

Gather around

How do you get people who have a vested interest in you to understand who you are and what you do? We bring you the latest developments and practical recommendations on corporate reporting, digital, and branding.



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Welcome, everyone,

Artificial intelligence is revolutionising corporate communication. The technology is evolving into a hybrid of author and audience. This issue of Gather around delves into the driving forces behind this transformation and how you can leverage its potential to captivate the very human hearts and minds. It's why we also continue our exploration of oft-overlooked aspects of corporate narratives that foster authenticity and reputational capital.

Please let us know your thoughts, even if you are Gemini.

Our Reporting Intelligence pages are a treasure trove of insightful reads, carefully filtered from the FRC and The Big Four. We've done the hard work, so you can stay informed without the hassle.

Enjoy reading

Richard Costa



Analysts don't read your annual report. AI does.

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AI is already having an impact on how investors engage with you and how you should communicate moving forward. Welcome to audience-first reporting.



Great, but why? Vision and accountability in corporate narratives (Part 2)

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From COP to Davos, people look to business to lead the way in solving the world's most challenging problems. This five-minute read is the second in a two-part series on the beating heart of your corporate narrative.



Reporting Intelligence

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Explore the latest reporting updates including the IFRS Foundation's new ISSB guide, PwC's survey on board perspectives on ESG, Climate Impact Partners' study on climate commitment trends and the FRC's annual review of corporate reporting.



Gather news

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The Gather team successfully completed the Vitality London 10k on 22 September, raising over £1,000 for Grief Encounter charity. A huge thank you for all the support and donations received.

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The world of corporate comms has changed forever

[OpenAI](#) dropped their o1 preview and o1 mini, and AI podcasts are abuzz with promises to have hit the next milestone of AI roadmaps: advanced reasoning capability at PHD level that can work through multiple steps rather than just providing the next best answer. Releases and updates from [Anthropic](#) and its competitors are coming thick and fast. If you haven't been impressed by AI before, you should try it. Google's latest update to notebookLM generates entertaining podcasts with two speakers debating the content of any PDF you upload. Prepare to have your mind blown.



By **Julia Scanlon**
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Analysts don't read your annual report. AI does.
continued

How do these AI developments impact corporate communications?

The reality is that most investors and analysts are seeking shortcuts. Everyone wants tools that can improve the quality of their research and make it faster and more efficient. The specific tools analysts use may vary based on company policy. Still, regardless of the AI language model they use, it's becoming increasingly unlikely that anyone is reading reports cover to cover.

What does best practice digital-first reporting look like?

Well, it's not about a landscape PDF or dumping regulatory content on your website. Digital-first reporting begins by understanding how your audiences access critical information and where it's best to connect with them. It really should be called audience-first reporting.

Understanding your audiences and refined messaging

One of the first steps is to think through your messaging hierarchy and consider how stakeholders will access your content. We will likely see a more data-driven approach to reporting that allows teams and analysts to gather and access data more quickly; this often requires tools such as Workiva to avoid mistakes and manual errors. As CSRD becomes a requirement in 2025 for many, data-driven reporting will only increase, and companies need to carefully consider how they approach their double-materiality assessment and ongoing reporting.

How do stakeholders find your content?

Most of the time, your audience will use social media or visit your company website. They will head to the Investor section and then go to reports to download the report and half-year results. Understanding this journey is important because it allows you to highlight important messages along the way.

If you had 30 seconds to tell your story, what would it be? Is it your company strategy or your pipeline, or do you need to provide context to last year's figures? Be selective.

This is where we can help. At Gather, we are dedicated to crafting your corporate narrative in a clear and simple way. We prioritise your audience's needs above all else, beyond your website or the structure of your report.

So, as we all love a summary, what does the future of digital-first reporting look like?

1. More data in a more accessible way.
2. Clear, compelling narrative with all-year-round stories and content to support it.
3. Audience-first content across all your digital channels reinforces the same priority messages.

Getting AI read

In addition to thinking about how AI will read and analyse your report, you will likely soon be required to include risk assessments and roadmaps of how AI impacts your industry and business. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) as we unpack this further and send us an email to find out more about our AI workshops for executive and communication teams.

About the author

Julia Scanlon is Digital Director at Gather London and has over 15 years of experience in digital communication and content strategy. She has advised and delivered for many FTSE 100, private equity firms and B2C household names in their digital communication strategy.

