

Growing Global

Harnessing the power of reporting and data insights

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Foreword

How can business leaders use the intelligence and insight gathered through reporting to help grow internationally?

That's the question that companies should be asking as they prepare to expand while having to navigate an increasingly complex regulatory landscape. Indeed, in just the past few months, some jurisdictions have sought to strengthen rules and laws while others have embarked on a quite dramatic process of deregulation. In addition, brewing global trade conflicts are creating even greater barriers and headaches for companies seeking to expand.

Despite these complexities, an overwhelming majority (93%) of the 3,000 CEOs interviewed as part of our most recent [C-suite barometer](#) still maintain a positive outlook when it comes to growth. A quarter of them cite international expansion as one of their top-five strategic priorities – a testament to previous successes achieved in the volatile environment over the past two years, and the resilience that leaders and their businesses have established since the global pandemic of 2020.

However, the barometer also found that 25% of executives were concerned about new regulations and 53% consider the need to understand local regulations as their biggest challenge when expanding internationally. They might be forgiven then, as they confront an increasingly confusing regulatory landscape, for choosing to focus on growth first and compliance in different jurisdictions second.

That, we believe, would be a mistake. Rather than considering reporting as a necessary evil to meet compliance obligations, it can provide companies with a distinct strategic and competitive advantage – especially at a time when international compliance frameworks are being reshaped in real time.

In this report, we explain how embracing, bolstering and applying reporting (and crucially the data and AI technology that can provide insight from it) will help businesses grow globally while developing the resilience needed to succeed in these most interesting times.

“Successful expansion into new markets requires collaboration across all areas of the organisation. In today’s increasingly complex regulatory environment, high-quality data forms the foundation for reliable reporting - and enables confident, strategic decision-making.”



Fadi Ramadan
Partner,
Forvis Mazars Group





The reporting foundations for successful global growth

Companies all over the world are looking to grow internationally and navigate complex regulations. According to our most recent C-suite barometer, four in five (83%) businesses plan to expand to at least one new country in the next five years, with over 40% targeting three or more new countries.

The business world hates uncertainty, and most companies would prefer to have rules that remain consistent and frameworks that they can build internal systems to comply with. That way, they can plan how to scale their business over time. At present though, companies are having to consider expansion while facing unprecedented regulatory complexity including new potential barriers to trading internationally, and increasingly fractured regulations across different jurisdictions.

Even as landmark regulations like the OECD Pillar Two framework, the Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA) and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive are being introduced, other prominent regulations like the US SEC's climate disclosure rules are being abandoned, parts of the EU AI Act may be postponed and internal benchmarks like diversity, equality and inclusion that companies have invested time and resources to report on are being downplayed.

Amid this uncertainty, establishing a smart, data-led reporting framework, and investing in it as the company grows, will provide the core financial and non-financial insight executives need to navigate existing and future regulation wherever they do business.

The reporting foundations for successful global growth

The reporting chain of command starts at the top

Understanding the power of reporting and planning so that it can evolve, mature and support an expanding business requires a shift in mindset – one led from the very top of the organisation. It's only when the C-suite can see the tangible value and insight that reporting delivers in terms of growth that a data-led approach starts to promulgate throughout the organisation.

As companies grow, investment in office administration, data gathering and reporting capacity often takes a back seat to strengthening sales and marketing – traditionally viewed as the revenue generating side of the business. It's when companies start to trade internationally and regulations (and executive liabilities) become more complex that the reporting function gains the full attention of the CEO or CFO.

It's often at this point that the leadership team becomes aware of how reporting can have a direct impact on the risks and potential success for the business – especially when executives realise they are legally responsible for financial filings in multiple jurisdictions.

As we explored in our previous [report](#), retrofitting compliance reporting once a company has successfully expanded into a new country or jurisdiction can be complicated, expensive and sometimes legally precarious. That's why it pays to develop data and reporting capabilities at the same pace as the rest of the business. That way, reporting can really add unique value to growing the business, offering market insights that can help identify opportunities best suited to its strengths.

