

## Improving Your Corporate Governance Reporting

Corporate governance continues to evolve but the way companies report it does not.

The directors' report, the corporate governance statement and the remuneration report all lend themselves to a box-ticking approach. The result is reporting that seems designed to deter the reader, with page after page of densely packed text and hard-to-decipher tables.

Companies also fail to link governance to the front of the report, leaving the impression that governance is an academic exercise, divorced from the real running of the business.

With so much disconnected information, companies' messages go missing. The right approach, though, can transform your communications. The ideas below will help you to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of your governance reporting.

### Content

- » Simplify your governance section by stripping out anything that properly belongs in your business review or OFR, such as corporate responsibility or principal risks and uncertainties.
- » Put a human face on your disclosures by including letters from the chairman and the chair of the remuneration committee. These are also great places to set out your key messages.
- » Use summaries or 'at a glance' pages to make your disclosures work for skim readers and to provide context for those who go on to read the detail.
- » Think about your structure and aim for a narrative with a logical flow, which is easy to follow and more likely to convince your readers.

### Navigation

- » Consider including a content list at the start of each section, to guide readers quickly to the information they want.
- » Employ clear, bold cross-referencing to show where readers can find out more.

### Design

- » How your report looks has a real influence on whether people read it, so follow the design you use in the front of your report and make sure there is plenty of white space.
- » Create charts and diagrams to bring the report to life. These are particularly helpful for visual learners but all report users will find them useful.
- » Emphasise key points within the text by using pull quotes and boxes.
- » Use plentiful subheadings to divide each section into more digestible chunks.

## Text

- » Use the active voice to improve the clarity of your writing and make it more engaging.
- » Break up long paragraphs to make them easier to read and create a more appealing layout.
- » If you're reusing text from last year's report, review it carefully to make sure everything is still relevant and required. Rewrite as necessary to keep it fresh.
- » Excessive capitalisation makes text much harder to read. Only capitalise proper nouns.

Adopting these principles will improve your governance reporting and help turn your annual report into a single, integrated document, which better reflects the way you run your company.

This approach will also make your governance reporting work far better online, where readers expect to find the key messages instantly and have information presented to them in bite-sized pieces. The increasing tendency to access reports on mobile devices will only make this aspect more important.

## Contact me

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