

## Executive Summary

At MS&LGroup, we thought it was time - given the past two years' events - to provide our clients with accurate thinking and insights into the Banking Industry in post-crisis times, *from a reputation and communications standpoint.*

The insights come from a comprehensive media and data review carried out between November 2009 and April 2010; from talks with financial experts and from web-based research run with our partner Linkfluence. The research analysed online conversations in the most relevant, influential blogospheres in the USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy and China, reviewing crisis-related conversations that discussed: Who's to blame, and What should be done now.

## Key Findings:

Banks and financial companies are seen as reckless, fraudulent and disconnected from reality. Governments around the world meanwhile are blamed for their inaction or their inability to rein in wrong-doing financial corporations and their patent lack of regulation.

- Banks are seen as the primary wrong-doers. Their actions and policies are seen as the direct cause of the crisis. Moreover, they are criticised for keeping the bad habits (lack of transparency, over-sized bonuses, etc.) that led the world to plunge into its worst crisis since WWII.
- Corporations other than banks are also not considered to be trustful, but neither are they seen as particularly un-trustworthy.
- While some individuals from a non-corporate background are trusted to help economies and societies move beyond the crisis, CEOs are almost exclusively not.
- Governments did not, and do not, act appropriately. When Governments are blamed (in some countries more so than corporations, i.e. FR & US), it is mostly for the blind eye they turned on banks' actions and for their continued inability to enforce new and efficient regulations.
- Many opinion leaders who may not currently be strongly critical of banks or corporations in general, would take a far stronger stance if faced with a shameless CEO or, to a lesser extent, a complicit political figure.
- Opinion leaders believe there is a clear way out of this state of general mistrust: accountability and decisiveness, conservative (as in reasonable) and down-to-earth corporate and commercial policies, and the opening up of interpersonal channels of communication
- Scores on a proprietary '**Trust Index**' – established by Linkfluence - reveal particularly troubling situations in France, the UK and the USA

## Implications for Business

1. Banks and other financial institutions need to **move from trust to proof**. Evidence-based credibility is what they should build on
2. They need to address the shift to "**Value-for-All**" versus Shareholder Value.
3. They need to **flesh out the "Corporate Side" of their brands**: what kind of "global & local citizens "are they?"
4. They need to build on Transparency, Sustainability, Accountability, Proximity. These are the **core values in our post-crisis times**: each bank should adopt/adapt them
5. They need to deliver **Return to Community** rather than ROI only.

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**Linkfluence** helps companies optimise their communications strategies and brand offer through the analysis, segmentation and mapping of social media conversations

To find out more about this study, please contact MS&LGroup's chief strategy officer,  
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