

The **WWD** List

Corporate Cachet

Top U.S.-based retailers ranked by corporate reputation scores.

A retailer's corporate reputation is key to its overall success. New York-based Reputation Institute has released its third annual Global Pulse Study, which analyzes 600 of the world's largest companies based on revenue (150 are U.S.-based), by ranking the overall trust, esteem, admiration and good feelings consumers have toward them. The firm also factors in reputation drivers such as innovation, workplace, citizenship and performance. A total of 25 U.S.-based retailers were analyzed. "We consider scores in the 60s to be above average, and companies who scored in the 70s are very strong, reputable companies," said Anthony Johndrow, managing director. Below, a closer look at the top U.S. retailers, along with their efforts to enhance their corporate reputations. A few apparel and department store names fell just short of the top 12, including Target (15), Nordstrom (19) and Wal-Mart (24). — Cecily Hall

1		<p>COSTCO WHOLESALE CORP. Global Pulse Score: 74.33 The Issaquah, Wash.-based company operates 537 warehouse stores that offer groceries, electronics, jewelry, home goods, apparel, health and beauty aids and other products. "Customers value their membership with Costco," said Johndrow. Priceviewer.com noted that the company is a retailer that "does it right, paying well and offering generous benefits." Richard Galanti, Costco's chief financial officer, told the site, "If we pay better than average, provide a salary people can live on, have a positive environment and good benefits, we'll be able to hire better people."</p>
2		<p>WALGREEN CO. Global Pulse Score: 73.01 This drugstore chain has a commitment to creating a diverse group of employees, and it is seeking technology specialists to improve its innovation efforts. In addition, Walgreens donates millions of dollars to such charities as the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society and United Way. These attributes are key dimensions that heighten its reputation as a good corporate employer, said Reputation Institute. The retailer, based in Deerfield, Ill., sells personal products, apparel, toys, electronics, household items, and beauty and skin care products, among other items.</p>
3		<p>TOYS 'R' US INC. Global Pulse Score: 72.86 Though this toy and baby products retailer was losing market share to larger retail giants such as Wal-Mart a few years back (it shuttered its Kids 'R' Us chain in 2004), the Wayne, N.J.-based company is back on its feet, boasting more than 1,500 freestanding destination toy and baby specialty stores worldwide. The retailer has implemented a Guest Relations Team, which provides customer service through e-mails and phone calls. The company also has a convenient product recall section on its site, in order to keep its customers up-to-date on the latest in toy and product recalls.</p>
4		<p>OFFICE DEPOT INC. Global Pulse Score: 72.59 In 2007, Office Depot sold \$15.5 billion in office products and services to consumers and businesses. The Delray Beach, Fla.-based office supply company is also heavily involved with community efforts. "Through partnerships with organizations as wide-ranging as City of Hope, Toys for Tots, America's Second Harvest...Office Depot provides our associates with opportunities to support our core values," the company said. The retailer also has an initiative in place to support female entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses.</p>
5		<p>BEST BUY CO. INC. Global Pulse Score: 72.08 The nation's largest consumer electronics retailer delivered robust earnings on strong sales last year — "further evidence that shoppers are doling out more money for GPS navigators and game consoles than for apparel and shoes," WWD reported. In January, Brenda Mathison, director of environmental affairs for Best Buy Properties, said at the National Retail Federation's Annual Convention and Expo, "There's no department that environmental affairs doesn't touch." WWD also stated, "Best Buy is producing green products and packaging in its Insignia private label line."</p>
6		<p>STAPLES INC. Global Pulse Score: 72.01 Staples, based in Framingham, Mass., has a section on its Web site titled "All Product Reviews," which empowers its customers to provide details about the company's offerings. The office superstore prides itself on its dedication to the back-to-school population — it commemorated Tuesday, July 8, as the official start to the b-t-s season. "We analyzed historic trends and feedback from parents and schools, and added our in-depth knowledge of shopping patterns to determine the official start of the season," said John Mahoney, vice chairman and chief financial officer.</p>
7		<p>LOWE'S COMPANIES INC. Global Pulse Score: 71.76 As a home building supply chain, it's only fitting that the organization would involve itself in rebuilding efforts across the country. In 2007, the Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation initiated a relationship with Rebuilding Together, the nation's largest all-volunteer home rehabilitation organization. Lowe's support preserved affordable housing in almost 40 communities. The retailer also has a separate Web site, titled "Lowe's Creative Ideas," dedicated to helping consumers tap into their own skills to work on their homes.</p>
8		<p>THE HOME DEPOT INC. Global Pulse Score: 71.49 This \$77 billion home improvement retail giant doesn't just have homeowners and building contractors on the mind: It also offers free How-To clinics for children ages 5-12, which shows children how to build certain products. The clinics also educate children on how to use tools and the importance of tool safety. On its Web site, the retailer provides tips for homeowners on water and energy conservation to make their homes healthier and more eco-friendly. Home Depot suggests products to improve indoor air quality, such as air filters and latex paint products.</p>
9		<p>CVS CAREMARK CORP. Global Pulse Score: 71.14 This drugstore retail chain offers everything from cosmetics to prescription drugs to school supplies. The retailer's community efforts focus on children: Its signature charitable giving program, titled "All Kids Can," is a five-year, \$25 million initiative dedicated to supporting children with disabilities. In May, the Woonsocket, R.I., company released its first Corporate Social Responsibility report, which covers prescription safety, customer privacy, environmental management and the safety of its products, such as personal care items.</p>
10		<p>J.C. PENNEY CO. INC. Global Pulse Score: 69.92 The Plano, Tex.-based department store chain focuses on a diverse workforce. "We recognize the value that diverse perspectives bring to J.C. Penney," Myron E. "Mike" Ullman 3rd, chairman and chief executive officer, stated on the company's Web site. WWD reported at the end of June that, despite the lackluster retail environment and consumers' tight budgets, Ullman remains hopeful for back-to-school sales. "We feel good about our offers, good about our marketing and our pricing proposition...We're well prepared. Most kids need new clothes for back-to-school," he said.</p>
11		<p>KOHL'S CORP. Global Pulse Score: 69.31 This department store chain encourages its employees to give back to their communities. In 2007, almost 40,000 company employees volunteered more than 136,000 hours to support youth-serving nonprofits through efforts such as tutoring kids after school, building playgrounds and participating in fund-raising runs and walks. In addition, employees have shown their commitment to their communities, "by rewarding young volunteers with over \$1.5 million in scholarships and gift cards through the Kohl's Kids Who Care Scholarship Program," said the company.</p>
12		<p>BJ'S WHOLESALE CLUB INC. Global Pulse Score: 69.24 It's all about the customer for this warehouse store chain, which operates more than 175 locations in 16 states in the eastern U.S. "BJ's is dedicated to providing our members with prices significantly lower than those found in supermarkets, supercenters, department stores, drug stores and specialty retail stores," said the company. One of BJ's community initiatives is its Adopt-A-School program, which provides assistance to schools around the country with fund-raising efforts and the purchasing of items for curriculum enhancement (such as books).</p>

SOURCE: NEW YORK-BASED REPUTATION INSTITUTE. THE ANNUAL SURVEY ANALYZES THE LARGEST CORPORATIONS WORLDWIDE BY REVENUE; RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED THAT THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH EACH ORGANIZATION WERE THEN SURVEYED ON THEIR PERCEPTION OF EACH COMPANY'S REPUTATION ON KEY DRIVERS; 25 U.S.-BASED RETAILERS WERE INCLUDED IN THE UNIVERSE OF COMPANIES

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