

EMAAR Properties takes top place in first Gulf H&H Webranking Survey

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Real estate giant EMAAR takes top slot in online consultancy Hallvarsson & Halvarsson's (H&H) inaugural "H&H Webranking GCC" survey. Second place goes to Abu Dhabi National Energy Company with ZAIN rounding up the top three best performers. Bahrain is the GCC country with the highest average score in the region, closely followed by the United Arab Emirates.

For the first time H&H Webranking has included the GCC in its annual survey of corporate website performance. The 85 largest GCC companies, measured by market capitalization, in five GCC countries are included in the ranking. Sites are assessed according to 140 criteria which are derived from H&H's annual survey of business journalists, analysts and investors to identify what information and functionality they value most highly from a listed company's corporate website. This year, 800 corporate websites in 30 different countries have been included in the global rankings (for more information visit www.webranking.eu).

"The number of listed companies in the Gulf region has increased substantially over the past few years and the region is becoming increasingly interesting for international investors. This is why we have included the GCC in our annual H&H Webranking survey. Any company looking to compete on an equal footing for international investor attention needs to utilise high quality online communication", said Staffan Lindgren, Executive Partner of H&H.

Rank	Company	Score
1	EMAAR	34.25
2	Abu Dhabi National Energy Company	33.75
3	ZAIN	33.5
4	Sorouh Real Estate	33
5	Hikma Pharmaceuticals	32.5
6	SABIC	30.5
7	Al Khalij Commercial Bank (Al Khaliji)	28.75
8	Qatar Telecom	28
9	Gulf Finance House	26.5
9	DP World	26.5

The first edition of the H&H Webranking GCC awarded top honours to EMAAR as the best website in the region for corporate online communications.

"EMAAR wins the 2009 H&H Webranking in the Gulf as they present themselves online through a website that best fulfils the requirements for a corporate website's target audiences. In particular, EMAAR's website has a well developed Investor Relations section which offers information that is in demand by the capital market, such as presentations, financial figures and a lot of share-related information" says Staffan Lindgren, Executive Partner of H&H.

GCC outlook

The rankings show that some Gulf region companies are using the online medium for financial disclosure reasonably effectively. However, the spread of results within the region ranges from 0 to 34.25 points. This indicates that the level of website performance differs substantially, with some companies performing poorly.

The Gulf average is below the European average, 18.5 compared to 50.3 (average of 700 European companies in H&H Webranking 2008).

Bahrain is the highest average scoring country in the region, although there is no significant difference between the five countries covered by this survey.

Comparing the different sections in the survey, it is within **General Company Information, Technology** and **Front page**, where the Gulf companies show strong results. One of the strongest contenders in this area was Aldar Properties who have won a special award for 'best use of video and photography'.

Examples of areas with room for improvement in the GCC region are **Financial Information, Corporate Governance** and **Financial Calendar**. All these areas are increasingly important for the international capital markets.

"Many GCC companies are failing to use their corporate websites as their principle communication channel to the same degree as companies in other international markets. In order to communicate effectively to the key audiences in the capital markets, they need to adapt to international norms and standards of corporate communication. A corporate website, rich with information in English, is now one of the single most

important ways to attract international investors. Reliable and transparent corporate communication is an essential part of the process to create trust" says Staffan Lindgren, Executive Partner of H&H.

Rank	Country	Average score
1	Bahrain	20.55
2	United Arab Emirates	20.18
3	Qatar	19.25
4	Saudi Arabia	17.51
5	Kuwait	16.03

Commenting on the results of the survey, Nicholas Lunt, Gulf Region MD of H&H's sister company, M: Communications, added: "It's important to place these results in the context of the wider region and to understand that local and south Asian investors are a critical audience for listed companies in the GCC. Most GCC listed companies are head and shoulders above their regional peers when it comes to Investor Relations (IR) and PR. IR and PR industry professionals should focus on helping them weld together methodologies that are appropriate for their core target audiences with the best elements of international best practice. For example the way Aldar Properties uses video and photography on its website is an excellent example of a company presenting a human yet dynamic face to its stakeholders, something that I know is particularly valued in the Gulf Region".

Country by country

BAHRAIN

Rank	Company	Score
1	Gulf Finance House	26.5
2	Al Baraka Banking Group	26
3	Arab Banking Corporation	25.5
3	Invest Corp Bank	25.5
5	National Bank of Bahrain	23
6	Ithmaar Bank	17.5
7	Bahrain Telecommunications Co.	16.5
8	Ahli United Bank	15.75
9	Bahrain Islamic Bank	15
10	BBK	14.25

