

# How AI IMAGES will revolutionize branding and corporate reporting

Many companies are currently discussing the impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on corporate communications. In particular, the creation of images using AI is experiencing a rapid upswing. But what exact impact will this technology have on branding and reporting? A pilot project at Clariant sheds light on this question.

By Kai Rolker



DR. KAI ROLKER is Head of Group Communications at Clariant, a leading global specialty chemicals company. Until 2012, he was Director of Marketing Communications at Syntes. He studied philosophy and ancient history and has a Master's degree in communication management.

## Branding: a world of new possibilities

Creating a strong and consistent corporate identity is crucial for effective corporate branding. However, many companies find it difficult to establish a consistent visual language under everyday conditions. Often, employees are guided by personal taste or existing material rather than corporate design standards. In addition, conventional image procurement is often associated with high costs or legal problems. This is the case, for example, when images from the internet are used for presentations.

Initial experiences from the project at Clariant show that generative AI already offers revolutionary solutions to these challenges. It enables employees to easily generate images that are at least relatively close to corporate design standards and are easy to use for internal purposes. For external campaigns, however, an AI-generated visual language must represent the essence of a brand, convey a clear message and be surprising and attractive.

This is feasible if you don't try to make an AI image look like a photo, but consciously allow the aesthetics of the new medium to have a playful effect and thus emphasize its innovative character. Afri Cola and Heinz Ketchup demonstrate how impressive this can look in their latest marketing campaigns, which rely on AI-generated motifs.

However, the new technology is not without its problems. This is because one of the challenges with AI-generated images is that there are still open questions from a legal perspective. On the one hand, it is not easy to protect self-generated images, and on the other, there is a risk that self-generated images could infringe the copyrights of others. There is still a lack of experience here to provide clear recommendations on how to deal with these risks.

The rapid spread of generative AI is an exciting time for pioneers. In particular, the ability to generate images through simple text input is an outstanding and transformative area of application. In quantitative terms, the potential of this technology is enormous: between August 2022 and 2023, over 15 billion images were created using AI image generators such as Dall E, Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, as reported by the blog of IT company everypixel.com.

Compared to the history of photography, which took 150 years to produce 15 billion images, the ability to generate images from simple text descriptions in a matter of seconds promises to revolutionize various aspects of business life. This applies not only to traditional advertising campaigns, but also to general branding and corporate reporting in particular. The communications managers at Clariant recently initiated a project to explore the opportunities and risks of this technology in these areas.

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## A visionary perspective for reporting: AI as an illustrator

The creation of visual elements, especially infographics, is a time-consuming process in corporate reporting. The project at Clariant is investigating the extent to which generative AI can help to create texts, illustrations and infographics in less time and at lower cost. A compelling vision could be a direct communication between AI software and the company's ERP to generate consistent reports that reflect the company's key figures. The result could be a report with text, illustrations and images that are consistent with the company's financial and non-financial metrics. Whether this is technically possible and whether the result corresponds to the company's desired narrative remain to be seen. In this respect, this still seems very visionary, which is why Clariant is concentrating on generative image generation.

AI makes annual reports more human

The increasing regulation of recent years and the flood of financial and non-financial reporting obligations have led many companies to reduce the creative part of their reporting to a minimum. Although the annual reports meet the requirements of machine readability, the emotional appeal to a human audience is lost. To breathe new life into this, the pilot project at Clariant is focusing on the use of generative AI for image creation. AI-generated images have the potential to use reporting more strongly again for emotional brand positioning. Generative AI can be used to illustrate visionary scenarios, which appeals to the audience emotionally and helps to convey a company's affinity for innovation.

The "Schweizerreise 2085" campaign by the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) Switzerland impressively demonstrates the impact that AI images can have. It illustrates the impact of the climate crisis on well-known Swiss destinations by the end of the century.

This example shows how companies can, for example, present innovations that are still under development or visualize the expected impact of regional sustainability projects. Such impressive, captivating presentations not only emphasize the importance of the information presented, but also reinforce the perception of a company as dynamic and future-oriented.

Far-reaching consequences for companies, creativity and designers

Initial experiences in the project at Clariant suggest that the increased use of generative AI in image generation will soon be firmly established in everyday corporate communications. This will also change the collaboration between corporate communications and creative agencies. Designers will soon need additional skills as AI can take over certain design work. The role of the creative agency is shifting towards the strategic use of the latest technologies and the conceptual development of visual content. This development is likely to improve the quality of design and illustration as designers take control of AI and add a unique human touch to the creative process. At the same time, corporate communications will remain the guardian of the narrative.

