

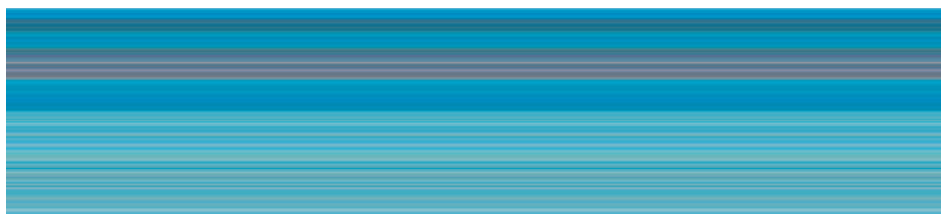
## All to play for – Making the most of what's on offer

By Reg Pauffley

I'm really looking forward to see how companies approach their corporate reporting this year. How many will provide an iPad application? How many will use video in the online version? Which companies will include an integrated sustainability report? Who will use social media in some way, or even produce a web first based report, with the availability of a print variant?

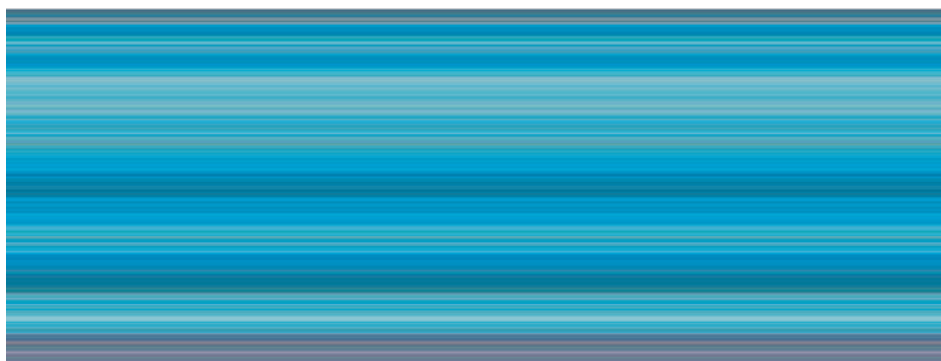
**Audiences now expect so much more in terms of choice, both in delivery and content.** By using today's unprecedented selection of channels and platforms to deliver the facts, figures and investment case, companies can add real **value** and increase the overall effectiveness of their **communication**. Will they seize the opportunity?

Well, I certainly haven't been disappointed by some of the first crop of December year-end reports that have just been published. But what's clear is that there is a real mixture of **trendsetters** and those **resistant to change**. Perhaps they're waiting to see what others do first.



AkzoNobel Report 2010

A year of delivering Tomorrow's Answers Today



Let me start with a couple of trendsetters. First the Dutch-based group **AkzoNobel**. Following on from last year's success, the chemical group has again produced a visually compelling and well-structured report, both in print form and in full html format. It delivers excellent strategic narrative, business performance reviews and provides the reader with a clear, well balanced insight into the group. It clearly articulates the company's ambitions, and how it will achieve them.

The online version is still very user friendly and provides real added value through the use of interactive figures, the ability to create your own charts, pdf and download a wide range of XLS files. The introduction video by the CEO, Hans Wijers is excellent. It's very well scripted and delivered, and I particularly like the fact that it's not just a talking head, it's cut with graphics and footage showing activities, as in a mini-documentary. A good role model for others. It's also very exciting to see that the online version is among the first to be available for the iPad as a free app.

Go to

<http://report.akzonobel.com/2010/ar/servicepages/welcome.html>  
to view the online and download the printed version.



The next example that falls into the trendsetter category is one of the world's leading diversified industrial groups, German-based **Siemens**. I like both the printed version and online, although in my view the online does not deliver quite as much added value as AkzoNobel, and is split between html and pdf format. However, both versions have good, strong content and the online makes excellent use of well produced informative videos.

The printed version is two books in one. The "*Company Report*" is divided into six chapters (Introduction, Foundation, Structure, Directions, One Siemens and Vision), supported by three in-depth product stories. Together, these provide the reader with a good understanding of what makes Siemens tick - its approach, purpose, strategy and culture. The second book is a substantial "*Financial Report*". It's all good content but the downside is that the whole report comes in at 275 pages.

Although there's room for improvement in the online, overall the report provides a highly effective package. It's especially good to see an innovative company like Siemens using an innovative approach like an iPad app to deliver its corporate reporting.

Go to <http://www.siemens.com/annual/10/en/index.html> to view the online and to download the printed version.

The other three that make up this early crop are also large multinational groups, two from Germany and one from Switzerland. All three are producing very informative and reports rich in content, but reports that are unfortunately looking the same year on year, which I believe could impact on how well they are communicating with their audiences.

I'm not advocating change for change sake, but I do believe that **a company should review each year how its corporate reporting is communicating**. Crucially, is it delivering what its audiences want, and in a way and manner they want it?



