increased to 6.90 in the US, up from 6.50 last year, driven by a combination of trust, innovation, and transparency.

Innovation as Trust Signal:
91% of consumers agree that innovation is critical to reputation, with 89% more likely to purchase from innovative companies and 79% willing to forgive their missteps.

Creativity isn't Clever:
84% see creativity as vital to reputation, signaling that consumers rewards brands that push boundaries and make life better.

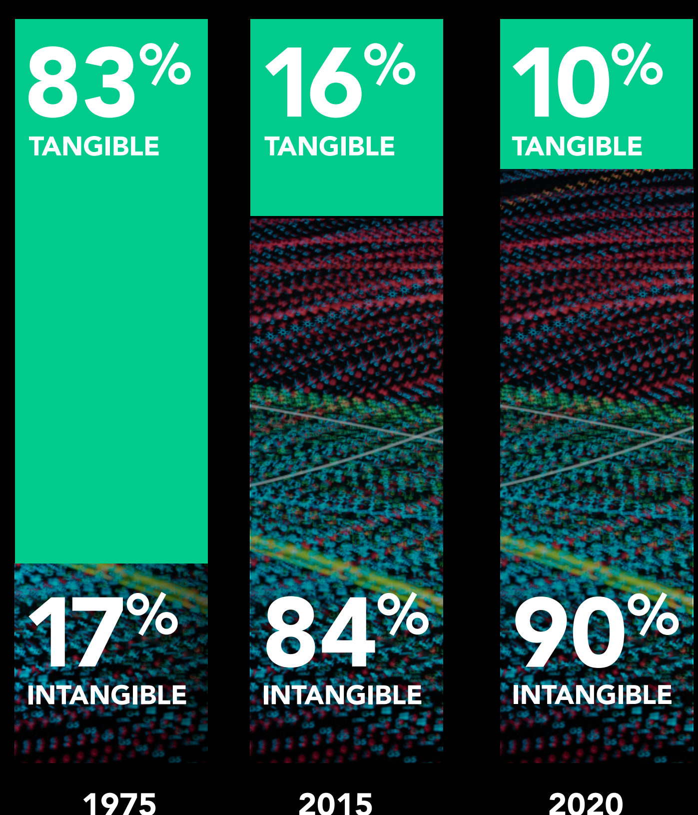
Transparency Tops Purpose Drivers:
In an era of greenhushing, 93% of consumers demand consistent communication about progress -- both good and bad.

The Bottom Line:
Strong reputation generates measurable business impact. Consumers reward high-reputation companies with more purchases, more trial of new products, more recommendations, and more forgiveness when things go wrong.

01

WHY REPUTATION MATTERS NOW

As geopolitical uncertainty, economic turbulence, and cultural debate swirl across the US and UK, the evidence is clear: a strong reputation is both a safeguard and a value generator for business.



VALUATION HAS RADICALLY CHANGED

TANGIBLE: property, factory, equipment, and inventory

INTANGIBLE: patents, brand reputation, software, customer data

SOURCE: McKinsey Global Institute (2021)

This year's research—surveying 7,000 American adults and 3,000 UK adults—reveals that consumers are seeing companies in a more positive light. What's driving that shift? A combination of trust, innovation, and transparency.

As corporate scrutiny sharpens, the rewards for doing business better create dividends for companies that have remained steadfast in transparency, commitment, and improving people's lives or work. Purpose drivers increased in consumer importance since last year, proving that environmental and social action are still essential to high reputation scores.

How Reputation Drives Valuation

Fifty years ago, company valuations focused mostly on physical assets like buildings, equipment, and inventory. These tangible assets were seen as the main drivers of a business's value and future success.

Today, the focus has shifted dramatically to intangible assets such as intellectual property, reputation, technology, and talent. In fact, a 2021 McKinsey study found that intangible assets now make up about 90% of the value of S&P 500 companies, compared to just 17% in 1975. As a result, modern valuation methods pay much more attention to these intangible factors, and reputation is a significant contributor of value.

Reputation vs. Brand Equity: Understanding the Difference

Before diving into how consumers view corporations as change agents, it's essential to distinguish between Reputation and Brand Equity. Reputation is the result of a mosaic of corporate actions, from employee treatment to stock performance to R&D prowess. It is the CEO's responsibility, with metrics linked to overall corporate performance and narratives that explain the company's uniqueness and value to the world and the economy. Because it includes responsibility for how all stakeholders engage with the mission of the company, some call this corporate citizenship or license to operate.

