

A high-angle, close-up photograph of a large crowd of runners at the starting line of a race. The runners are wearing various athletic gear, including shorts and running shoes, and are positioned on a green grassy field. The image is slightly blurred, emphasizing the sense of motion and the density of the crowd.

Tackling negative perceptions through transparent and negative reporting

Case Study: adidas Group

We worked on adidas' first thirteen sustainability reports, starting in 2001.

adidas
GROUP

The Challenge

By the late 1990s adidas had been synonymous with sporting goods for 50 years. With a world-leading position in global sports such as football

and a huge youth fan base thanks to the popularity of its clothes with pop stars and celebrities, adidas had also become an iconic fashion brand.

This high-profile global success meant that adidas was a target for campaigners concerned about conditions for factory workers in developing countries. The effects of globalisation and lack of corporate accountability were also leading to calls for companies to be more transparent about their sustainability strategy and performance. The adidas Group needed to disclose how they were addressing labour and environmental issues in their supply chain in a way that would be credible to critical audiences such as activists and analysts.

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Adam has provided essential consultancy in developing our sustainability communications strategy and furthermore, he has been involved in shaping the overall sustainability strategy of the adidas Group.

GLOBAL DIRECTOR

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, ADIDAS GROUP

How We Helped

Adam Garfunkel, the partner in Junxion's London office, has been lead consultant and writer on all 13 of the adidas Group sustainability reports.

We advised on the structure and content of the adidas Group's first social and environmental report published in 2001 and have worked on all the subsequent reports published each year. Over that time the reports have included a wider range of issues and they are now labeled as 'sustainability progress reports'. We have provided consultancy on what the reports should cover and how to do it, establishing what the 'material' issues are through stakeholder interviews and questionnaires.

After 12 years of sustainability reporting, adidas is acknowledged as a leader in tackling supply chain challenges.

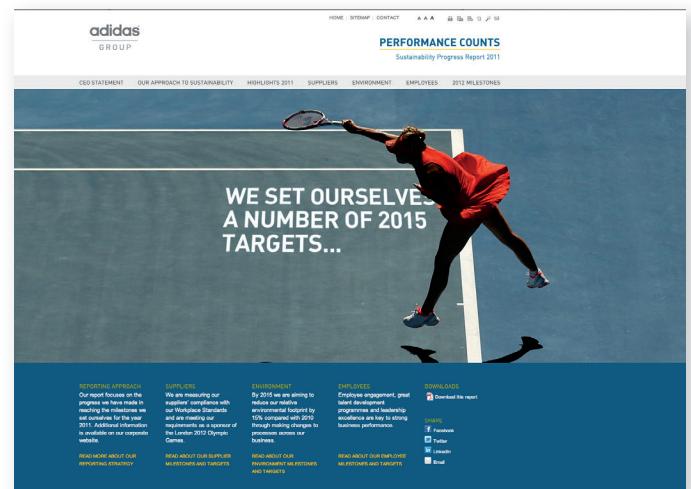
We are always keen to ensure the reports strike a balance between covering the necessary issues to sufficient depth and telling an engaging story at the same time. The readers for sustainability reports are analysts, academics and activists (or 'the 3As' as we called them). That does not excuse the need to structure and write the report in ways that draw the reader into the detail and convey key messages effectively.

The first reports were printed but for the last six years, the reports have moved online. The adidas Group is keen to improve its reporting year-to-year which has led to experimenting with approaches and formats. We have written magazine-style printed reviews that set out the big picture alongside a detailed online report, video scripts to introduce the report, interviews with key members of staff and CEO statements. We also guide the company in choosing the flagship initiatives to highlight in the report and to use in the launch press releases and follow-up communications with stakeholders.

Measuring Success

The sustainability reports have helped position the adidas Group as a company that takes the issues seriously and is working hard to address them. While pressure groups are still campaigning about working conditions, they do recognise the company's willingness to engage and their responsiveness to claims made. The investment community has applauded the firm's efforts at transparency.

Ever since the first report was launched back in 2001 the adidas Group has been listed in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, and for nine of those years as Industry Leader. Since 2005 the adidas Group has also been listed among the 'Global 100 Most Sustainable Organisations in the World'. Two of the reports won best sustainability report that year by a company in adidas's home market of Germany and the adidas Group is now firmly established as a sustainability leader in its sector.



Are you ready to define your social purpose and embed it in your strategy? Reach out to [Mike Rowlands](#) in Vancouver, [Shayla Meyer](#) in Toronto, or [Adam Garfunkel](#) in the UK to start a conversation.