

Getting value from social reports

Much time, effort and money goes into compiling social report but does their intended audience read them? During a CSI Connect Forum, Sarah Campbell, MD of Kaelo Engage provided the following tips to delegates on how to get their social report content to work harder and live beyond the pages of a dense corporate document.



Image via [123RF](#)

1. Tell the human story

Data definitely has a very important place in a social report but do not forget to make your content relatable. Use story-telling techniques and populate your pages with personal stories of change from your beneficiaries. Write up personal stories and use them in the media and to engage with your staff or community stakeholders.

Build case studies showing how you put your social investment strategy into action and illustrate best practices. Include the case studies in the social report as boxed inserts, upload them as separate PDFs on your website or push them out into the media as stand-alone stories.

2. Give your audience the power of choice

It is a good idea to provide a variety of different formats to meet the needs and preferences of your different stakeholder groups. Not all stakeholders want to read a report on an iPad and not all audiences want to read pages of information. For a digitally savvy audience, consider building a microsite that is optimised.

Reading time online is particularly precious so think about how to segment information and make sections of your report easily accessible to people. Some companies are even providing users with the online functionality to customise their own report by selecting the information they want to know about.

3. Take advantage of digital platforms

Your report should be translated into some type of online content. Think about creative ways that you make the content sing and engage your audience. For instance one of our clients, Kagiso Trust, used a podcast to supplement an Executive Summary. Check out what innovative brands such as Apple, Nikon and Coke are doing with their social reports online.

4. Leverage your social media platforms

Your report is content rich with facts and information. Develop a dedicated social media content plan that will help you disseminate these messages to your audience. Think about how you can engage your audience on these platforms with this content, rather than just broadcasting information. Post on LinkedIn with case studies and develop thought leadership article for your corporate blogs.

5. Simplify your content graphically

No one reads long reams of copy anymore. Our advice is break up the copy in your report into pull quotes, boxed inserts and graphics. Simply words with design and present complex information through graphics. Repurpose these images or graphics and push them onto your social media platforms.

6. Engage internal and external audiences

Align the communication about your social report to already established external and internal channels and engagement platforms e.g. investor forums, distribution of annual report, supplier days, etc. Consider how you are going to engage your external audience. It could be through an emailer to announce the report, a media briefing, advertising or mail outs. Do not forget about your employees, as they are your most important ambassadors. Reach through your internal channels. You might consider a foyer display, intranet content. Make it easy to read and very visual.

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