

6 Steps to an Engaging Nonprofit Annual Report

Your nonprofit's annual report is not only an opportunity to inform your audience on the previous year's accomplishments, but it builds transparency and trust and attracts new supporters to become involved and help strengthen your organization. With so many benefits of a thoughtfully implemented and engaging annual report, let's get it right together.

1. Pinpoint your audience and your objectives.

The best nonprofit annual reports are created with these elements clearly defined. Your audience is likely to include your current and prospective donors, partners, volunteers and members. At its heart, an annual report is meant to encourage your audience to support your cause by providing concrete evidence that donations are creating an impact.

2. Cover your bases.

Your audience expects to see specific types of information in your annual report. Create the most impact by including:

Mission statement: Keep your purpose front and center and give your audience something to rally behind.

Financial statement: Clearly highlight the most important metrics and use charts and graphics to make your information visually appealing and easy to understand.

Accomplishments: Explain how your activities led to quantifiable results. For example, "We raised \$XXXX from our spring fundraiser. With those donations, we covered the costs for XX spays/neuters, XX microchip implants and XX diagnostic tests."

Gratitude: Share the love with your community of supporters. They want to know that you are grateful. Inject words of thanks and appreciation throughout your report to make it clear that you value contributions of all kinds—whether that be time, money or resources.

Personal stories: Embrace the power of storytelling with personal anecdotes, success stories, profiles and testimonials. Feature the people impacted by your organization and let their voice tell your story.

Call to action: Wait until the end, and then make your ask. This is your opportunity to let your audience know how they can continue to support your organization.

3. Keep it concise.

Yes, you'll want to use your annual report to inform and persuade, but don't go overboard with details. The days of building a 20-page annual report are gone. Your audience wants something to get excited about, and reading a long, text-heavy report is not one of them.

4. Add visuals to make your report shine.

You know that saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words." So, let your photos do the talking. Break up large sections of text throughout your report with photos of your volunteers and staff, events, the people or animals benefiting from your nonprofit and anything else you can think of.

5. Get creative with your distribution.

Is your audience traditional? Print your annual report on an oversize postcard or in a 4-page or 6-page format. Communicating with a more tech-savvy audience? Take the digital route with a video, infographic or microsite. Want to really stand out? Do both! Printing your annual report gives that personal touch while going digital makes for a fun way to get interactive and expand your reach.

6. Give yourself plenty of time.

An annual report is important, so don't rush it. Plan to spend at least 4–6 months developing your reimagined publication that will capture the hearts and minds of your audience.

You're on a mission. Ours is to help you achieve it. What's the perfect canvas for sharing your cause, your impact and the people involved? Your website. At Firespring, we make that possible with beautiful responsive designs that engage visitors, touch hearts and tell your story. [Learn more about our mission-driven websites](#), trusted by thousands of nonprofits around the globe.