



Creating Annual Reports with Less Stress

A helpful **guide**

Whether you're working with an external or internal team to create your Annual Report, the planning process can be stressful. That's why we've created this e-book to help guide you through the process. From planning your report to finalizing your content, **we cover the bases of working with a graphic designer and offer our insights along the way.**



Be prepared

Know your vision

At the beginning of an Annual Report design, a discovery meeting with your designer should be a no brainer.

Whether it's a conference call or face-to-face, it's important to have a discussion with your designer about your vision and your expectations for your report. It's helpful if you are well prepared for these meetings, so we've outlined some of the questions you can expect to help get you started.

1. Do you have a theme for your report?

If so, do you have any ideas on how you want to carry this theme through or are you open to suggestions?

2. Do you have an idea of the style you'd like to see?

Providing examples to your designer can be helpful. Visuals depicting the style or look and feel you are after help to streamline the process. The clearer you can communicate your vision, the better.

3. Do you have a Brand Standards Manual?

If so, explain to your designer how closely these guidelines need to be followed. Some brands are more lenient than others when it comes to the design of their Annual Report so it's helpful to let your designer know where your organization stands on this spectrum.

If you don't have a brand guide – not a problem. Simply provide your designer with prior examples of collateral they should follow or, if you want to deviate from what you've done in the past, give them the green light to start fresh.

4. Do you think your Annual Report is going to be content heavy? Are you looking to incorporate more visuals than text? Or perhaps your report will be somewhere in the middle?

It's important to let your designer know this part of your plan so that they can take this into account during their prep. If you are looking for a visual report, be sure to clearly identify what you will require from your designer.

It's helpful to be ready for these types of questions and more.

It's the only way your designer is going to get a sense of the direction you want to take with your report. The more prepared you are by knowing what it is you want, the better your designer will understand your vision.

Of course, if you aren't sure exactly what it is you want, don't fret. Be as prepared as you can be and be open to suggestions.



Be organized

Break out those
spreadsheets

Every project needs to have a plan. If you start by outlining a schedule for your Annual Report, it will help to keep your project on track and running smoothly.

When developing your schedule, it's helpful if you work with your designer to flush out the dates to ensure they work for both parties. Start by outlining project milestones, such as when you would like the project to start or when you are required to present your report to your board, then move on to outlining the key dates and tasks required to reach that milestone, such as when you can provide final content or when you would like to see a first draft.

Keep in mind that, during large projects such as these, delays sometimes happen, so it's important to ensure that your schedule is flexible. Be mindful of this and provide some cushion to account for potential hiccups. If a delay does occur, we recommend that the schedule be revised and sent to all necessary parties to make them aware of the change.

Remember, it's valuable stay in touch with your designer throughout the project. If you keep each other updated and informed as to the progress of the report, you ensure that everyone is on the same page. Open lines of communication will help to keep the project moving forward as planned.

GIVE DESIGNERS TIME TO WORK THEIR MAGIC

When working on your schedule, it's important to keep in mind not to rush the design process.

Designers understand that deadlines are important, but so is the quality of work. There's a lot of specialized skill and knowledge that goes into a professionally-designed piece. To get a good quality product, it's best to ensure you are providing your designer with the time they need to work their magic.



Be open

The creative approach

When it comes time to developing a concept for your Annual Report, it's important to be open to your designer's creative approach.

Keep in mind that there is a reason for every decision made in the design process – from font choice, to spacing, to placement, to graphic treatments – and these elements all come together to form an organized layout and stunning execution that your designer feels meets the goals of your Annual Report.

Of course, your designer will always be accepting of your suggestions and feedback, but it's good to keep an open mind when it comes to the implementation of your ideas. The best approach is to be as specific as possible about what it is you would like to improve, without telling them exactly what to do. Let your designer use their creative mind to suggest the approach they feel will work best (after all, their expertise is what you hired them for).

While working to develop the concept for your Annual Report, it's helpful if your designer has content to work with right from the get go.

