

# SOAPBOX

## METRICS

AMY SCHOENFELD and GUILBERT GATES

# Three P.R. Nightmares

**T**OYOTA, Goldman Sachs and BP have shown some of the steepest declines in public perception this year, according to research groups that analyze corporate reputations based on online polls and phone calls. Although some experts say the online polls should be used with caution — as the respondents may not represent the entire population — others say they are one of the best ways to keep tabs on fast-moving public sentiment.

Toyota has regained close to half the public support it lost after late January, according to daily public perception scores collected by YouGov, a market research firm. (That month, Toyota suspended sales of eight models over fears about uncontrolled acceleration.) Experts attribute Toyota's rebound to its longstanding reputation for quality and doubt about whether the company was to blame for the problems.

Goldman Sachs, on the other hand, has had a negative public perception score since 2008, when the government helped bail out Wall Street. And after the company was charged with fraud in April — a case later settled — it continued to see damage to its reputation.

As for BP, public perception has been on the rise since oil stopped spilling into the Gulf of Mexico on July 15. But experts say the company still has a long way to go to regain public support.

"You still see people strongly associating 'Exxon' and 'Valdez.' And that spill was 21 years ago," said Charles Fombrun, chairman and co-founder of the Reputation Institute, which helps companies measure how they are perceived. "It will take BP years and years and years to disassociate itself from 'Deepwater Horizon' or 'gulf crisis.'"



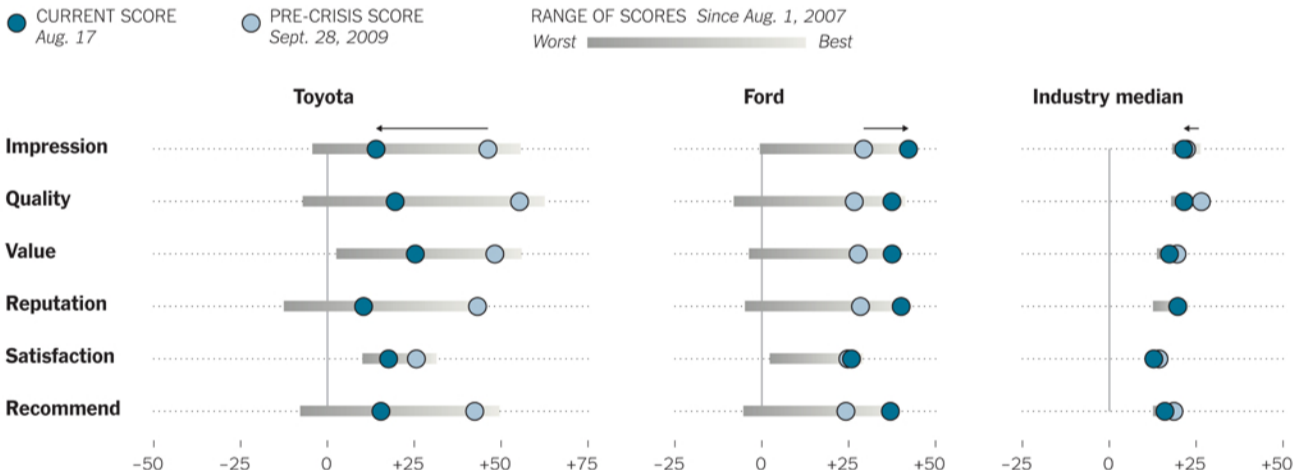
### The components of brand health

Overall brand health is an average of six components on which respondents are questioned:

- Impression**: Is your general impression of the brand positive or negative?
- Quality**: Does the brand represent good quality, or poor?
- Value**: Does the brand represent a good value for the money, or a poor one?
- Reputation**: Would you be proud to work for this brand, or embarrassed?
- Satisfaction**: Are you a satisfied customer of this brand, or dissatisfied?
- Recommend**: Would you recommend this brand to a friend?