First, **Bayer**. A report that when you first pick it up feels like it's going to provide you with everything you need to know about the company, what it does, how it does it, its markets, its purpose and its strategy for the future. But it's somewhat disjointed and lacking in clarity. Virtually all the stories and visuals are from the Bayer perspective, with men and women in white coats in laboratories. It's my sense that the report would be more compelling if the stories came from a more customer-centric point of view, showing how Bayer impacts on its markets and customers around the world.

As for the online it's just too busy and confused. The news style approach leaves the user not knowing where to go first. But it does use video and some flash-based presentations.

I believe Bayer possesses all the ingredients to be a great communicator, it just needs to bring some fresh thinking to how it delivers its story.



Next, it's **Henkel**, which again is very much in the Henkel look and feel, a lot of information, delivered in a somewhat reserved manner. I'm pleased to see that this year the cover is just one full bleed photograph supporting the new positioning of "*Excellence is our Passion*", and that the narrative focuses on "*putting customers at the center of what we do.*" I do feel that the report would benefit from having a more relaxed style, perhaps using the style of a corporate magazine to create a more engaging read?

The Sustainability report is easier to read, and uses many more soundbites and graphics. It's a shame the front cover photograph is so static.

The two reports together are referred to as the Henkel Corporate Report, highlighted on the group website. It has its own landing page, where the user can click onto either the online versions or download a pdf of the other report.

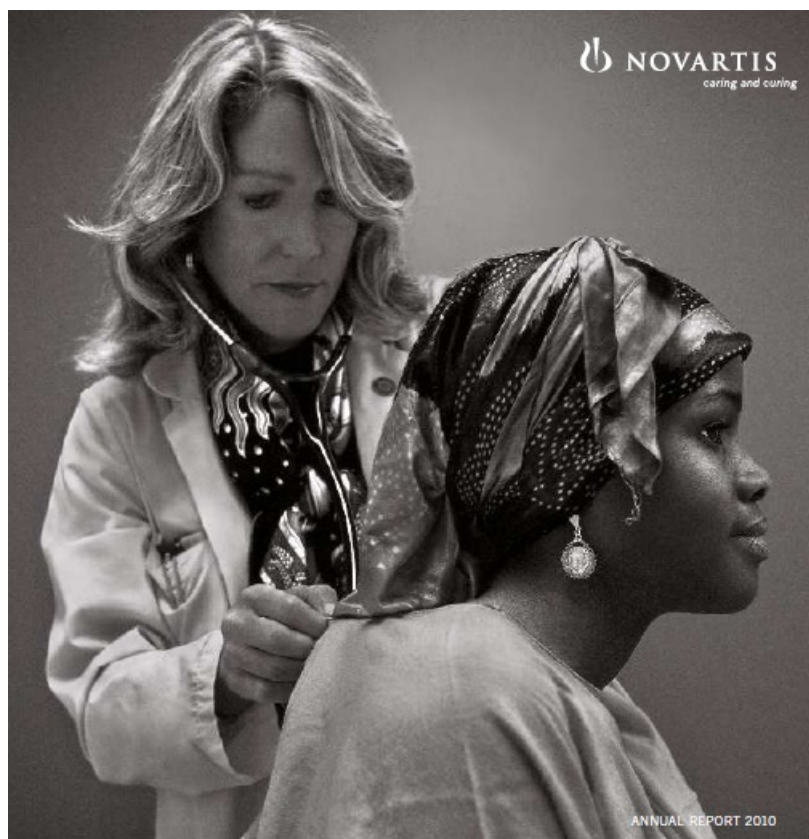
It's good to see Henkel return to producing online versions of the two reports, and I also notice on the group website the mention of Henkel and social media.

The online versions are simple, clear and easy to use, although veering on the side of print on screen with no real added value.

Overall I get the feeling from what Henkel has produced this year that it's very much a matter of 'watch this space'. Next year's

corporate reporting could be pushing the boundaries in content and delivery. Another one on the brink of being an outstanding communicator.

Go to <http://corporatereport.henkel.com> to either view the reports online or download them as pdf files.



Finally, it's **Novartis**, which is, apart from a few minor layout tweaks and obviously different words, the same as last year and the year before that and the year before that. It's beautifully designed and the photography is outstanding and truly reflects the company's serious and somewhat academic approach. Novartis adopted this editorial position a number of years ago and it works for them, but I wonder if that remains the case for the various audiences. Could there be another way of delivering this much information in a more user friendly manner whilst still maintaining overall integrity? Why not produce an online version which would at least allow the user to just download the sections that are required? At the moment it's a pdf of the whole or nothing.

I feel that it's time for Novartis to ask the difficult questions of itself, are we communicating in the most effective way?

Go to <http://novartis.com/newsroom/corporate-publications/download.shtml> to either download a pdf or order a hard copy.

So, based on this evidence am I still looking forward to a really interesting corporate reporting season? You bet. Bring them on, I'm sure that we're in for a real treat.

Let me know what you think and how much you care about good design at: [reg.p@creativeconsortia.com](mailto:reg.p@creativeconsortia.com).

Read also my web pages and comments on corporate reporting on: <http://whosdoingwhatincorporatereporting.com/>