Final content would be ideal but draft content will work just fine at this stage. Don't worry if you haven't started writing your content yet; if you can provide your designer with an overview of the structure you have planned for your report, it would be just as helpful.

Doing so allows your designer to see the types of content you plan on including in your report so that they can ensure they cover the bases when developing a concept. It also allows them to develop a concept where the design and content can work together in harmony.

When the concept is presented to you,
keep in mind it's the first draft.

This is where your input is required and your designer will be open to your feedback – after all, their goal is to make you happy. Typically, revisions are included in this stage but, it's important to note that they are not unlimited. We recommend that you take your time when looking over the concept and circulate it to those involved in the review process. We find that the most efficient way to complete revisions is to collect feedback from your group and provide it to your designer in one set. Just remember: be as specific as possible about areas you would like to improve and let them provide you with the solutions.

BE SPECIFIC WHEN PROVIDING FEEDBACK

When it comes to requesting revisions, be as specific as you can.

A vague statement such as “make it pop” is not going to get you anywhere. Specific examples or descriptions are more useful in getting your design to where you want it to be.



Be flexible

Fine-tune your content

Once the concept for your Annual Report has been approved by your team, it's time to start working on finalizing your content.

When doing so, it's good to keep the approved concept top of mind. Remember, content and design work hand in hand. You've approved the creative approach so it's best if you fine-tune your content to follow suit. For example, if you discussed having a visual report with minor content and you see that you have a content heavy document, it's helpful to refine it so that it fits with the approved concept. If not, your report could end up looking different than what was originally proposed.

When you're working to finalize your content, a good rule of thumb to follow is the 1:2 ratio. This is especially true if you have a set page count. Keep this in mind: for every page of copy you have, assume it will cover two pages in your final report. If you keep this mindset, you give your designers wiggle room to play around with the layout and overall design of the spread.

Before your content reaches your designer's hands, it's best that it has been spell-checked, reviewed and approved internally. If this is not possible, let your designer know ahead of time so that you can work something out. Of course, it's possible to make changes along the way, but it makes the process more efficient if the content you provide is final.

TRIM THE FAT

Go through your report with a fine-tooth comb and get rid of unnecessary content.

If your report is going to have infographics, read through it and ask yourself “Am I repeating myself?”. Having duplicated content in visuals and copy can be redundant so it’s best to cut it loose.

Now that you know the ins and outs of working with a designer on your Annual Report, it doesn't seem like such an intimidating feat after all, does it? If you follow our tips and tricks, you'll be on the path to success. Just remember to be prepared, be organized, be open, and be flexible and **together you and your designer will create one stunning Annual Report.**

If you're looking to work with an Agency on your next Annual Report, Cyan is here to help!

With years of experience developing all types of Annual Reports for our clients, we know what we're doing and we know how to work with you to develop an Annual Report that meets your goals.



Let's get started. Contact us today
at simple@cyansolutions.com

MEMBER SERVICES

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS SET A CLEAR DIRECTION THROUGH VERY SPECIFIC INDICATORS OF SUCCESS. THE TARGET IS 3 REGULAR MEMBERS PER YEAR.

Despite an aggressive marketing campaign, that target proved elusive to reach given bankruptcies and consolidation in the Canadian meat industry. We are aiming to achieve a more productive outcome with respect to member recruitment in 2016.

At the same time, the Council continued to host events and provide member services in support of its strategic priorities.

EVENTS

Our 95th Annual Conference, held in downtown Ottawa from May 6-8, 2015, was a great success with the participation of prominent elected officials and bureaucrats.

We also continued to host regular Technical, Prepared Meats, Pork and Beef Committee meetings as well as work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency ("CFIA") to organize regional meetings in Western Canada, Ontario and Quebec in the spring and fall of 2015.

Because of the evolution of the regulatory agenda in 2015, we conducted numerous technical briefing sessions for our members following the CFIA's release of the preliminary draft text of the Safe Food for Canadian Regulations, Health Canada's Canada Gazette, Part I, pre-publication of the proposed nutritional labelling regulations and release of the government's proposed national livestock identification and traceability system.