Conclusion

The synergy between AI and human creativity will push the boundaries of what is visually possible, taking branding and reporting to a new level. AI will allow us to design images in line with corporate identity guidelines, solving the challenges of traditional image sourcing. Although still a vision, AI systems could soon create complex illustrations and infographics faster and more cost-effectively by communicating directly with the ERP. Visually appealing branding and reporting make complex information more accessible and memorable. Companies and stakeholders benefit in equal measure. Initial experiences from the project at Clariant show that every company should experiment with this technology if it does not want to be overtaken by developments.

A compelling vision could be a direct communication between AI software and the company's ERP to generate consistent reports that reflect the company's key figures.

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GESCHÄFTSBERICHTE GANZ EINFACH: 4 SCHRITTE, WIE ES WIRKLICH GELINGT

Eine immer breitere Adressatengruppe und extern getriebene Veränderungen im Reporting machen klar: Wer das Datendickicht durchdringen und Stakeholder überzeugen will, muss verständlich kommunizieren. Corporate Publisher stehen in der Pflicht: Wie sorgt man für Reportingtexte, die ohne Umwege ankommen? Zum Beispiel mit dem neuen internationalen Standard für Einfache Sprache.



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Dabei wäre es leicht: «Put your readers first.» Indem Sie den Lesern Texte liefern, die sie von A bis Z und auf Anhieb verstehen. Den Mehrwert davon merken Sie spätestens, wenn Sie auf der anderen Seite stehen und eine Versicherungspolice zweimal lesen müssen.

Eine klare Unternehmenskommunikation hat also höchste Priorität. Auch laut CCR-Zukunftslabor: Für 82% der Befragten sind Lesbarkeit und Verständlichkeit immer wichtiger. Doch wir kennen die Ansprüche ans Reporting, also muss ein Instrument her, das damit kompatibel ist. Vorhang auf für die Einfache Sprache. Sie macht selbst Fachtexte für alle verständlich. Die Richtlinien dazu sind seit Januar in der ISO-Norm 24495-1 offiziell festgehalten.

«Na toll, noch mehr Regeln», denken Sie? Da müssen Sie jetzt durch. Denn an Ihrer Kommunikationsstrategie soll sich ja was ändern. Und für Texte ohne Anstrengung braucht es vorab ein wenig Strenge mit sich selbst.

So funktioniert Kommunikation, die einfach funktioniert

Hinter Einfacher Sprache stehen vier Grundsätze, nach denen man Texte gestaltet:

1. Leser erhalten, was sie brauchen (relevant)
2. Leser finden leicht, was sie brauchen (auffindbar)
3. Leser verstehen, was sie finden (verständlich)
4. Leser können die Informationen einfach verwenden (brauchbar)

Bei Geschäftsberichten heisst das: Vorab identifizieren, auf welche Fragen Ihre Zielgruppe eine schnelle Antwort sucht – alles andere landet hinten im Bericht. Wo immer möglich geläufige Wörter statt Fachbegriffe wählen. Sätze kurz halten und nur jeweils eine Idee hineinpacken. Auch Hervorhebungen wichtiger Stichwörter helfen für das Verständnis. Bilder und Multimedia ebenfalls – wenn sie Aussagen untermauern und nicht nur Seiten dekorieren. Also alles, was den physischen Akt des Lesens unterstützt, statt erschwert.

«Klare Worte bringen Sie schneller zum Ziel. Und zum Geschäftsabschluss.»

Das Ganze hat neben Verständlichkeit noch weitere Vorteile: Wer sich kurz hält, wirkt dem Data Overload entgegen. Etwas, das Stakeholder laut CCR-Studie verpönen und paradoxerweise sogar als nachteilig für Transparenz und Vertrauen einstufen. Zu dick auftragen führt wohl nicht weit. Und absolute Klarheit fördert im besten Fall sogar das Geschäft. Denn weniger Rückfragen bedeuten schnellere Ergebnisse – egal ob beim Vertragsabschluss oder beim Aktienkauf.

Trotzdem reichen Zeit und Interesse nicht immer für das Brüten am Text aus. Darum gibt es Schreibexpertinnen und -experten, die genau dabei helfen. Bei uns heissen sie Plain-Language-Profis und machen Sie direkt für alle verständlich. Manchmal kann es so einfach sein.



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