

ADVERTISER RESPONSE TO THE O'REILLY FACTOR

On April 1, 2017, *The New York Times* released an [investigative report](#) on alleged sexual harassment by Fox News host Bill O'Reilly. Since then, more than 90 companies announced that they would stop advertising on his show The O'Reilly Factor. On April 19, it was announced that Bill O'Reilly would be leaving the network.

Weber Shandwick continuously monitors how companies communicate and are held accountable to their corporate values. [Research](#) we released earlier in 2017 shows 91% of global executives believe companies are influenced by consumers. Companies recognize the power of today's consumer.

We examined the responses from 94 companies that stopped their advertising on The O'Reilly Factor that we found online and in the media. A summary of our findings is below.

Of the 94 companies we analyzed through April 19...

- + **70%** are headquartered in blue states (i.e., leaned Democratic in the 2016 presidential election)
- + **28%** are headquartered in red states (i.e., leaned Republican in the 2016 presidential election)
- + **35%** are brands listed in or owned by companies listed in the 2016 FORBES Global 2000
- + **54%** replied to an activist. Many activists contacted companies asking about their advertising status as well as called on them to pull advertising.
- + **35%** explained why they were stopping advertising in context of their company values
- + **53%** did not reference the allegations against O'Reilly. **36%** directly mentioned the allegations and **11%** alluded to them.

Companies used a variety of words and phrases to describe how they were responding to the allegations. Top phrases include:

- + Pulled ads: 20%
- + No longer advertising: 11%
- + Suspended ads: 9%
- + Removed ads: 9%

Statements made about stopping advertising primarily came from two sources: the company Twitter account and an unidentified company spokesperson. The full list of who made the statement:

- + Company Twitter account: 52%
- + Unidentified spokesperson: 44%
- + PR, communications, corporate affairs or brand marketing spokesperson: 4%
- + CEO or co-founder: 3%
- + Media agency spokesperson: 1%
- + Investor relations spokesperson: 1%
- + Company Facebook account: 1%

The messages were delivered primarily through Twitter and statements to the media:

- + Tweet: 52%
- + Media statement: 45%
- + Email: 9%
- + Phone call: 2%
- + Facebook private message: 1%
- + Statement on company website: 1%

IMPLICATIONS: 1. Be prepared to respond on Twitter in a crisis. In this case, Twitter was the platform of choice for activists. **2.** Companies are paying attention to activists. About half of the advertisers we examined replied to them. However, it is unclear whether their decision to withdraw ads was directly related to activist outreach.

For more information, please contact:

MICHO SPRING
Chair, Global Corporate Practice
Weber Shandwick
mspring@webershandwick.com

LESLIE GAINES-ROSS
Chief Reputation Strategist
Weber Shandwick
lgaines-ross@webershandwick.com