

Teneo '23 & ESG Series

Three Key Design Trends in 2023 Sustainability Reports

Teneo Insights / December 2023



This is the fourth report in Teneo's '23 & ESG Series analyzing 250 sustainability reports published by S&P 500 companies between January 1-June 30, 2023 ("2023 sustainability reports"). Other reports in the series highlight [top 10 takeaways and key statistics of 2023 sustainability reports](#), [DE&I data](#) and [Australian Sustainability Reports](#).

Sustainability reports can be powerful tools to demonstrate the impact of a company's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility and build trust with a wide range of stakeholders. However, with 2023 sustainability reports averaging 82 pages in length (and increasing year-over-year),¹ navigating the sheer volume of information in reports can prove daunting.

Implementing clear and compelling design throughout a sustainability report can draw focus to key content and data points; reinforce a connection to the company's mission, values, and/or products and services; and engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from shareholders to customers, investors, analysts and current and potential employees. **Based on our analysis of 2023 sustainability reports, following are three key design trends and best-in-class examples for organizations to consider when designing future sustainability reports.**

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1. Start with a Story

Of the 250 sustainability reports analyzed, 43% showcased a tagline or theme in the report title.² These themes are often directly connected to the company's purpose and values. They can provide an engaging entry point for the reader and a throughline as the reader progresses throughout the piece. Many companies present a new theme each year, which provides opportunities to highlight various aspects of a company's ESG program, showcase company priorities or demonstrate progress over an extended period of time.

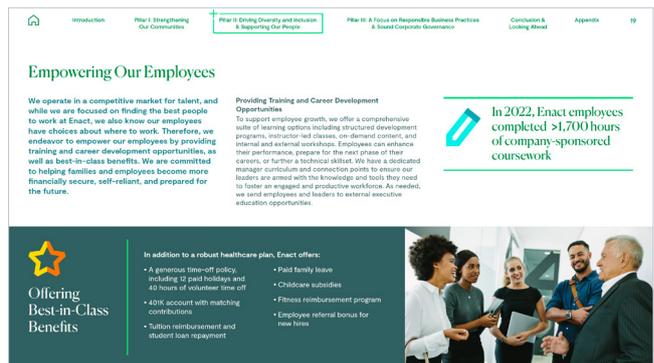
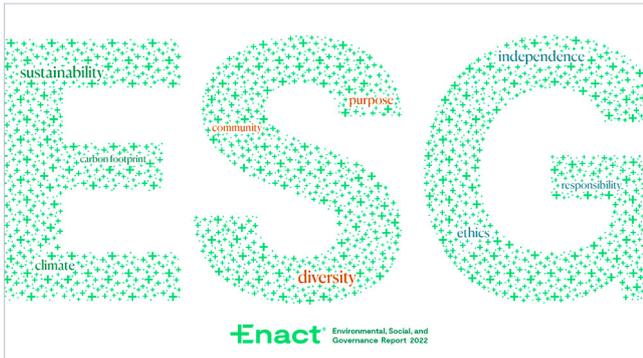


Hilton 2022 Environmental Social and Governance Report: Hilton's 2022 ESG Report effectively uses their ESG strategy as their theme line. "Travel with Purpose" is Hilton's aim to drive responsible travel and tourism globally. At the heart of this strategy are their people, beautifully photographed and woven throughout the report to emphasize their commitment to sustainable travel. Additionally, clear navigation (down the left margin of the report), compelling graphics and key highlights presented upfront set the tone for a robust and engaging reader experience.

1. Teneo '23 & ESG Series: The DNA of 2023 U.S. Sustainability Reports | Teneo
 2. Teneo '23 & ESG Series: The DNA of 2023 U.S. Sustainability Reports | Teneo

2. Expand the Toolkit

Given the breadth and nature of content highlighted in sustainability reports – and the increasing number of vehicles through which sustainability reporting is communicated – companies are pushing the boundaries of their existing design libraries and brand guidelines when designing sustainability reports. In 2023 sustainability reports, there is a noticeable trend toward companies introducing visual elements such as custom photography, iconography, data visualizations, graphics, etc. that are not utilized in standard corporate materials. Introducing an expanded design “toolkit” in sustainability reports underscores the singular significance of a sustainability report in a company’s communications calendar and provides a more fulsome, flexible starting point for the design of follow-on ESG-related communications throughout the year.

