

Sustainability reporting online

by Andrew Buckwell - Monday, April 10, 2017

At the beginning of 2017 Altus Impact was commissioned by the United Nations Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) to publish its 2016 annual report in digital format. The annual report was launched at the 2017 [PAGE Ministerial Conference in Berlin](#).

Unbounded by the physical constraints of the print medium, Altus Impact successfully translated the content and design elements of the substantive annual report and an internal stakeholder, outcomes-based report into a multi-layered [online experience](#).

This brought together a high level of design aesthetic, 'punchy' headline-grabbing information with detailed storytelling based on PAGE deliverables, helping justify the actions to donors.

What is a digital report? Isn't it just a website?

A digital report differs from a (corporate) website, mainly due to its self-contained nature and specific purposes - that of reporting to stakeholders as a point-in-time statement. Though it is driven by the same technologies of the World Web and most often uses similar layouts to traditional websites (*why change what works?*), it can also be extended to be downloaded and viewable off-line, with all the assets contain inside an 'app'.

Organisations are increasingly recognising the benefits of turning to the digital medium as the default reporting option. No longer will there be undistributed boxes of annual reports held in storage rooms, or the modern day equivalent of being posted to a website in PDF format and having zero downloads.

Publishing online provides all the benefits of web-interactivity with design aesthetic of magazine publishing. It provides:

- **Improved return on investment** - Your report still demands stunning design, but you'll save money by taking the guesswork out of estimating print runs. You can reach unlimited new audiences.
- **More findable** - Your reports can be more closely integrated into your broader corporate communications strategies and also become more 'findable' on web through use of direct mail, social- and search engine-marketing.
- **Generate the 'wow!' factor** - With a flexible digital canvas you can include stunning imagery, interactive multimedia elements such as video, podcasts, dynamic maps, infographics and charts as well as deliver perfectly crafted but powerful and meaningful messages.
- **Creative narrative** - By thoughtful use of page structure, hyperlinks, glossaries, and show/hide techniques, your content can be crafted and layered in such a way so that it can keep the required technical detail, whilst maintaining a clear narrative without losing the reader.
- **Cross device/format** - Your report can seamlessly be displayed on all types of devices and formats, from desktop to tablet to smartphone and - yes - print. It can even be made available off-line.
- **Greater accessibility** - Your digital report will be fully accessible to people who require special assistance in accessing information.
- **Marketing services** - Integrate marketing of your products and services directly into your reporting.

Effective online reporting suits many publications, from annual reports to programme reporting to investor prospectuses.

If you are thinking of moving towards digital reporting, effective, forward planning is important. Standard, printed reporting is commonly deeply rooted in organisational behaviour - *this is how we've always done it!* And often budgets may already be assigned to replicating last year's reporting process. So start your planning early, start convincing your stakeholders now!

Altus Impact has a unique [set of knowledge, skills and experience](#) that enables it to provide specialist services in assisting organisations with online reporting. Find out more about having [impact through communications](#).