

TO: Clients

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SUBJECT: BRAND POSITIONING FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

## Background

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OVER THE LAST YEAR, INTEREST AROUND SOCIAL IMPACT AND ESG (environment, sustainability and governance) has grown significantly. Consumers increasingly expect corporations to match their own values, and investors are aware of the long-term risks that ESG liabilities create for potential growth.

**Without a strategy to communicate social good work in Washington, government relations efforts are missing a unique opportunity. In times of political uncertainty, planning ahead to communicate this work is vital.**

To become attractive allies to policymakers and other make-or-break stakeholders, ROKK Solutions has developed the [following set of communications recommendations](#).

## Appeal to Both Sides of the Aisle

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Strategies incorporating social good should not focus on just building relationships with Democrats alone (although strategically-minded companies are already thinking through their plans should November usher in a change in administration). While it is easy to assume that only Democrats care about these positive stories, there is [research](#) which shows that Republicans do care as well. However, the issues of concern are sometimes different for each party. For instance, while Democrats might respond to messaging focused on environmental corporate give-back, Republicans may be more inclined to appreciate efforts that support veterans.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are also issues that resonate with leaders and voters on both sides of the aisle. These include, but are not limited to, efforts related to disaster response, partnerships with local charities and, importantly, a number of issues under the corporate governance category of ESG. Governance typically refers to a company's leadership structure and how it approaches issues like diversity and inclusion (D&I). Beyond creating opportunity for companies to engage with voters and policymakers on issues that resonate with both sides of the aisle, these initiatives also create opportunity at the investment level.

## Leverage Sustainability Reports

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Corporate sustainability reports are a foundational resource for an organization's overall ESG profile, yet are often relegated to obscure links on company websites. They can provide a reservoir of content such as adherence to [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) and mitigation plans that stakeholders want to understand. This content is a rich source for high-value communications tactics that will reach both key audiences:

- + EARNED MEDIA:** Proactive media pitching that ties report data to the news of the day will help companies boost their reputation and expand interest in their policy objectives. As voters will pick up on media signals, so too will individual elected officials.
- + BRAND BUILDING:** By attaching ESG report topics to the news cycle, companies can also create opportunities to engage in thought leadership, either through events or editorial content that amplify their work in a specific area. Both brand building tactics will provide relevant content to highlight for target audiences.
- + DIGITAL CONTENT:** Snackable, fact-based content around issues like diversity and the environment found in reporting provide powerful data to back up buzzy corporate statements. It also provides opportunities to engage with consumers, employees and voters where they live: in the digital space. Consider developing a bank of evergreen social media and infographics based on sustainability reports that can be deployed throughout the year and, when possible, aligned with the news of the day.

To effectively execute these tactics, organizations should make sure they are both authentic in their follow-through and on-brand with their messaging. While policymakers are looking for cues from corporations, younger audiences in particular are more than willing to call out companies for not backing up their statements with meaningful effort. Assuming that follow through, a successful ESG communications effort will tailor messaging to the specific audience, build a foundation based on social impact efforts and reporting frameworks, and execute a complementary set of messaging tactics.

## Questions?

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