One example of how strategic reporting shows its worth is when a company is preparing to launch a product in a new jurisdiction. In many organisations, the tax department would only learn about the launch after it has been activated. But by involving tax in the initial planning, the smart business can apply the insight from its previous reporting to proactively plan how to expand in the most tax-efficient and compliant way.

With executive buy-in and support for the strategic business value provided by reporting, companies can begin to overcome the siloed mentality that exists in too many organisations and start applying its insights across different departments. Consider the example of a tax department in a mid-sized company. For most people in the organisation, it is probably perceived as having just one strict function. However, its insights can inform procurement, accounting, legal and sales, and give the CFO and CEO the reassurance to grow with confidence in new markets.

“Understanding the data you're going to need even before you start trading is important. If you already know what you're going to need later for reporting, it's far less time consuming than trying to gather that information retrospectively.”



Phil Laminack
Partner,
Forvis Mazars US

The reporting foundations for successful global growth

Get your data and AI house in order

Transforming the company's technology stack and capabilities is considered the most important strategic priority by 43% of CEOs surveyed in this year's C-suite barometer – a jump of 11 percentage points from last year. Notably, 91% of leaders either already have a dedicated strategy for implementing generative AI or are currently planning one, while 87% of leaders are convinced that generative AI will have an impact on their organisation.

Firms are investing in new and improved systems and processes to ensure data quality, new overall data strategies for the business, integrating data sources and capabilities across all parts of the business and ensuring compliance with data protection laws.

This investment also elevates the power of smart reporting and forecasting in supporting international growth once it is underpinned by quality insights based on robust, reliable data.

Reporting helps companies understand what information will be needed to comply in different jurisdictions which, in turn, allows businesses to

gather the data they need to analyse the business decisions underpinning new market expansion – whether it be logistics, supply chain, tax regimes or sustainability considerations.

To make technology-driven reporting useful though, executives need to ask themselves: do we know just how much relevant data sits within the organisation and where is it located? Do we have enough data to make really informed decisions? Or do we have too much data and don't know what to do with it?

Successfully consolidating the various streams of data held within the organisation, therefore, is a top priority. It involves gathering the numerous systems where the data is held including HR, sales, procurement and vendor management. Most international companies have IT consolidation systems – constructed like a connected spider's web – that gather all the data. Once this is applied to the various diverse systems, it's possible to start shaping a cohesive data strategy and, importantly, focus on streamlining the company's data pipelines so that information can be easily accessed, organised and analysed to inform growth.

“A good data strategy helps you work with colleagues around the world to understand how regional dynamics on rules and regulations might impact your business. That's why collaboration is key.”



Bongwiwe Mbunge
Partner,
Forvis Mazars Group

The reporting foundations for successful global growth

Bridge cross-border knowledge gaps

Entering new international markets introduces challenges that many leaders haven't experienced before.

When foreign companies enter the US market, for example, they are confronted with having to do state and even city tax reporting – a level of complexity many have never dealt with before. It's a similar challenge for companies doing business with Europe – whether they are actively trading in the EU or just part of the global supply chain.

Many African businesses now find themselves having to be compliant on EU sustainability rules regarding carbon emissions to maintain their licence to operate. Locating and tracking the data needed to provide compliance is much easier when it's being done in real time.

Complying with the updated [Pillar Two global tax rules](#) illustrates the importance of good data and reporting to prepare for international expansion. Pillar Two requires many different data points for jurisdictions that companies have never had to consider in the past. Many companies are having to retrofit their systems to make sure they can access the data required and compensate for the nuances between the ways that different countries are applying the new rules – even when they don't yet know the specifics. In Vietnam, for example, the government has drafted a decree adopting

the 15% global tax on multinational enterprises but has yet to establish the mechanisms for how companies need to comply.