Brand Equity tracks customers' experience and emotional associations with a company's products or services and is the CMO's responsibility. Metrics are linked to products or specific sales results and use narratives about how the product (brand) changes and transforms the lives of their consumers or buyers. Consumer insights departments measure and dissect the many aspects of customers to determine brand equity, but are not tracking opinions about the company overall.

02

WHAT DRIVES REPUTATION?

For eight years, we've examined 17 individual drivers of corporate reputation, each clustered via statistical analysis under three core pillars: QUALITY, PURPOSE, and PERFORMANCE.

Every single reputation driver increased in importance from 2024 to 2025, showing heightened consumer expectations and an improving opinion of businesses across the board.

Brands we perceived as having a clear, values-driven identity (sustainability, ethics, social action) consistently outperform those seen as merely functional. Purpose acts as a reputation multiplier: quality and trust remain table stakes, but purpose differentiates leaders from laggards.

The Purpose Rebound: Why Companies Can't Stay Silent

Each of the 17 drivers is an element of how a company operates across many complex dimensions and how it engages across multiple stakeholder groups. Reputation is the sum of how a company behaves in the world and how important its products are in people's lives.

In the eight years we have tracked how people feel about business's role in the world, it's been within the context of economic, cultural, and political change. We've seen people's expectations of companies shift in response to external events.

The significant shift from last year is what we are calling a Purpose Rebound and is in response to companies backing off commitments or quieting how they are responding to cultural divisions. In the face of all the current tumult, consumers are telling us that they expect companies to step up and reward those brands with a legacy of social and environmental action. **That's been the biggest year-over-year increase.**

The Average Corporate Reputation Score Increased in 2025

2018 — First year of our Survey — 7.23

2019 — Business Roundtable redefines the Purpose of a Corporation — 6.83

2020 — George Floyd murder/BLM — 6.90

2021 — Vaccine, employer response to Covid — 7.09

2022 — Return to office, supply chain issues, high prices — 6.70

2023 — 6.60

2024 — Anti-ESG, anti-woke activisism — 6.50

2025 — Executive orders, tariff protests, boycotts — 6.90

The 17 Reputation Drivers

QUALITY

- **Quality** – they offer dependable and well-made/designed products and services
- **Reliable** – they consistently do what they say
- **Secure** – they keep my data, information, and identity safe
- **Well Run and Managed** – they do a good job managing the business
- **Trustworthy** – they are honest, and I believe what they say
- **Affordable** – their products and services fit into my budget
- **Customer-Focused** – they care about their customers

PURPOSE

- **Socially Responsible** – they operate to preserve, protect, and positively impact society
- **Environmental** – they care about and are taking action to protect the planet
- **Philanthropic** – they give money and other support to important causes or communities
- **Inclusive** – they advocate for, value, and promote people from all backgrounds and beliefs both internally and externally
- **Advocates** – they stand up for issues and causes that extend beyond their business
- **Transparent** – they clearly communicate what's happening, in good times and bad
- **Employer of Choice** – they would be a great company to work for

PERFORMANCE

- **Innovative** – they bring transformational new offerings, products or medicines that are useful and important to the market
- **Profitable** – they make significant profits for shareholders and owners
- **Creative** – they attract consumers' attention in unique ways

