

A different kind of annual report

By  Robert Gentle

27 May 2019

Forget about the annual report to shareholders; here's a different kind of report that many people might actually read.



© rawpixel via [Pexels](#).

It's based on a valuable asset that can easily be exploited for PR purposes. That asset is not sales or profits or the latest successful business venture; rather, it's hard-earned knowledge.

For example, banks are knowledgeable about money, finance and investment; short-term insurers understand home and vehicle security, and the risk of theft and break-ins; and clothing retailers are keenly aware of fashion trends and how these affect purchasing decisions.

This is really valuable stuff that companies tend to guard jealously. Yet the smart thing to do is to give it away for nothing. Outrageous? Absolutely – that's the point. The payback is enormous. You get lots of media coverage, a reputation for thought-leadership and lots of new business leads.



Your thought-leadership toolkit

Robert Gentle 27 Mar 2019



Here are three examples you can find online:

Rand Merchant Bank – investing in Africa

Every year, RMB issues a report entitled *Where to Invest in Africa*, packed with analyses, charts, and other insights. Each country's investment attractiveness and macro-economic fundamentals are assessed across a range of criteria and are backed up by an Investment Attractiveness index. This is practical information based largely on the bank's own investment activity in 35 African countries. The report is required reading by anyone thinking of investing on the continent.

Volvo – road safety

Last year, Volvo published its *Volvo Trucks Safety Report 2017*, compiled by the company's accident-research team. It covers more than 1 700 accidents involving trucks since 1969. The report contains revealing insights into accident-statistic trends, the causes of accidents by heavy goods vehicles, and the kinds of accidents that are most frequent.

Barilla – future food trends

Barilla is an Italian food company that sells pasta in many supermarkets in South Africa. They published a report a few years ago entitled *Eating in 2030: trends and perspectives*. Topics ranged from world hunger and the impact of food production on the environment to nutrition, lifestyle and culture.

Three different companies, three different kinds of report. But they all share a common characteristic: they disseminate useful information to the world, free of charge; one could even argue that it's a public service. However, make no mistake: there's a sound commercial and PR logic behind them.

Upon their release, there is a veritable blitz of coverage in the press, on radio and TV, and online – not just locally but internationally too. Because these reports contain interesting, useful information, they virtually PR themselves. Best of all, the reports can be taken out on the road and presented to targeted stakeholder groups – not just potential clients, but also government and academia. They're an even easier sell at conferences. Sure, a big budget and lots of executive time go into producing these documents, especially when they're issued on a regular basis; but the return on investment makes it all worthwhile.

The ultimate impact of these reports is enhanced thought-leadership because it shows the company to be smart and forward-looking, and that is extremely good for business. This is high-value PR that more PR agencies and in-house departments should embrace.

ABOUT ROBERT GENTLE

Robert runs the PR training company, www.robertgentle.com. He has some 25 years of experience in financial journalism, public relations and training. He wrote the bestseller *Read This - Business Writing that Works*.

- Is it time to dump mission statements? - 10 Jul 2019
- A different kind of annual report - 27 May 2019
- Your thought-leadership toolkit - 27 Mar 2019
- Business is too timid with its PR - 8 Mar 2019
- Has "PR" become a dirty word? - 21 Feb 2019

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>