That's where having robust data and reporting frameworks can really help, especially if the business operates in multiple jurisdictions. AI, for example, increasingly is helping companies quickly understand tax legislation in jurisdictions all around the globe and how liabilities change from one country to another. With centralised data, colleagues and advisors can work together quickly to solve regional issues that arise and so ensure global compliance.

“Agility comes from consistently capturing the right data points. With this clarity, management can proactively respond to regulatory changes and market shifts - instead of being forced into reactive decisions.”



Fadi Ramadan
Partner,
Forvis Mazars Group

How to turn reporting into an international growth driver

By understanding the potential of reporting to offer strategic business insights and harnessing the power of data to inform that reporting, companies can start to fully grasp the opportunities of growing globally and applying the lessons of expansion through the enterprise.

First though, employees need to see the value of reporting not just through the lens of navigating regulatory compliance but as a real driver of growth. Here are three ways that demonstrate those strengths.

Identifying global growth opportunities

Knowledge is power, and the more data that can be applied to reporting, the more knowledgeable leaders will be about how to grow the business both at home and abroad.

Drawing on reporting from different jurisdictions can help identify how to be more competitive in new markets, how to understand pricing better and how the new venture stands up against competitors – because they also will be reporting on core elements of their own business.

Once a company has started capturing, collating and making sense of the different data points available, it can start taking proactive business decisions about where to expand and sometimes where to contract. Over time, the reporting on that data will shed light on whether the investment in markets (and demographics within those markets) is generating the required return.

One hypothetical example is the role that a tax department can play in product development at a software company. The sales and marketing teams may excel at getting the new product into the marketplace, but the tax department has the data to show that, if the company sells the product as Software as a Service rather than a software licence, it can save 25% in local taxes. This way, the tax department, fuelled by its reporting insights, is helping the business generate money.

Sometimes a company is looking to move their manufacturing abroad but is unsure of the best location. AI drastically reduces the time it takes to understand taxes on individual products and in which markets companies might enjoy a competitive advantage or disadvantage – a task that previously would have taken tax advisors many hours or days to achieve.

“Pay close attention to your data in real time as you’re moving into new markets so that you can get a good benchmark of what it will really cost to expand. Then use that information to make decisions about where else you should expand. You might want to access a market, but at what cost?”



Phil Laminack
Partner,
Forvis Mazars US

How to turn reporting into an international growth driver

Funding international expansion

Corporate reporting has long provided investors with financial insight into a company's future growth prospects.

It can boost investor confidence through transparent, regular and standardised reports that demonstrate if a company is well managed, has a good culture of accountability and has a consistent track record of performance. Robust reporting also speeds up due diligence as it helps and reassures investors that the data they need to find is already available to them. It's a bit like building a database to streamline future fundraising. Reporting also enables easier benchmarking and valuations by investors (accelerating funding decision making) and it improves credibility with lenders and credit agencies (as consistent reporting improves corporate credit ratings).

Taking the time to organise data and create frictionless pipelines to improve reporting also makes capital planning an easier exercise for the executive team – helping them identify when they need to proactively approach investors.

Increasingly, a combined financial and non-financial data-led reporting approach is helping investors understand the opportunities and risks in international expansion.

In some regions, for example, investors are having to weigh up a complex list of governance and sustainability factors including sourcing, human rights, anti-bribery and corruption laws and equitable supply chains. The more data companies can gather, and the more transparent they can be in reporting around those key topics, the easier it is to satisfy investor concerns – especially if some of the funding is coming from public entities or listed companies.

“In South Africa, your ability to demonstrate the support of empowered and women-led enterprises, to demonstrate the reduction of education inequality or to show there is no child labour in your supply chain can be very persuasive for investors.”



Bongiwe Mbunge
Partner,
Forvis Mazars Group

How to turn reporting into an international growth driver

Optimising efficiency

Many companies already use internal reporting as a diagnostic check on how different parts of the enterprise are performing and where improvements in efficiency can be made. Expanding that reporting framework into international markets can help leaders evaluate the pros and cons of expanding globally.