02

What Moved the Needle: Quality Remains Table Stakes, Purpose Surges

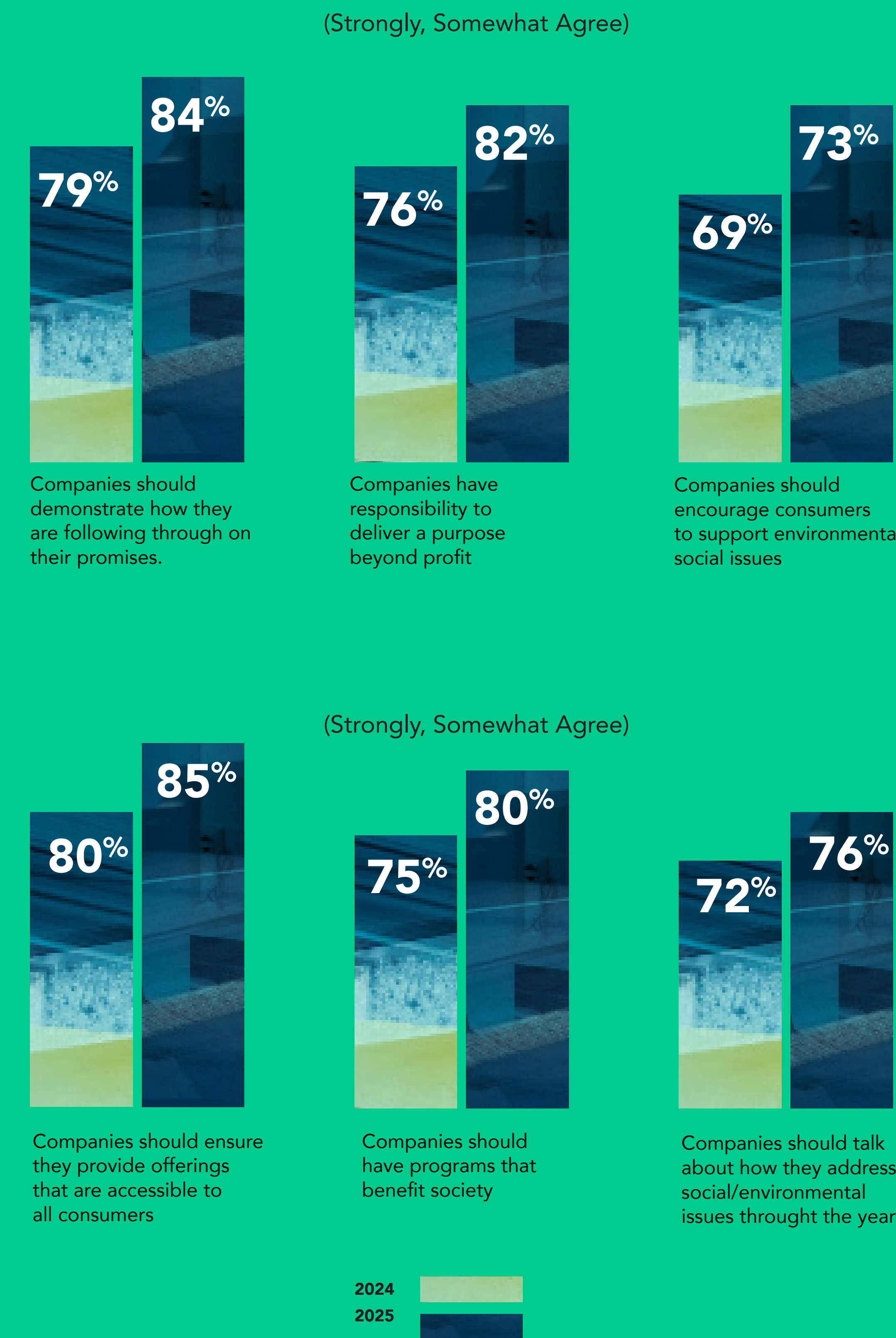
The Quality drivers remain foundational (95–94%), validating that quality is table stakes.

What's different this year is that Purpose-linked attributes' correlation to overall Reputation increased the most since last year—85% in 2025 up from 80% in 2024. This was the biggest jump, showing real momentum and the continued importance of environmental and social programs to consumers when they assess corporate reputation.

For 2025, the increased favorability of company reputation is because consumers expect to see companies making society and the environment better and recognize those who have integrated that responsibility into their core business.

The Purpose driver with the highest ranking is transparency.

In this era of greenhushing and backing off public commitments, the data tells us that communicating consistently aboutprogress—both good and bad—is critical to driving value.



2025 REPUTATION CORRELATIONS

94% QUALITY

91% IN 2024

85% PURPOSE

77% IN 2024

80% PERFORMANCE

76% IN 2024

PURPOSE HAD THE BIGGEST REBOUND

Clearly communicating what's happening, in good times and bad, is critical.

Transparency is not just a defensive strategy. Honesty is not just a value. It is a strategic advantage.

93%

03

INNOVATION & CREATIVITY AS REPUTATION MULTIPLIERS

Where do innovation and creativity play in driving strong reputation and consumer loyalty? The answers are striking.

Innovation and creativity are no longer "nice-to-haves"—they are essential elements of brand reputation, directly influencing consumer action.

