

Marketing

## Toyota takes poll position in reputation stakes

Neil Shoebridge

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### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Source: AMR Interactive

#### 2003

1. Virgin Blue
2. Woolworths
3. Toyota
4. Bendigo Bank
5. Holden
6. Qantas
7. McDonald's
8. Coles Myer
9. David Jones
10. BHP Billiton

#### 2004

1. Virgin Blue
2. Microsoft
3. Toyota
4. Qantas
5. Bunnings
6. Holden
7. Harvey Norman
8. Woolworths
9. Bendigo Bank
10. NRMA

#### 2005

1. Toyota
2. Microsoft
3. Sony
4. Virgin Blue
5. Woolworths
6. Holden
7. Harvey Norman
8. David Jones
9. NRMA
10. Coles Myer

Its grip on the No. 1 spot in the car and truck market is slipping, but Toyota has moved to the top of a different list: the company with the best corporate reputation in Australia.

Toyota moved into the top spot on AMR Interactive's annual reputation survey, up from third in the 2004 survey.

Last year's No. 1 company, Virgin Blue, dropped to fourth. Microsoft retained the No. 2 spot, while Sony entered the top 10 at No. 3.

The car maker's rise does not reflect its recent performance: Toyota's sales fell 2.2 per cent in the first seven months of 2005, compared with market growth of 4.9 per cent.

As a result, its market share dipped from 21.2 to 19.8 per cent. It is now fewer than two share points ahead of Holden, which had an 18.1 per cent share in the seven months to July 31, down from 18.6 per cent in the previous corresponding period.

AMR chairman Brian Fine said Toyota's rise to the No. 1 spot reflected improved scores in several of the areas that AMR researched to determine a company's reputation, including vision and leadership, workplace, and financial performance.

"Virgin Blue's fall reflects a drop in consumers' emotional attachment to the brand, as well as concerns about its product quality, reliability and value," Mr Fine said.

The AMR survey, which Mr Fine said highlighted "the importance of being regarded well in a climate of corporate mistrust", was based on an initial survey of 1880 people who were asked to nominate companies with the best and worst reputations.

AMR then created a list of 25 companies, which were researched further with another 6313 people.

Mr Fine said a company's reputation was largely based on its "emotional appeal", that is, how good or bad people felt about it.

A company's emotional appeal was, in turn, based on a combination of attributes, including how its products or services were regarded, its reputation for social responsibility and perceptions of its workplace environment.

AMR looked at six dimensions to create its overall corporate reputation scores: emotional appeal, products and services, social responsibility, workplace environment, financial performance, and vision and leadership.

Toyota ranked No. 1 in terms of products and services and workplace environment, and was second in the other four categories.

Bendigo Bank topped the social responsibility category, but fell out of the overall top 10 this year (it ranked 12th).

Qantas and Wesfarmers' Bunnings hardware retailing division were ranked fourth and fifth, respectively, on last year's list. This year, neither made the top 10.

"Bunnings's visibility has declined over the past year," Mr Fine said. "But its reputation among those familiar with it remains high and stable."

Retailers David Jones and Coles Myer returned to the top 10 after a one-year absence, while Woolworths moved from eighth to fifth.

But the highest-flying company was Sony, landing in the top 10 at No. 3. Mr Fine attributed its rise to the increased visibility of the Sony brand.

"We have seen this with Sony before; if its visibility is high enough for it to be included in the broad list, it is normally rated in the top five in terms of reputation," he said.

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