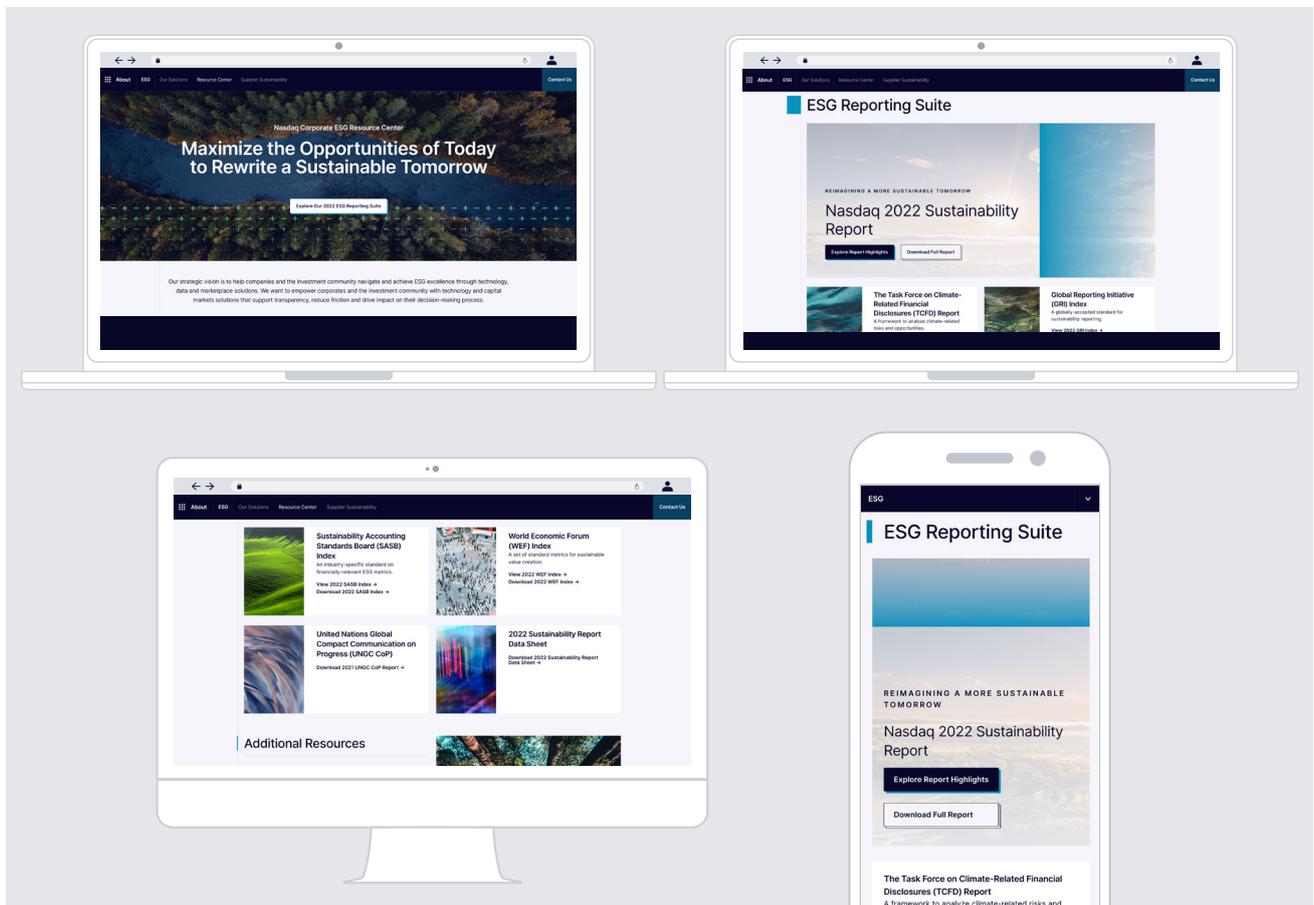


Enact Environmental, Social, and Governance Report 2022: For its inaugural ESG report, Enact created new icons and graphic patterns derived from its corporate logo to convey a bold initial statement about its ESG priorities and initiatives.

3. Make the Content Interactive

With 2023 sustainability reports reaching as high as 262 pages in length,³ companies are increasingly utilizing microsites on their corporate websites to make sustainability reporting more accessible, searchable and interactive. Indeed, 88% of 2023 sustainability reports included an accompanying microsite, a marked 61% increase from 2022.⁴ Organizations should also consider creating an ESG reporting suite, where each piece of content is separated by framework and self-contained as its own “report.” Presenting sustainability information in a dynamic, interactive format on a microsite allows stakeholders to:

- Easily digest what can be dense and voluminous content.
- Search and filter content based on area(s) of interest.
- View content that is dynamically optimized for the device on which it is accessed.
- Seamlessly cross-reference and connect to relevant information on the corporate website or other external sources.

