

# INVESTING IN A BETTER REPUTATION

Perspectives on the Diversified Financials Industry

The RepTrak Company | Content and Community

The global Diversified Financials sector is facing reputation headwinds so far in 2021. Companies currently have an overall average Reputation Score (69), and the industry lags the global average by two points.

Governance, Citizenship, and Products most influence the industry’s reputation, which excels across Products and performs just average (<70) on Citizenship and Governance.

The industry has hastened to adopt digital solutions to ensure its operational resiliency. With much of the world relying on virtual services to stay connected, financial companies that lead with “digital-first” strategies can provide a more relevant user experience and attract market share from entrenched players.

In this respect, the industry can improve its reputation by prioritizing Innovation to enhance its existing Products advantage. While 40% of the industry’s supporters feel companies can stand behind and offer high-quality products and services, only one-third of the sector’s supporters think that the industry can adapt quickly to change.

The introduction of fin-tech ideas such as "gamification" and cryptocurrencies, among others, has created a more complex digital environment. Despite its prevalence of technology usage, the sector finds itself in uncharted territory. This uncertainty can wear into the perceptions of the industry being opaque or not credible. More than half of the IGP is currently unsure of their support in business outcomes related to credibility and trust for financial companies – whether to defend, trust, or give financial companies the benefit of the doubt.

To improve business outcomes, financial companies should prioritize transparency, starting with more distinct communication. Currently, almost two-thirds of the public feel ambiguous about whether financial companies reach out frequently enough, in a relevant way, or provide sufficient information. This skepticism means companies must be proactive about reaching out to investors, consumers, and other stakeholders to understand the implications of emergent technologies and the new digital landscape.

