



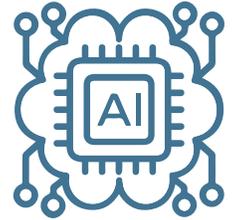
**Financial  
Reporting:**  
How to  
keep the  
big picture  
in focus



# Financial Reporting: How to keep the big picture in focus

**Earnings announcements, M&A deals and financial communications tend to be stodgy, conservative and, quite frankly, boring.**

In fact, many have become so mundane that there are instances of reporters passing the torch of writing them to robots. For example, the Associated Press is taking advantage of AI to write full earnings reports, more than 3,500 each quarter for U.S. companies. It is not that earnings



figures are insignificant. Quite the contrary – brands’ earnings reports and broader financial communications carry significant implications for shareholders, customers, regulators and employees, just to name a few. Yet, reporters and other stakeholders following your brand want to quickly understand the big picture and story your earnings are telling.

**A press release, which still holds value, is not enough for breaking through the clutter and communicating a company’s definitive story.**

Lengthy copy and numbers are insufficient in today’s contemporary communications environment where stakeholders are interacting with your brand across social channels, websites, apps, television, podcasts, and radio. While easy enough to piece together and distribute quarter to quarter, companies that take this route are missing out on highlighting their unique story, building their brand image and ultimately augmenting their investor relations story to illustrate a more dynamic, integrated and engaging brand personality.



## Think of your company’s bigger picture.

What is newsworthy about your earnings this quarter and how do trends at your company tie into larger trends? Did a larger push around talent management strategy improve revenue? How has M&A activity impacted the face of your company with customers and prospects in different geographic regions? Even if earnings are down, is your company in a holding period while you build up toward a bigger plan of action?



**The default option for decades and the prevailing perception has been – investors want cut and dry numbers.**

Yet, that thinking is antiquated. It is time to shake up that paradigm. Brands should be asking themselves “How can we dynamically communicate the uniqueness and essence of our brand and culture to investors, reporters and the wider financial community through a multi-channel approach?”

To increase engagement with announcements and make bolder statements about their brands, companies are exploring more impactful digital formats, like infographics, animations, videos, and microsites.

Let us review why and consider a few approaches your organization can model.



## Take out the detective work

Companies spend millions of dollars on marketing and brand image. Why should financial communications and investor relations activities operate independently of these crucial considerations? Hint: They should not.

**90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual.**



**Slapping your company update into the same old black and white template is doing your brand a disservice.**

Consider, 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are known to improve learning and retention by 400%. According to a stat on [HubSpot](#), when people hear information, they're likely to remember only 10% of that information three days later, but if a relevant image is paired with that same information, people retained 65% of the information three days later.

What does this mean for your earnings, M&A and other financial content? Extract the main takeaways your brand wants to convey, and leverage these in infographics or animations. Readers do not have time to do detective work – long-established trends reflect shorter attention spans and changing media consumption habits. Brands, particularly investor relations teams, need to keep this in mind.

### **Drawing attention to your main messages**

visually helps a reader find the information more easily and helps them better retain this information. When a reporter is considering their next story or an investor is reevaluating their portfolio, the brand recall you are building will help you stay top of mind.

**“Extract the main takeaways your brand wants to convey, and leverage these in infographics or animations.”**



# Blanket your brand ecosystem

**20% of Americans often get their news on social media.**

According to one Pew Research Center survey, 20% of Americans often get their news on social media. Not immune to clutter on these channels, brands still need to be more dynamic than posting a simple text Tweet about their latest earnings or announcement. They should leverage quote cards, infographics and other visuals that can reinforce their message and make a post even more shareable.

**With your newfound multimedia assets, meet your audiences where they are.** As it stands today, 15 of the 20 largest U.S. banks (75%) post earnings on their corporate websites rather than distributing them via a newswire. This is a mistake. The amount of time that is spent on developing assets and elements to tell your financial story can and should be more widely distributed. Why not try to amplify great content further? Repurpose graphics and videos for email and social media so that your marketing ecosystem is working together.



## Give your CEO some face time

It's no secret that video content is growing in popularity, but for brand heads that need convincing, according to HubSpot, 54% of consumers want to see more video content from a brand they support. Couple that with the finding that seventy percent of consumers feel more connected to brands with CEOs that are active on social, and you have the recipe for an effective multimedia asset. Supporting a financial announcement with a video from the CEO is a great way to fulfill demand for video content, and to build an intimate connection between a brand's head and its investors.

**54%**  
of consumers want to see more video content from a brand they support.

Through a video, the CEO can highlight key company updates, but more importantly share a personal message. When you can take important facts and figures, and infuse them with personality, then you have a narrative that investors can relate to, and as a result, feel they are contributing to something big.

# Steal back your thunder

**“When you cannot be first, you can be more dynamic. If another company stole your thunder, steal it right back.”**

In our efforts to break through the clutter in the crowded space, we must give a nod to timing. In a recent blog by MIT Sloan, Eric So, associate professor of accounting, discusses the importance of novelty in garnering attention around earnings: “If Coke were to move earlier [than Pepsi], when Coke announced their earnings, it would take away a lot of the novelty of Pepsi’s announcement, because we kind of know what they’re going to say.” MIT Sloan reveals in a study that first movers receive heightened attention and a bump in trading volume.



Given it is hard to pinpoint when your competitors will release their earnings, when you cannot be first, you can be more dynamic. If another company stole your thunder, steal it right back.

Your competitor issued a simple release, whereas you issued a video of your CEO sharing top three highlights from the quarter and the goals of the company in the next quarter. The latter was designed to be more quotable by media and shareable on social media. Drumming up this noise can help a company steal back some market chatter.

Multimedia assets, channels, timing – these all converge to boost financial communications beyond one humdrum press release. But it does not matter if you have not defined the story your organization wants to tell. As mentioned earlier, think of your company’s bigger picture. If you lose sight of this, you may have well-designed graphics, but they will not support your business objectives.

So, the next time you’re in a meeting with your IR team and your instinct is to go on autopilot and hit the default option, think about your prospective employees, investors, or customers. The opportunity is ripe for reimagining how to conceive and integrate your financial story into your larger brand narrative through multi-sensory storytelling.



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