Take Country by Country Reporting (CBCR), where governments require companies to disclose by jurisdiction information about their operations, revenues, profits and taxes. By conducting that data gathering and reporting exercise, companies quickly learn about the amount of revenue they are generating at a jurisdictional level and relevant profit margins. CBCR can also show weaknesses in supply chains, problems with transfer pricing or even inter-company charging structures, helping answer why it costs more to run the business in one jurisdiction than another.

Yet companies can only see the benefits from this insight if they scale their data gathering and internal reporting as they expand. A well-functioning data analytics strategy and framework will enable a company to deliver reporting not just from one jurisdiction but all around the globe in a way that avoids duplication of data, overcomes siloes and gives employees the confidence to draw on the insights and input of their colleagues.

“Reporting for individual countries is straightforward. The real challenge lies in harmonising processes and systems across multiple jurisdictions. By adopting a global, technology-driven data strategy early on, complexity becomes manageable.”



Fadi Ramadan
Partner,
Forvis Mazars Group

Preparing for a different reporting landscape

Building a scalable, data-led reporting system won't just help companies now as they expand internationally, it will also future-proof their growth in an age where existential forces like climate change and AI are set to reshape both how companies operate and how they impact society and the natural world.

Bolster governance and ethics through integrated reporting

Despite the pushback against ESG reporting frameworks and a growing sense of climate scepticism among some global governments, investment in sustainability initiatives remains high on CEO agendas. Twenty-three percent of executives surveyed in the C-suite barometer highlight a new or revised sustainability strategy as a top-five priority. Notably, 35% of executives acknowledge a difference in values (approach to human rights or the ethical application of AI, for example) as a key challenge when setting up operations in new countries or jurisdictions.

One significant reason why sustainability remains a central consideration for business leaders of both public and [private companies](#) is that over a decade of reporting on non-financial issues has shown how climate change, resource scarcity, destruction of natural environments, human rights and equality have a real financial impact on their operational costs, ability to raise capital, brand perception and even their licence to operate.

That puts a premium on the quality of sustainability data that continues to be collected within the organisation and how it is reported. Certain industry sectors such as mining, energy, infrastructure and agriculture already understand the influence that sustainability factors can have in terms of business

risk and confidence. In the future, new regulations are likely to turn that focus on many other sectors.

In Europe, the [Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive](#) (CSRD) already requires the companies covered by the legislation to employ a double materiality assessment of the sustainability issues most relevant to the business and its stakeholders. Doing so requires companies to evaluate their impact not just on the environment and society but also on the business itself. Likewise, the way companies employ AI will also come under increased regulatory scrutiny. The EU AI act, for example, is the first legal framework to create a set of guardrails to ensure the responsible use of AI.

In February 2025, the [EU scaled back](#) the highly ambitious initial scope of CSRD, reducing the number of companies that need to comply and giving those that do have to more time to report. Nevertheless, the overall trend remains clear. Non-financial reporting is becoming [integrated into core business strategy](#).

Over time, this will foster cultural change within organisations as its value to the business evolves. Investing now in fully integrated financial and non-financial reporting will ensure companies identify, understand and meet the sustainability challenges they will inevitably face in the near future.