## DIVERSIFIED FINANCIALS INDUSTRY

69.3

January 2021 Global Reputation Score

18%

Most Influential Driver Shaping Div. Financials - Governance

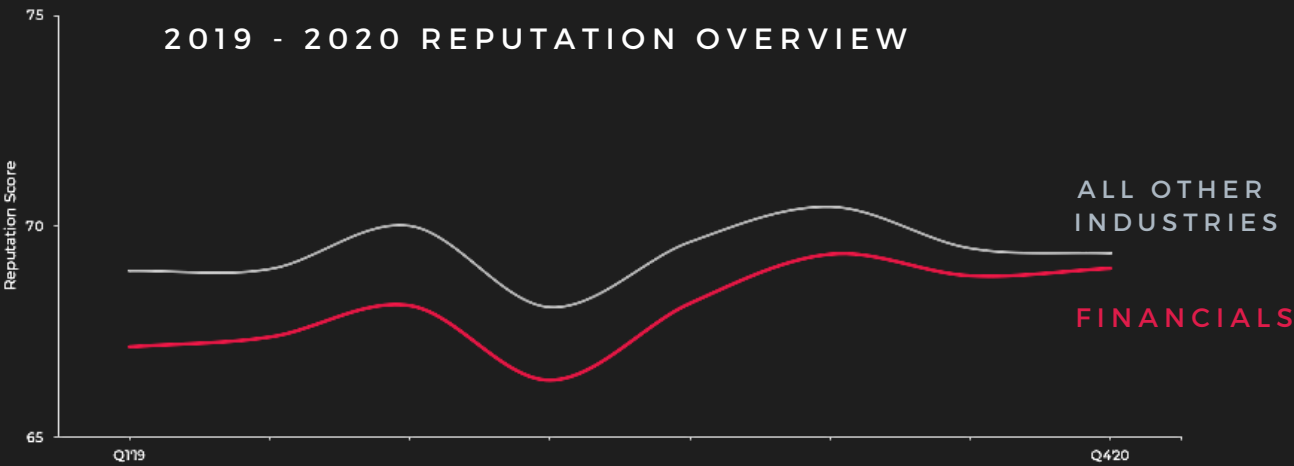
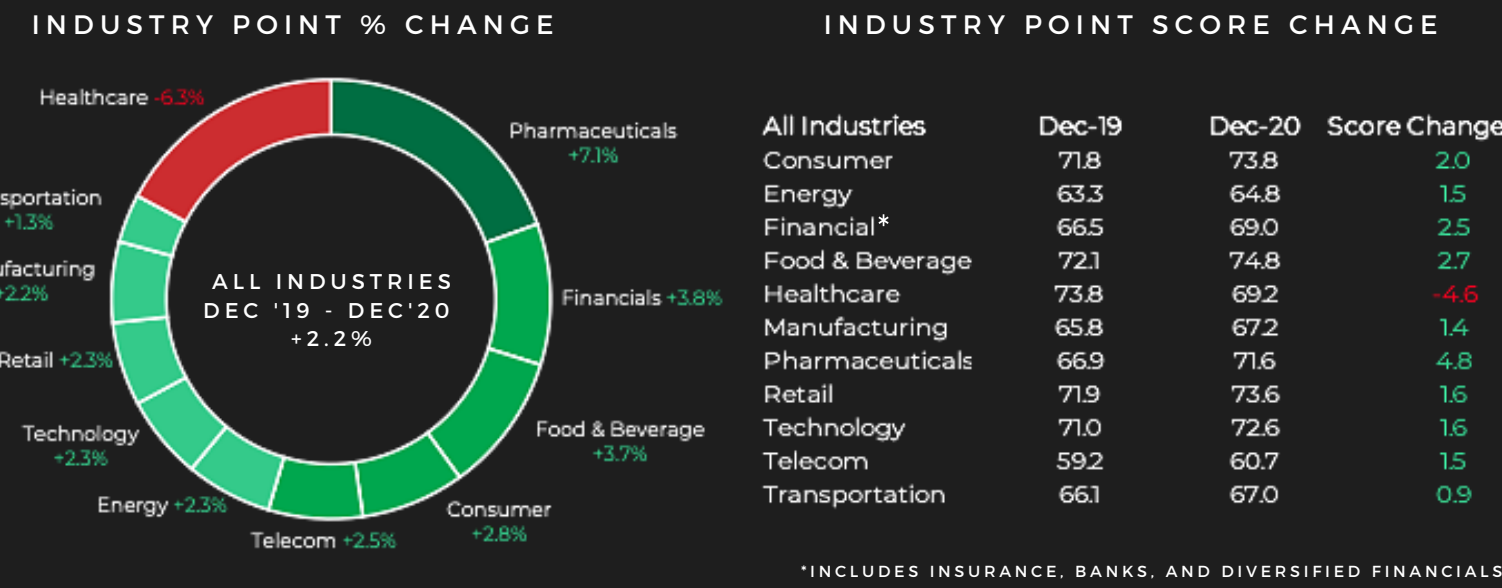
72.1

Highest Performing Driver Score - (Financial) Performance

58%

Percentage of Fence-Sitters unsure whether to give companies the "Benefit of the Doubt"

## GLOBAL CONTEXT



## INSIDER Q&A

In this Industry Insider, we examine the Diversified Financials Industry. Our spotlight speaker is Cara Knox. She is Director of Reputation Management at Edward Jones, a century-old financial services company headquartered in North America.

- Edward Jones sees reputation management as essential – it enables the firm to build trust and engagement with key stakeholders better, attract top talent and clients, and ultimately "live its purpose and tell its unique story."
- Cara predicts one of the enduring trends facing the industry is relationship building. While the way companies work today has changed, their commitment towards the "human-centeredness of relationships" has not. Empathy, understanding, and caring are essential requirements to serve and lead.
- Edward Jones embeds reputation management through its business. Cara says the company uses its metrics tactically by working its RepTrak Score into marketing and client strategies. Broadly, it also measures different stakeholder groups to understand which content and channel perspectives work best. This emphasis on reputation management enables the company to improve and better prioritize and allocate budget and resources.
- Cara advises her communications peers to keep a Growth Mindset and "never stop sharing your perspective." Communication is critical and can help create power narratives to influence and align stakeholders for good. Communications leaders and professionals must "keep learning, keep growing, and embrace challenges to get better, and help others get better too."



**Cara Knox**  
Reputation Management  
Director  
Edward Jones

Cara Knox leads reputation management for Edward Jones, which includes strengthening the emotional connection key external and internal stakeholders have with the firm. The department is comprised of marketing teams responsible for public relations and corporate citizenship.