Inditex CEO Pablo Isla named best CEO in the world - again

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Inditex CEO Pablo Isla has topped Harvard Business Review’s list of the best-performing chief executives in the world for the second year in a row. The ranking takes into account economic results and other elements of social responsibility.

Measured on financial returns alone, Isla would have come in 29th, compared with 18th a year ago, according to the publication. But the company’s strong performance in terms of corporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG), which makes up 20% of each CEO’s ranking, helped him take the top spot.

“This recognition has been made possible thanks to the work of all the people that are part of Inditex across the stores, countries, offices, logistics centres, factories and corporate headquarters,” Isla said in a letter sent to employees this week. The group owns fashion chains including Zara, Massimo Dutti and Stradivarius.

In the letter, Isla also highlighted that the effort and commitment of its employees make Inditex a “unique” company.

If the ranking would have been measured on financial performance alone, Amazon’s Jeffrey Bezos would have taken the top spot. Although he climbed three spots, Bezos ranked 68th in the global list due to his low ESG performance.

The top ten chief executive officers include Nvidia’s Jensen Huang, Bernard Arnault of LVMH, François-Henri Pinault of Kering, Continental’s Elmar Degenhart, Salesforce’s Marc Benioff, Jacques Aschenbroich of Valeo, Johan Thijs of KBC, Hisashi Ietsugu of Sysmex and Martin Bouygues of Bouygues.

According to data from the publication, only six CEOs have appeared on the list every year since 2013, including Bezos, Isla, Blake Nordstrom of Nordstrom, Paolo Rocca of Tenaris, James Taiclet Jr. of American Tower, and Renato Alves Vale of CCR.
Meanwhile, Marillyn Hewson of Lockheed Martin, Debra Cafaro of Ventas and Nancy McKinstry of Wolters Kluwer are the only women on the list, reflecting the very low female representation among the CEOs of the world’s best companies.

49 of the 100 CEOs on the list work for American companies, nine for French companies, six for Chinese and Japanese companies and four for Spanish companies. Germany, Mexico and the UK follow with three CEOs each.

Translated by Barbara Santamaria

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