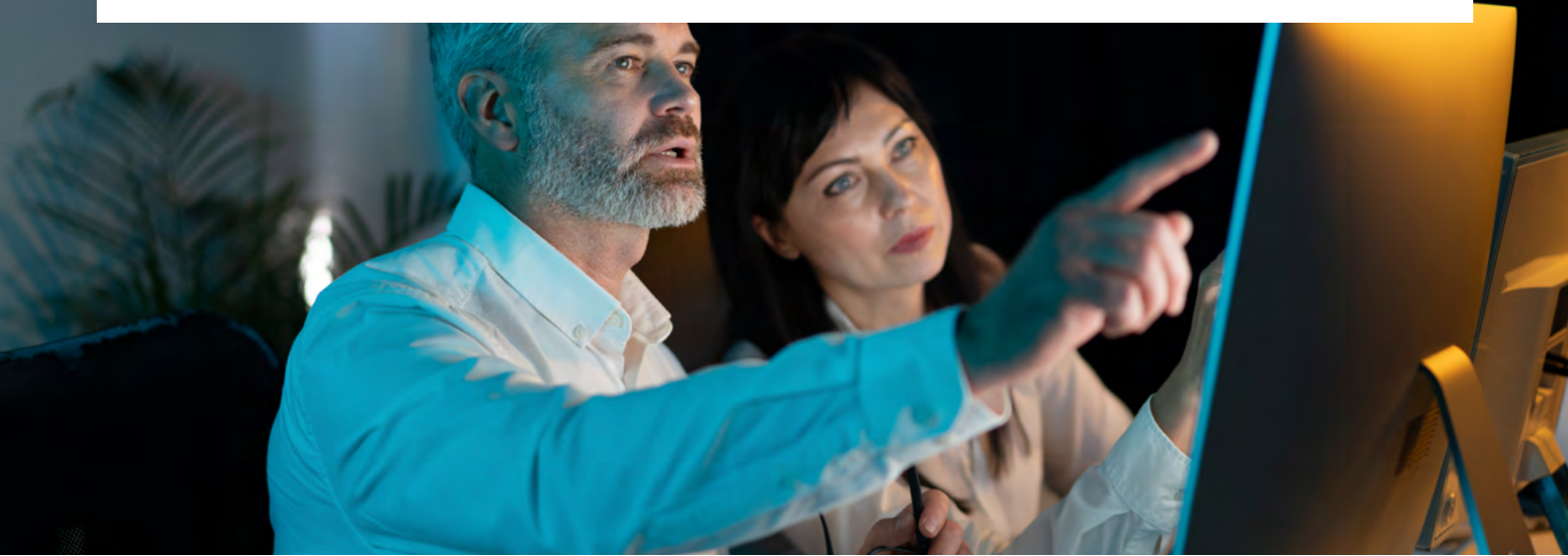
Conducting an options analysis of both financial and non-financial considerations can highlight not only the opportunities, but also the sustainability risks that might cause a conflict with company values. This allows the business to fully evaluate potential growth opportunities and cost savings while protecting corporate reputation and licence to operate.

“You can't report what you don't have or have not done. There must be an appreciation of the work that needs to happen between reporting periods to give you the credibility to transparently communicate its outcomes right.”



Bongwiwe Mbunge
Partner,
Forvis Mazars Group

Conclusion



Next steps for harnessing the power of reporting and insights

Every company is used to reporting for compliance – it's a long-established part of doing business and maintaining a licence to operate. It's only recently, though, that executives have started to think proactively about drawing on the insights of their reporting to identify new market opportunities, analyse their strengths and weaknesses and understand the competitive landscape as they look to expand internationally.

Moving forward, powered by AI and a data-led approach, companies will have access to even more information that can help them grow globally. As long, that is, as they have shaped the reporting strategy, targeted the investments and enabled their employees to do so. Here are three key takeaways to help companies immediately harness the power of their reporting and insights so they can expand internationally with confidence.

1. Make reporting a core part of business strategy

All parts of the business need to understand the power of reporting to inform better decision making around growth and international expansion. That involves a cultural shift led by the C-suite that can filter through the organisation and demonstrate how reporting is about competitive insight and not just compliance.

2. Integrate financial and non-financial reporting insights to get a whole-world picture on international growth

The business world and regulation are becoming ever more complex, with companies having to factor in many economic, geopolitical and stakeholder variables to their growth strategies. Integrating both financial and non-financial reporting will help companies navigate regulation and provide essential insight into where they should expand and how.

3. AI can support your growth, provided your reporting data is robust and well organised

The future of business will be transformed by the power of AI to streamline operations, decision making and strategy. AI insight, however, is only as good as the data that informs it. Start now to get your data house in order so that you have access to all the data you need to fully embrace AI.



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