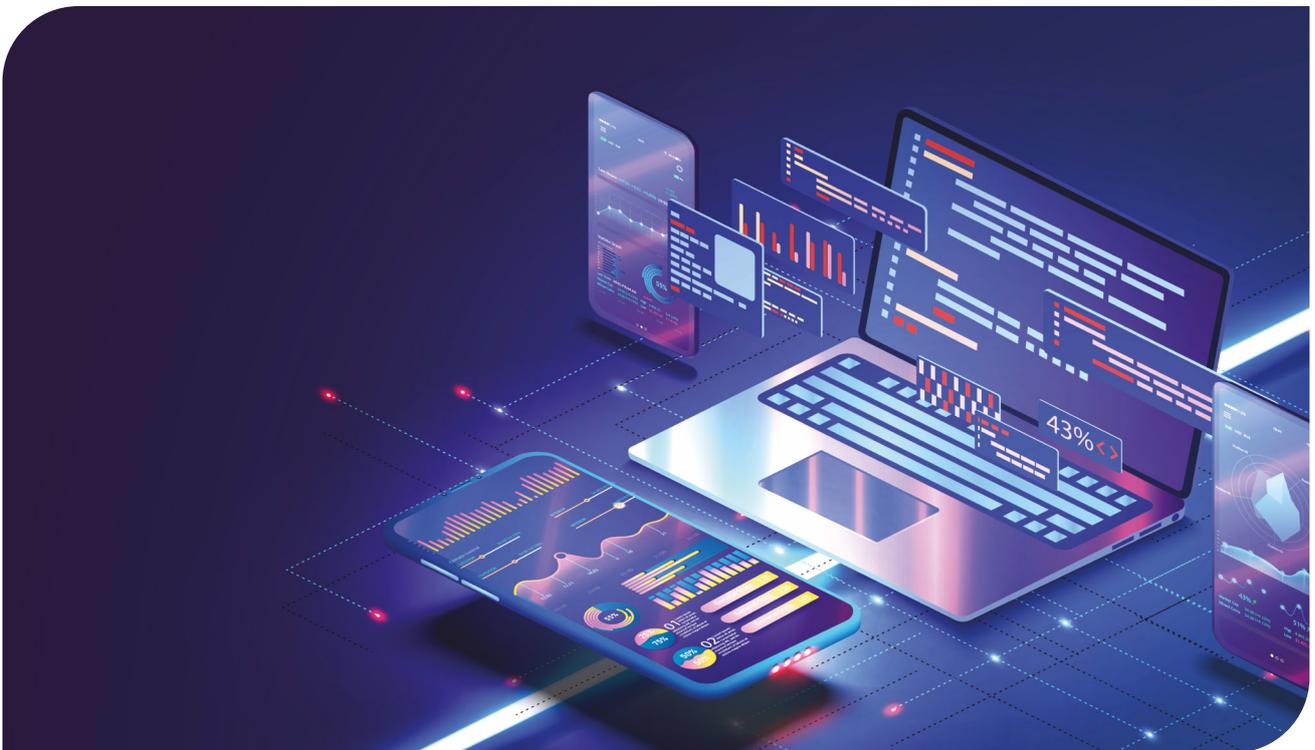


Nasdaq Corporate ESG Resource Center: Nasdaq’s Corporate ESG Resource Center is the online destination for the company’s sustainability initiatives. A bold and clear user experience guides the reader to all sustainability content such as their ESG Report, TCFD Report, GRI and SASB Indexes, and Sustainability Report Data Sheet. An optimized, responsive experience broadens Nasdaq’s reach, engaging all audiences across multiple digital platforms.

3. [Teneo '23 & ESG Series: The DNA of 2023 U.S. Sustainability Reports | Teneo](#)
 4. [Teneo '23 & ESG Series: The DNA of 2023 U.S. Sustainability Reports | Teneo](#)

Conclusion

Despite a surge in political attacks on ESG in 2023, particularly in the U.S., there are no indications that companies are backing down from their commitments. Based on our analysis, sustainability reports are actually expanding in size, scope and prominence, indicating that companies are embracing the opportunity to showcase and communicate their ESG ambitions and results to key stakeholders. As they do, innovative and impactful design can be an essential and effective conduit to bring these aspirations and outcomes to life.



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