The best **Bahrain** corporate website belongs to Gulf Finance House, with a score of 26.5 points. In second place we find Al Baraka Banking Group with 26 points. Arab Banking Corporation, with 25.5, takes the bronze together with Invest Corp Bank. Bahrain has the highest average score in GCC region. The ten largest companies in Bahrain, measured by market capitalization, were included in the survey.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Rank	Company	Score
1	EMAAR	34.25
2	Abu Dhabi National Energy Company	33.75
3	Sorouh Real Estate	33
4	Hikma Pharmaceuticals	32.5
5	DP World	26.5
6	Deyaar	26
6	DEPA Limited	26
8	Emirates NBD	25.75
9	AirArabia	25
10	National Bank of Abu Dhabi	24.75

EMAAR with a score of 34.25 takes top position in United Arab Emirates. Second place goes to Abu Dhabi National Energy Company (33.75), and Sorouh Real Estate (33) fills the third place slot. The United Arab Emirates as a country has the second highest score in the GCC survey. The 34 largest companies in United Arab Emirates, measured by market capitalization, were included in the survey.

KUWAIT

Rank	Company	Score
1	ZAIN	33.5
2	The Public Warehousing Company	23.75
3	Kuwait Finance House	19.5
4	National Industries Group	16
5	Bobyar Bank	13.25
6	Kuwait International Bank (KIB)	10.75
7	Mena Holding Group	10.5
8	International Financial Advisors (IFA)	9.5
9	Al-Safat Investment Company (Al-Safat)	7.5

ZAIN with a score of 33.5 takes top position in Kuwait. Second place goes to The Public Warehousing Company (23.75) and Kuwait Finance House (19.5) rounding up the top three best performers. The nine largest companies in Kuwait, measured by market capitalization, were included in the ranking.

QATAR

Rank	Company	Score
1	Al Khalij Commercial Bank (Al Khaliji)	28.75
2	Qatar Telecom	28
3	Commercial Bank	23
4	Industries Qatar	22.25
4	Qatar Fuel	21.5
6	Qatar National Bank (QNB)	21.5
7	Qatar Gas Transport (Nakilat)	16.25
8	Qatar Islamic Bank	15
9	Doha Bank	14.75
10	Barwa Real Estate	10.75

Al Khalij Commercial Bank grabs first place in Qatar with a score of 28.75, while second and third place goes to Qatar Telecom (28) and Commercial Bank (23) respectively. The 12 largest companies in Qatar, measured by market capitalization, were included in the ranking.

SAUDI ARABIA

Rank	Company	Score
1	SABIC	30.5
2	Dar Al Arkan	24
2	SABB	24
4	ZAIN KSA	22.25
4	STC	22.25
6	MA'ADEN	19.25
7	RIBL	19
8	Almarai	17.25
9	Saudi Fransi	16.25
10	Arab National	16
10	YANSAB	16

SABIC takes the top slot in Saudi Arabia with a score of 30.5, followed by Dar Al Arkan and SABB each with a score of 24. The bronze goes to ZAIN KSA with a score of 22.25. The 20 largest companies in Saudi Arabia, measured by market capitalization, were included in the ranking.

Sector outlook

Gulf Finance House (26.5) has the highest score in the *General Financial sector*. Second place goes to **Al Baraka Banking Group** (26) and **Arab Banking Corporation** (25.5) takes the bronze.

Al Khalij Commercial Bank (Al Khaliji) with a score of 28.75 receives the highest score in the *Bank sector*. On second place we find **Emirates NBD** (25.75) and **National Bank of Abu Dhabi** 24.75 on the third.

ZAIN with a score of 33.5 takes the top position in the *Telecommunication sector*, while second place goes to **Qatar Telecom** (28) and third place to **Du** (22.75).

Aldar Properties wins a special award for the *best use of video and photography* to illustrate its corporate story.

How H&H Webranking works

The H&H Webranking survey, which is now in its 13th annual edition, is the most comprehensive research and analysis of corporate online communication in Europe. The study evaluates the English language version of companies' websites, excluding the commercial sections. H&H Webranking is the established international yardstick of website performance of 700 of Europe's biggest listed companies.

The H&H Webranking questionnaire

Every year the Webranking survey taps into the demands of the capital markets via a questionnaire sent out to analysts, investors and business journalists. Around 350 professionals throughout Europe replied to the 2009 questionnaire, which investigates how they use the web and what information and functionalities they require of corporate websites. These answers are used to define the protocol on which the evaluation is based.

The criteria and how companies are evaluated

The H&H Webranking protocol consists of 140 criteria divided into 11 sections, for a maximum score of 100 points. The structure of the protocol resembles the past years, although many of the criteria have been re-weighted and regrouped. New criteria have also been introduced. This substantial similarity allows for an easier comparison of results over time, even as the protocol becomes more demanding every year. The most heavily weighted section is still that which is dedicated to financial information, and making up 30% of the final score.

2009 H&H WEBRANKING PROTOCOL BY SECTION

1. Technology
2. Functions
3. Start page
4. General information
5. Press
6. Financial information
7. Corporate Governance
8. Corporate Social Responsibility
9. Contact
10. Calendar
11. Career

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