



"Helping winning companies tell their stories and build their brands."

## Start Planning Now for a Winning 2005 Annual Report

### With Gratitude...

Thanks to all of our clients for the trust they place in our services and the opportunities they provide us to tell their stories and build their brands.

We take a very pragmatic approach because our business succeeds or fails based on the results we deliver. Client success is our success, and we never forget that.

### Inspiring Words

"Far and away, the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

-- Theodore Roosevelt

Dear Nancy S. Juetten,

**We crafted this article for the *Puget Sound Business Journal* last year in collaboration with Susan and Michael Elliott of [RocketDog Communications](#), and the tips today are as valid as they were when we first put pen to paper.**

**If you need to bring in a team to help you create an award-winning annual report, call on Susan and Michael Elliott for concepting and design services. Our team at [Nancy S. Juetten Marketing, Inc.](#) would be happy to do the copywriting.**

**Today's annual report market is one of greater complexity with tighter timelines and fewer dollars. Although the landscape has changed, one fact still remains – the annual report is the single most important document a public company produces. How you weave the visuals and narrative together beneath a unifying theme determines whether or not the report is a builder of shareholder confidence and brand. If creating a top quality annual report is a priority this year, take a lesson from nature to embrace the four elements that inspire winning work.**

**Earth:**

**Building on a solid foundation is critical. That means securing agreement to the report theme, allowing adequate time for project planning, setting a realistic budget, and agreeing to a production timeline. These ingredients create solid footing for an effective and well grounded annual report to take root.**

**When choosing a theme, dig deep to create a theme that doesn't sound cliché. Review the reports of your competition and companies in other industries. Look for inspiration and ideas that are unusual, inspirational, and that reflect the spirit of your corporate brand. Core values do not an annual report make. Have the courage to say something new, different, and – most importantly – meaningful. Then, unleash imagination so that strategic design, copy, and visuals can catapult the project skyward.**

### **Water.**

**A fluid process is essential to successful annual report creation. Take steps to secure a steady and timely stream of information, visuals, and data to support the theme. The visual elements, messaging, and financial components should flow together to create a seamless, integrated story.**

**Strengthen the company's brand identity and reinforce its unique selling proposition. Boost the brand through a mix of photography, graphics, design, and text. Use testimonials to illustrate the company's strengths in compelling, descriptive ways.**

**Steer clear of the typical “blah, blah, blah” narrative you expect to find in a public relations tool such as an annual report. Rather, go deeper to tell emotionally powerful stories that capture attention.**

**Tell it like it is, yet be smart about it. Share news in an honest, authentic way without fluff. Make clear the company's strategies, and make certain that the design and a theme support those. Describe the business, risk, and other factors which could have a material impact on financial performance.**

**If budget is an issue, consider the number of pages, the number of**

**colors, and the paper weight and quality so you can create the best report possible with the resources available. Don't overlook stock photography if original photography is beyond the project budget. Source photographs from pre-existing marketing collateral as a way to integrate communications and save money.**

### **Fire.**

**Have passion for the success of your annual report. The brilliance of smart design and powerful storytelling will capture attention and fuel the flames of shareholder confidence, no matter what the project budget.**

**Advance planning is critical to avoid a "crash and burn" situation. Since most reports need to reach shareholders by mid-April, the bulk of the planning and most of the work needs to begin now.**

**Of course, the devil is in the details when it comes to producing a quality piece. Every figure, comment, and comma should be checked for accuracy.**

### **Wind.**

**If you've got good news to share, take your shareholder's breath away with compelling charts and graphs. And if company performance is less than stellar, remember that charts and graphs over time can portray a pattern of consistent performance, despite a temporary blip on the performance continuum. Be certain to show a minimum of three years of financial data so trends are apparent. Make certain the diagrams and charts add clarity to the data, rather than confuse it.**

**Describe the company's business, risk, and other factors which could have a material impact on financial performance. Articulate the reasons and events contributing to the results. Infuse a sense of**

**keen management vision within the president's letter.**

**The talent, experience, and proven work process of a capable, experienced design partner can deliver a gust of power to fuel project success. Their expertise is apparent, yet contained by understanding of the practical limits and budget realities that are the undercurrent of doing business today.**

**Start today, and you can put your company's best foot forward in its next annual report. The key is to start now, get real with the facts, and use great creative solutions and resources to get the job done.**

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