Her focus at Gather is to bring communication strategies to life through super-connected storytelling across channels using the latest AI and digital tools.

Great, but why? Vision and accountability in corporate narratives (Part 2)

Vision and accountability are underplayed in corporate communication, but they have never mattered more in today's business landscape. From COP to Davos, people look to business to lead the way in solving the world's most challenging problems. This five-minute read is the second in a two-part series on the beating heart of your corporate narrative.

People are interested in the stories behind the businesses or brands they choose to support. Like brands, corporate narratives shape perceptions, build trust, and foster loyalty. Connecting means meeting their expectations, a responsibility that businesses must uphold to provide certainty and positivity in challenging times.

Corporate narratives are expected to address the big picture. [The previous article in this series](#) examined strategies for communicating the company's purpose, values, and culture. This article dives deep into the imperative of stakeholder partnerships and governance in business.

Communicating your regard for stakeholders

The word 'externality' has entered the everyday lexicon. The public cares about business's impact on the economy, society, and the environment. People know companies' actions ultimately affect them.



By **Richard Costa**
Consultancy Director

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Great, but why? Vision and accountability in corporate narratives (Part 2)
continued

Corporate communication about the impact on stakeholders must address what's material to them. If it sounds obvious, it's surprisingly uncommon. Outlining how the company's directors consider the effects on stakeholders during discussions and decision-making can be a good idea. Describing how the company's leadership ensures fairness between stakeholders, including but not limited to the workforce, community, and the environment, goes a long way.

Communicating how stakeholders affect you

Businesses need people and entities to hold a stake in it. Corporate communication typically focuses on what's in it for the holders. Still, a meaningful and transparent approach to this area presents a partnership or contract and, therefore, includes stakeholders' impact on the company.

Explaining the various factors influencing a corporation's interests helps companies be better understood and appreciated. Therefore, it's good practice to illustrate how engagement with stakeholders affects stewardship and to detail the outcomes of such engagement. It is critical to describe how considering the interests of stakeholders and the long-term impact of the company's activities on the community and environment may significantly influence the company's long-term success.

Stakeholder engagement is vital for establishing and nurturing relationships that generate and protect value.

It entails employing diverse methods to interact with parties, comprehend their concerns, and prioritise their issues. Good corporate communication underlines how fostering strong business relationships with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders is crucial for the company's success and longevity. Often, this is equivalent to describing the company's business model.

The communication of stewardship

You know it to be true: people distrust faceless corporations. Powerful, anonymous Business seems counter to valued societal qualities such as authenticity, good governance, and accountability.

Addressing this notion involves communicating the leadership team's experience, skills, roles, and responsibilities. Effective corporate communication emphasises how these aspects work together to provide guidance. Explain how diversity within the leadership, including gender and ethnicity, contributes to improved governance. Complete the circle by describing the succession criteria and plans for future leadership positions.

The communication of accountability

Stakeholders thoroughly investigate companies' inner workings. It is wise to take a proactive approach to addressing leadership's performance, accountability, and incentives. The goal is to show how directors prioritise upholding a reputation for high standards of business conduct and ensure that incentives and rewards align with the company's purpose and values.

Company policies matter, but they don't make themselves. Many examine how compensation policies and practices support the business strategy and contribute to long-term, sustainable success. Therefore, it is vital to clearly outline the impact and results of engaging with stakeholders, such as shareholders and the workforce, on the policies.

Stakeholders expect businesses to explain how governance contributes to the success of the business model and the achievement of the Greater Good. Yet, or maybe because of this, this area of corporate communication is far too often patronising hot air. Evidencing the nitty-gritty, such as how directors receive accurate, timely, and precise information and how leadership regularly reviews the company's risk management and internal control framework, helps communicate governance effectiveness and controls. It makes it real and feels authentic.

At Gather, we understand that brands, websites, and annual reports are often not only the repository of the corporate narrative but also the vehicle to develop it. Through these projects and channels, firms can help build positive reputations and support the company's success. Get in touch to discuss how we can help you.

Reporting intelligence

IFRS Foundation releases guide for voluntary ISSB sustainability reporting



The IFRS Foundation has released a guide to help companies voluntarily apply the International Sustainability Standards Board's (ISSB) sustainability reporting standards. The ISSB, launched in 2021, developed these standards to inform investors about companies' sustainability risks and opportunities. The inaugural general sustainability (IFRS S1) and climate (IFRS S2) reporting standards were released in June 2023. Over 20 jurisdictions, representing nearly 55% of global GDP and over half of global greenhouse gas emissions, are adopting or considering these standards.

