How to ~~draft~~ craft an annual report

Issued by icandi CQ   20 Jun 2023

If your annual report doesn't look like it will be a must-read for investors and other stakeholders, then you need to throw out the draft and employ more craft.

Annual reports are important for regulatory and compliance reasons but, just as vitally, they provide credible data so investors can make sound financial decisions. Companies need to tell – and sell – their story on how operational practices and policies impact their vision, goals and triple bottom line. So, once the numbers and information are in place and compliant with the JSE and other regulatory requirements, what next?

First, check the sustainability box

Stakeholders expect companies to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability. In fact, sustainability reporting goes beyond compliance to showcase how sustainability initiatives contribute to long-term value creation. In 2022, The JSE released its Sustainability and Climate Change Disclosure Guidance to help guide listed and unlisted companies in SA on how to approach sustainability reporting.

Next, unpack the story you want to tell (and read)

An annual report is essentially a snapshot of your business. It tells the reader about the year just past and commits to the year ahead. The story is about your people and what they did to deliver sustainability and success. So you need to make it a report worth reading, and to do this you need to leverage the twin powers of visual and verbal storytelling in a way that turns facts, big data and even performance metrics into a story that speaks to how you made a difference to customers, shareholders, employees – and the world around you.

Create greater impact through better design

Financial information is boring? Data is cold? Think again. Great design takes you on a visual journey that enriches the data-based information and brings the story to life.

Great design:

- **Draws attention and focus where it's needed**, highlighting patterns, correlations, and outliers that may not be immediately apparent in raw data.

- **Allows for the quick and efficient communication of information**, leading to faster analysis of information.

- **Enhances clarity and understanding** by presenting complex data in an easily digestible and intuitive manner, important insights and trends effortlessly.

Design techniques to consider for your next report:

- **Got a lot of data to get through?** Data visualisation techniques make your company's financial data more memorable for readers.

- **Want to keep your readers attention?** Consider interactive features, like clickable charts or animated infographics.

- **Want to bring in a playful element?** Illustrations can tell engaging stories that merge your financial performance with your brand.

Make every word count and every sentence matter

Engaging storytelling techniques, like establishing a narrative structure, using anecdotes, and highlighting key milestones, help create annual reports that are easy to read and hard to put down.

Great writing:

- **Creates a compelling narrative** around the the company's achievements, challenges, and future aspirations.

- **Simplifies complex financial information** so it's accessible and relatable to a wider audience.

- **Breaks down complex or technical information** into easily understandable terms and short sentences.

- **Uses plain language and clear messaging** to draw the reader into the story instead of alienating them with jargon and verbose language.

Part art, part science, by combining great design and impactful writing, your annual report will simplify complex information and turn big data into a compelling story.

Icandi CQ has a specialist annual reporting team of project managers, writers and designers who can partner with you to engage stakeholders with captivating design, impactful narratives, and seamless print and digital solutions. Get in touch.

Brand love, from the inside out 14 Feb 2024
Is 2024 the year we unlock AInternal Communications? 17 Jan 2024
How to ~~draft~~ **craft an annual report** 20 Jun 2023
Tell or sell - how website storytelling goes beyond selling 8 May 2023
Can your EVP drive work-life integration in 2023? 23 Mar 2023

icandi CQ

icandi CQ is a 31% Black Woman Owned, Level 2 B-BBEE strategically driven full-service digital brand, communication and employee experience agency.

Profile | News | Contact | Twitter | RSS Feed