Innovation: 91% of consumers agree that innovation is a critical reputation driver, reflecting heightened expectations that brands continually evolve to make consumers' lives and work better. Innovation is a stronger reputation driver than creativity, with 89% saying they will purchase products from a company they perceive to be innovative and 79% willing to forgive missteps of innovative companies.

Creativity: 84% see creativity as vital to reputation, signaling that consumers reward brands that surprise, delight, and push boundaries.

The Business Impact

The business impact is significant. Consumers are more likely to **purchase (89%)**, **remain loyal (85%),** and **recommend (80%)** brands they see as innovative and creative. These drivers also strongly influence forgiveness and advocacy. When a company is viewed as innovative, **79% of consumers are willing to defend it, and 79% are likely to forgive a misstep.**

In technology and retail, innovation and creativity are especially pronounced as differentiators, but even traditionally "stable" sectors such as consumer-packaged goods and financial services see a reputational boost when they are perceived as inventive and forward-thinking.

91%

believe companies need to bring transformational new offerings, products or medicines that are useful and important to the market.

Innovation needs to make life better.

60%

define creativity as coming up with products or services that make life better.

19%

want clever campaigns and 27% see creating cultural moments as creative.

Creativity isn't clever, it needs to deliver.

04

REGIONAL INSIGHTS: US VS UK

This year's research included 3,000 UK adults alongside 7,000 American adults. The numbers in the UK were mostly consistent with US consumer attitudes—with a few noticeable differences.

In the UK, there's a stronger emphasis on social and environmental responsibility: 88% of UK consumers rate social responsibility and 86% rate environmental action as "very important," both higher than the US figures of 84% and 83%. This reflects the UK's stricter regulatory environment and a cultural expectation that companies play a larger role in broader social issues.

Innovation, on the other hand, is a more prominent driver in the US. 91% of US consumers consider innovation very important in their assessment of brands, compared to 89% in the UK. American consumers tend to reward brands that are known for introducing new ideas and pushing boundaries, which aligns with the country's strong entrepreneurial spirit. This focus on innovation has a significant impact on purchase decisions, loyalty, and brand advocacy in the US market.

Economic and regulatory factors also influence these attitudes. UK consumers, facing higher living costs and more stringent ESG requirements, tend to scrutinize brands more closely for genuine commitment to social and environmental issues. In the US, a more fragmented regulatory landscape and individualistic culture mean there's a broader range of expectations, but innovation consistently stands out as a key differentiator.

These regional nuances matter for global brands seeking to build reputation across markets. A one-size-fits-all approach to purpose communication may miss the mark.

	UK CONSUMERS	US CONSUMERS
RATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS "VERY IMPORTANT"	88%	84%
RATE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION AS "VERY IMPORTANT"	86%	83%

	UK CONSUMERS	US CONSUMERS
INNOVATION	89%	91%

Inside the Top 3

How Bose, The North Face, and LEGO Win on All Fronts

Bose, The North Face, and LEGO rank in the top three by seamlessly integrating innovation, social and environmental responsibility, and uncompromising quality into every aspect of their brands.

Top 10 Overall Reputation Leaders

(Includes all 17 Drivers)

1. BOSE
2. THE NORTH FACE
3. LEGO
4. patagonia
5. P&G
6. COLGATE-PALMOLIVE
7. McCORMICK
8. chewy
9. Publix
10. REI co-op

Bose exemplifies how relentless innovation and product quality go hand-in-hand: its pioneering work in audio technology continuously redefines industry standards, while its sleek designs and intuitive user experience reflect a creative approach to solving consumer needs. Bose's commitment to privacy and ethical business practices further enhances its reputation, demonstrating that technical excellence and corporate responsibility are mutually reinforcing pillars of trust.

The North Face stands out by fusing technical performance with a deep commitment to environmental and social progress. The brand's innovative use of sustainable materials and cutting-edge weatherproofing technologies is matched by its passionate advocacy for outdoor accessibility and conservation. The North Face's creative collaborations and campaigns not only keep the brand culturally relevant, but also reinforce its purpose-driven mission—proving that high-quality products can be both innovative and a force for good. This holistic approach resonates with consumers who increasingly expect their favorite brands to lead on both performance and impact.

LEGO's enduring appeal is rooted in its ability to inspire creativity while delivering top-tier quality and advancing global responsibility. Through continual product innovation—ranging from STEM-based kits to digital play platforms—LEGO pushes the boundaries of what's possible in play and learning. At the same time, the company has taken bold steps toward sustainability, investing in recyclable materials and circular play initiatives that align with societal values. LEGO has built a legacy of trust and purpose that resonates across generations and geographies. that resonates across generations and geographies.