The new guide, "Voluntarily applying ISSB Standards – A guide for preparers," aims to assist companies in meeting investor demand for sustainability reporting, especially in jurisdictions without regulatory requirements. Major investors like BlackRock and Vanguard are encouraging the application of ISSB Standards. ISSB Chair, Emmanuel Faber, emphasised that this guide helps companies transition from current reporting practices to ISSB Standards, providing a cost-effective route for delivering decision-useful information to investors.

Only 7% of U.S. board directors equate ESG with sustainability, PwC survey finds



PwC's Annual Corporate Directors Survey highlights a declining focus on ESG in U.S. corporate boardrooms. Only 47% of directors report ESG as a regular agenda item, down from 55% in 2022. The survey, covering over 520 directors from various industries, reveals ambiguity surrounding ESG, with 66% agreeing it means different things to different people. Notably, only 7% equate ESG with sustainability. Larger companies show better ESG understanding and recognise its impact on performance more than smaller ones.

Directors face challenges in overseeing ESG disclosures and climate commitments' impact on capital allocation. Despite the ESG focus decline, data security and talent management remain top boardroom priorities. PwC stresses the need for directors to understand ESG beyond terminology, focusing on identifying issues driving sustainable value creation and guiding management in resource allocation for long-term success.

Reporting intelligence
continued

Silent surge: Fortune Global 500 climate commitments grow amidst scrutiny



Climate Impact Partners' study of Fortune Global 500 companies shows a significant increase in climate commitments, despite growing anti-ESG sentiment and greenwashing concerns. Net zero targets have risen to 45% of companies, up from 39% in 2023 and just 8% in 2020. However, companies are becoming less vocal about their goals due to increased scrutiny. North American companies show the most progress, with 79% having significant climate targets, despite U.S. anti-ESG movements.

European companies lead at 95%, while Asian firms lag at 46%. The use of carbon credits in climate strategies has increased, with 42% of companies planning to use them. Companies using carbon credits are twice as likely to have near-term science-based targets. The study highlights the need for ambitious targets and the use of tools like carbon credits to accelerate progress in tackling the climate crisis.

FRC publishes Annual Review of Corporate Reporting – with 47% of reviewees receiving 'substantive letters'



In its report the FRC looked at a range of reporting areas, mostly around financial disclosures but also sustainability and narrative reporting.

The main findings were that; the quality of reporting had improve in the FTSE 350 but there is evidence of the gap widening between the FTSE 350 and other companies, climate-related reporting is becoming more well-established but the scope is widening with new regulations, and good quality reporting does not necessarily require a greater volume of disclosure.

The top issues that the FRC acted on by asking substantive questions of companies were on impairment of assets, cash flow statements, and financial instruments.

5% of companies with cases opened had questions raised on the strategic report and 4% on TCFD and climate-related narrative reporting, both making the top 10 issues raised.

For the 2024/25 cycle, the FRC expects that companies will improve their pre-issuance checks to ensure common technical compliance issues are reviewed robustly, risks and uncertainties are clear and consistent so they align clearly with the financial statements, and that the corporate narrative in the strategic report includes a fair, balanced and comprehensive review of the company's development, position, performance and future prospects.



Gather news

Vitality London 10k

We did it! The Gather team smashed the Vitality London 10k on 22 September, raising over £1,000 for our chosen charity, [Grief Encounter](#).

Huge thanks to everyone who supported, donated, and cheered us on – it made all the difference!



Workspace Group plc wins best Remuneration Reporting in the FTSE 350 at PwC's Building Trust Awards



We are delighted to announce that our client Workspace Group PLC has won best Remuneration Reporting in the FTSE 350 at PwC's Building Trust Awards.

The award assesses the extent to which companies explain and justify the remuneration of executive directors in the context of the experience of the company's stakeholders, including the company's employees, shareholders, customers and suppliers.



Workiva 2024 Amplify Conference 29–30th October

Tessa Murray (CEO) and Katy Fuller (Senior Sustainability Consultant) at Gather will be attending Workiva's 2024 Amplify EMEA Conference on 29–30th October in Amsterdam. If you are also attending, we would love to connect.

Reach out to either:

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and let's get in touch!



Contact

Please do get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

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GATHER

Joined-up communications in a changing world.
Brand. Reporting. Digital. Sustainability.