

# ESG INTEGRATION FORUM – SUMMER

Thursday, June 27, 2024  
Clifford Chance, Two Manhattan West, New York

## A New Era of ESG

ESG is facing an identity crisis; on one side, regulatory pressure is mounting, requiring companies to get more granular with their ESG reporting and disclosures. On the other side, the anti-ESG movement is gaining momentum, and certain funds are quietly dropping the term 'ESG' altogether.

As ESG enters a new era, balancing conflicting stakeholder expectations around ESG will be critical for listed companies in 2024.

The ESG Integration Forum, happening toward the end of the proxy season, helps IR, governance and sustainability teams at public companies take stock of the changing expectations in ESG reporting and communications and adapt their practices to become more compliant, strategic and drive value through their ESG efforts.

## AGENDA

All times are in ET (Eastern Time)

**8.00 am**      **Registration, refreshments and networking**

**8.55 am**      **Welcome to the ESG Integration Forum**

Steve Wade, head of content, IR Magazine and Governance Intelligence

**9.00 am**      **A complete guide to climate disclosure regulations (and how to remain compliant)**

As companies prepare for new climate-related reporting mandates from the SEC, California and Europe, we analyze the new requirements, its impact on reporting, investor behavior, markets & litigation, and discuss how to implement changes to reporting practices to remain compliant with the new rules.

- Hear about the changes in climate reporting requirements to help identify gaps in data collection systems and processes
- Discuss how the new rules will affect investor expectations and how it will impact investment and voting decisions
- Understand how the SEC ruling could change the litigation landscape and hear about emerging legal risks resulting from the climate rule

**9.45 am**      **Going backward or going mainstream? How ESG expectations are changing**

At a time when regulators are pushing for increased, more complex and reliable ESG disclosures, there are indicators of waning enthusiasm for ESG, such as

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reduced shareholder support for ESG resolutions, a softening of language around sustainability and net outflows from ESG funds.

In this session, we debate how attitudes are changing around ESG, and why these changes are happening, with a view to understanding how this will impact ESG expectations and voting or investment decisions in the future.

- Understand how attitudes and behaviours are changing in sustainable investment
- Debate if these changes indicate a maturity of ESG investing, or a detraction from responsible investing principles
- Learn how to adapt your future plans and practices to satisfy future investor expectations on ESG

**10.30 am**      **Coffee break and networking**

**11.00 am**      **How to prepare your board to work toward ESG goals**

It starts at the top! Effective ESG governance requires the board to be organized, trained and informed in a way that allows them to work collaboratively toward ESG goals. This session explores how to integrate ESG risk oversight into board practices.

- Board structures and ESG: Understand the benefits and challenges of assigning ESG oversight across the full board, multiple committees or a stand-alone sustainability committee
- Hear how governance teams have amended their governance guidelines or committee charters to ensure enhanced focus on ESG-related issues
- Learn how to evaluate and recruit directors that are best suited to govern on ESG-factors impacting the company and how to keep them informed on ever-evolving ESG risk landscape through data provision and training
- Discuss how best to share information with the board, which data-sets are most helpful and how frequently teams should meet with the board on ESG matters

**11.45 am**      **ESG in the age of AI**

As technology evolves and becomes more powerful, businesses and their stakeholders become increasingly reliant on tools like artificial intelligence. As generative AI evolves, businesses look to capitalize on the opportunities but must be aware of the risks involved, both financial, and extra-financial.

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This session explores how companies can mitigate growing technology related ESG risks and maximize the opportunities of technology to improve their ESG reporting and communications.

- Understand which ESG-related factors are impacted by an increased adoption of AI and how to mitigate these risks
- Explore the regulatory landscape as it relates to the governance and management of AI, cyber-security and data privacy issues now and in the future
- Learn how to capitalize on the potential opportunity to utilize AI to enhance ESG reporting and communications
- Understand the concerns related to how investors, proxy firms and ratings agencies utilize AI to understand your company's ESG-risk, and how to adapt corporate reporting practices to avoid these challenges

## **12.15 pm**      **Aligning sustainability targets with executive compensation**

Linking executive remuneration to ESG metrics is a clear signal to markets that ESG is a priority at your company. However, there is limited evidence to suggest that linking compensation to ESG goals definitively improves ESG performance, investor preferences on ESG metrics in remuneration plans are divergent and factors such as metrics, timelines, measurement and assurance are more complex for non-financial factors than those of traditional finance factors.

This session takes a deep dive into the topic of ESG-related remuneration and provides insight that will help you decide whether linking remuneration to ESG is right for your business, and how best to integrate ESG into executive compensation plans.

- Learn how stakeholders such as investors, management teams and proxy advisors and ratings agencies perceive ESG targets in compensation plans and understand what their expectations are as it relates to the metrics, timelines and structure when incorporating ESG into executive remuneration
- Discuss how to select the metrics that are most relevant to long-term value creation of your business, and how to structure plans to influence better decision making that creates sustainable returns for the business
- Assess how to report and communicate around ESG-related executive compensation metrics, to avoid accusations of greenwashing and gain investor support for compensation packages

## **12.45 pm**      **Lunch**

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## 1.45 pm **How to prioritize ratings agency requests**

ESG ratings and sustainability scores aid asset managers in their investment decisions and help inform voting decisions. However, with thousands of firms requesting information from companies, prioritizing rating agency requests is essential for efficiently managing resources.

This session aims to establish a criteria that companies can use to help identify the most relevant rating agencies and streamline your efforts.

- Understand the rating agency landscape, the critical role they play in the ESG ecosystem and the different functions they serve
- Discuss the factors that go into deciding which rating agencies to respond to, and learn about the criteria you can use to rank their effectiveness
- Learn how to engage with rating agencies that are missing essential context and information about your business and its ESG performance

## 2.15 pm **Producing investor-grade data that aids decision-making**

Good decisions require relevant data that is accurate, assured and delivered in a timely fashion. As ESG reporting expectations grow there is also higher demand for better quality data to help investors identify risk-factors within their portfolios. This session examines the changes that companies can implement to produce investor-grade data.

- Hear about the expectations that investors have regarding data quality
- Learn how to overcome the challenges and make decisions related to assurance and third-party auditing of sustainability information
- Discuss how companies can change their data collection and reporting practices to increase the quality of ESG data

## 3.00 pm **Balancing stakeholder needs: Taking an integrated approach to sustainability reporting and communications**

ESG reports, proxy materials and sustainability communications go far beyond the boardroom and investor community. Employees, customers, suppliers and advocacy groups are just some stakeholders that interact with ESG information. Even within the capital markets, portfolio managers, stewardship teams and analysts interact with different ESG information in a variety of different ways.

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This session looks at practical ways to approach ESG reporting and communications in a way that satisfies the needs of all stakeholders, manages the size of sustainability reports and is aligned with the overall corporate communications strategy

- Learn how to analyze the information needs of different stakeholder groups and the level of detailed metrics that are required
- Understand how communications, governance, finance and sustainability teams can collaborate to establish clear messaging on ESG issues
- Explore how to identify the most relevant topics to publish via different channels

**3.45 pm**

## **Champagne problem solver**

Help yourself to a glass of bubbly in this interactive session.

Share your biggest ESG-related challenge in a special session that has been designed to work collaboratively on overcoming challenges with the help of fellow governance, sustainability and IR professionals.

**4.30 pm**

## **Closing remarks and networking drinks**

Steve Wade, head of content, IR Magazine and Governance Intelligence