05

2025 REPUTATION LEADERS

Purpose Leaders

Brands appearing on both Reputation and Purpose lists—like LEGO, Patagonia, The North Face, and REI—echo 2023 and 2024 trends that reward quality and give a reputation premium to purpose progress. Purpose Leaders earn admiration for their values, social impact, and transparency and are seen as advocates, employers of choice, and champions of inclusion.

Key Traits of Purpose Leaders:

- Deeply committed to social responsibility, taking meaningful action to support communities and causes
- Embedding sustainability into every part of the business
- Active advocates for progress, speaking out and leading on issues that matter
- Inclusive and transparent, fostering trust through openness and equitable practices
- Employers of choice, creating workplaces where people feel valued, supported, and inspired to contribute

Key Takeaway:

Purpose leadership means living your values—proving that consistent, authentic action builds both trust and impact.

PURPOSE LEADERS

1. patagonia
2. THE NORTH FACE
3. REI co-op
4. SEPHORA
5. Wegmans
6. Publix
7. TRADER JOE'S
8. BOSE
9. WHOLE FOODS MARKET
10. McCORMICK

05

2025 REPUTATION LEADERS

Performance Leaders

Performance Leaders deliver exceptional functional excellence—innovative, well-managed, and trusted organizations that set benchmarks in product quality and reliability.

Key Traits of Purpose Leaders:

- Innovative, setting new benchmarks in product excellence and customer experience
- Defined by quality, delivering products and services that perform consistently and exceed expectations
- Trusted and reliable, ensuring durability, security, and integrity across every interaction
- Dependably consistent, earning loyalty through performance that stands the test of time

Key Takeaway:

Performance leadership has evolved—it's no longer just about operational excellence, but about innovation that delivers trust at scale. The best performers integrate purpose and performance seamlessly, proving that reliability and responsibility can coexist.

PERFORMANCE LEADERS

1. THE NORTH FACE
2. LEGO
3. BOSE
4. Nintendo
5. NVIDIA
6.
7. LVMH
8. Lilly
9.
10. SEPHORA

06

THE NEW RULES OF REPUTATION LEADERSHIP

01 **Consistency Is Your Compass**
Reputation is a Pattern, Not a Moment. Consumers want to see brands "walk the talk." Consistent, sustained action and communication—not splashy campaigns—build trust and resilience. The "say-do gap" is fatal.

02 **Purpose Must Be Operationalized**
It's not enough to have purpose as a tagline or CSR initiative. Brands must embed purpose into product, operations, and culture. When purpose is siloed, its reputational power is diminished.

03 **Innovation And Creativity Are Table Stakes**
Innovation is the new trust signal. With rapid market evolution, consumers reward brands that deliver transformational products and services. But creativity must be authentic and aligned with customer needs to be rewarded.

04 **Transparency: The Ultimate Reputational Reset**
When mistakes happen, brands that are transparent, honest, and quick to communicate are more likely to regain consumer favor. Silence or obfuscation is punished.

05 **Know Your Stakeholders—And Their Expectations**
Sector-specific insights matter. Food and retail brands are expected to address wages and supply chain sustainability, tech companies must focus on accessibility and ethical innovation, and healthcare must prioritize health equity.

06 **Reputation Isn't A Campaign. It's About Culture.**
Consumers are watching even more closely and they're rewarding brands that drive progress innovatively and authentically. It's time to do business better.

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THE REPUTATION RANKING: PURPOSE PREMIUM REPORT ™

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METHODOLOGY

The Reputation Ranking: Purpose Premium Report 2025 presents findings from a Porter Novelli survey, designed and executed by Dynata in August 2025 among an online sample of 7,000 American adults and 3,000 UK adults ages 18+. Respondents rated up to six companies they were familiar with, with each company evaluated by an average of 150 respondents. Companies were rated on a 0–10 scale across 17 reputation drivers, statistically clustered into three pillars: Quality, Purpose, and Performance.

Only companies with at least 30% consumer familiarity were ranked for overall Reputation and Purpose scores. The companies analyzed were drawn from the Fortune 100, Best Companies to Work For, Best Brands for Social Impact, Most Loved Brands, World's Most Ethical, and Diversity Inc.'s Top 50, among others.

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