



WARMING UP

How do I

report?

➤ **Are you thinking about producing a sustainability report but haven't quite worked out who it is for?**

Or are you a seasoned reporter and need to step up to the next level? Before you invest time and resources into reporting it is worth defining exactly why you are reporting as this will shape the report and process.

RESOURCES

Download the Guide to Reporting on Sustainable Development at www.imsplc.com

EXPERT OPINION



Dr Richard Westaway , senior consultant and materiality specialist

In our experience, sustainability reports fulfil a range of purposes, including:

- **meeting** legislative requirements
- **highlighting** current performance
- **demonstrating** non-financial activities to use when bidding for new work
- **building** trust in your business or brand
- **responding** to stakeholder demands
- **explaining** your future direction and targets

Before you decide the 'what' and 'how' of reporting – you should also consider 'who' you are targeting with the report. Stakeholder mapping can be used to identify and prioritise the stakeholder groups that have most influence or involvement in your business.

The Global Reporting Initiatives latest G4 sustainability reporting guidelines encourages you to report on the issues that are 'material' to your business. A material assessment adds a crucial step in the reporting process – you can find out more on pages 6 and 7.

There is a range of different ways that you can report – the way you report depends on your purpose and audience. Options to consider include:

- a section in annual reports and accounts – although this give sustainability prominence, in our experience it often limits the space available.
- standalone report – many companies go down this route, and although extra resources are required, it creates freedom to produce as much content as needed and allows you determine the right design approach and tone for your target audiences.
- integrated report – this approach intends to replace a traditional annual report and accounts and provide a more balanced view of a company's overall approach. In our view, until a company is truly integrated in its approach, reporting in this way will be difficult.
- online report – some companies choose to provide content online only. This approach means that reports are not limited to snapshots in time, but can include continuous updates and encourage real-time dialogue with stakeholders.
- customised reporting – is when you can produce multiple version of reports to meet the needs of different stakeholders.

HELP ME SOLVE THIS PROBLEM

For a chat about the most appropriate approach to reporting for you, contact us at info@imsplc.com or visit www.imsplc.com to find out more.