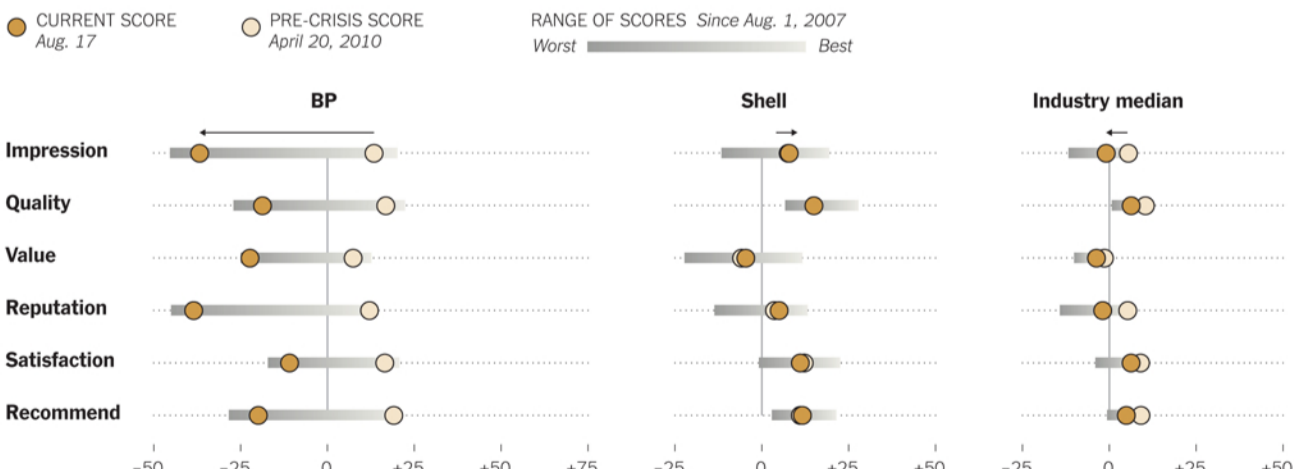
### BEFORE AND AFTER THE RECALLS

Toyota's fall was sudden, but its scores have since rebounded to levels close to the industry median.



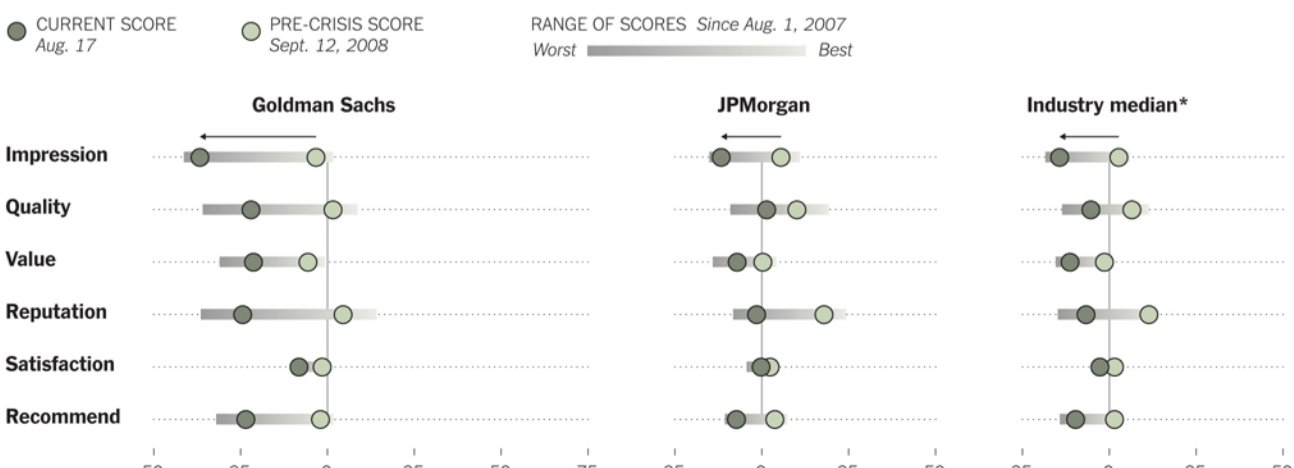
### BEFORE AND AFTER THE SPILL

BP's early attempts to play down the disaster only added to its public-perception problem.



### BEFORE AND AFTER THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Goldman Sachs became synonymous with an industry out of favor.



\*Includes major bailed-out banks as well as directly comparable investment advisers.