"What a great article!"
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This blog by Karen Shackleton is part of a weekly series from the Pensions for Purpose team.

Have you ever read an investment thought leadership piece, or a blog, and at the end thought "Wow, what a thought-provoking and insightful article"? It's a refreshing moment when that happens, especially in our industry where we are overloaded with new information to process, almost every hour of the day.

I've been giving some thought as to what makes a good written piece or podcast for pension funds. It's been particularly relevant for Pensions for Purpose as we assessed around 160 entries for our annual content awards (this is the reason why my blog this week is four days late!) In my humble opinion, the best pieces met the following criteria:

Clarity

For a lay person, the investment arena is full of jargon, and the ESG/sustainable/impact investment space is certainly no different. I've heard so many pension funds grumble about acronyms, technical jargon and complex explanations. Whilst an author is keen to demonstrate their expertise and knowledge-base on the topic in the paper, the reality is that the best thought leadership pieces are easy to digest, understandable and make little use of acronyms and jargon. Just as an example, the acronym TCFD might be every-day language for an environmental manager, but it might be the first time a pension fund trustee has heard the term.

Originality

One thing that became apparent when reading 160 different thought leadership pieces, was that the articles that shone out were those that considered an original dimension or topic. If you want your audience to read your article, then tell them something they don't already know!

Educational insight

Many articles that go under the banner of thought leadership are in fact an indirect sales push for a fund or strategy. At Pensions for Purpose we try hard to screen these pieces out because we want to maintain the integrity of the platform. A good thought leadership piece is educational in nature, its goal is to leave the reader better informed than when they first viewed the content.

Presentation

This sounds obvious, and as a general rule, the quality of submissions to our content awards were of a very high standard. That having been said, as a time-poor team, we definitely favoured those thought leadership pieces that presented content effectively and concisely, without repetition, and used well-labelled charts and diagrams.

Relevance (for pension funds)

ESG, sustainable and impact investment can appeal to many different types of investor, from pension funds to individuals, charities and foundations. We would encourage those authors targeting the pension fund market to consider how their thought leadership is relevant to the specific audience they are writing for. What are the pension fund's concerns and how might this topic be relevant to their fund?

We have just published the shortlisted content for our 2020 content awards – these can be found under People and Events on our platform. These have been sent to our valued judges for scoring and assessment, and I'd just like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank them all:

Betty Carey	Independent Adviser
Jacqueline Jackson	Head of Responsible Investment, London CIV
Sally Kessen	G4S Pension Fund
Henna Shah	Make My Money Matter
Jamie Broderick	Impact Investing Institute
Nick Wheeler	Volvo Group UK Pension Schemes
Victoria Moffett	Warwickshire County Council

We will be announcing the winners at our virtual Investing with Impact Summit with DG Publishing, on 18th November 2020. Congratulations to everyone who has been shortlisted, and good luck!

Next time you read an outstanding article on ESG, sustainable or impact investment, why not feed that praise back to the author, even if this is one of your competitors? And maybe let us know your views, as well…

Karen Shackleton
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