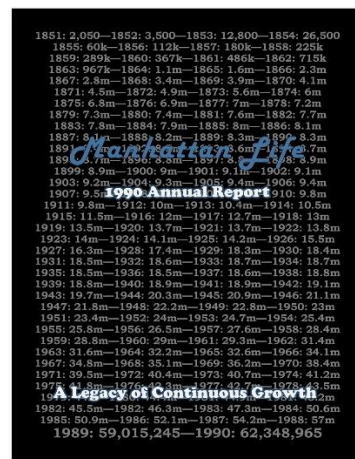
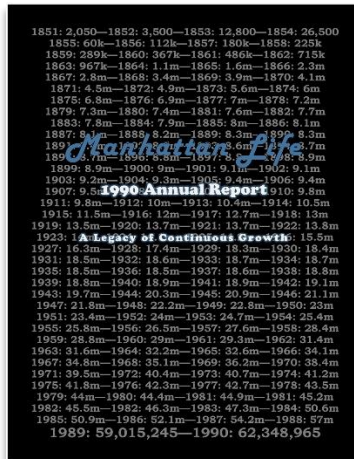
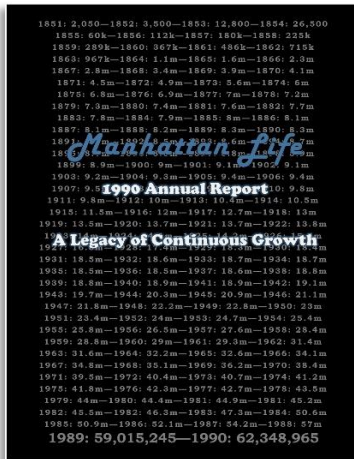


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Characters

- Walter** *55-ish, head speech writer/copywriter, despite his conservative dress, his hair changes color daily from salt-and-pepper, to dark brown or gray or blonde.*
- Laura** *45-ish, Walter's direct supervisor, head of the company's public/media relations department*
- Liz** *40-ish, the company's lead graphic designer*
- Mildred** *60-ish, the media relations department office manager*
- Helen** *60-ish, Laura's executive assistant, on off-stage voice*
- Setting:** *New York City 1991, a pseudo-gothic office building with a cavernous lobby, sterile marble floors, pillars and archways. The working floors above the lobby are typical 1980s offices with a mixture of spartan cubicles, open areas and opulent private offices.*

The Three Annual Report Cover designs:



EXECUTIVE DECISION

Setting: Inside Laura's spacious, well-appointed office. There is a desk with chair and separate table, a coffee table and two padded chairs.

VQ-SLIDE SL (over desk) shows window with view of NYC skyline

SQ-Music up

At Rise: Laura sits at her desk on the phone. Liz and Mildred sit on chairs bending over the coffee table looking at three Annual Report cover layout mockups.

LQ-light spot comes up CDS

[Walter stands in the doorway SR and enters after Laura motions for him to come in. He moves to coffee table to look at the layouts. Liz stands with one layout to find a better light in the room, soon followed by Mildred coming together (downstage center). They then move over to empty table by Laura's desk, but the light there is not as good.]

LIZ

Walter.

[Liz motions to Walter, who has sat by the remaining cover at the coffee table, and he joins them to help move the table to downstage center. As they place the three cover options on that table, Liz, Walter and Mildred start examining the layouts and Laura joins them.]

LQ- lights come up full

VQ-SLIDE SR: Three cover layouts

SQ-Music FADE out

LAURA

Which one was the one he showed us last time, again?

LIZ

It's not here. I think it was like this first one, only with the company name in smaller type.

WALTER

Remember, Karl wanted the name bigger?

LAURA

Yeah, yeah. But it doesn't really look all that much bigger to me.

MILDRED

I think it's *much* bigger...

LIZ

Oh, yes. Remember, last time it was the same size as the words "Annual Report."

LAURA

You sure he didn't just make *that* smaller?

MILDRED

No. It's the same size. I remember it came in about three inches from the right margin. And it's the same size as the numbers in the background pattern. See how the 1990 in "1990 Annual Report" is mirrored in the numbers in the background?

WALTER

Yeah.

LAURA

O K. And now he's got the title in white. What else should we be looking for?

WALTER

I remember Joe thought the title was lost at the bottom of the page.

LIZ

Even in white, it still seems lost.

MILDRED

Yeah, it does.

LAURA

Well, I don't know. You can *definitely* see it better in white. What do you think, Walter?

WALTER

I'd have to see them side by side. But I think Joe 's right. Let's just dump this version with the title still on the bottom.

LIZ

I agree.

LAURA

Mildred?

MILDRED

If Joe already said he doesn't want the title down there, I think we shouldn't come back with an option with it there.

LAURA

O K. So, take that one out and let's see how these other two differ.

[Liz removes the first layout and puts it on the coffee table. The Laura moves closer to Walter and Liz returns next to Laura.]

VQ-SLIDE SR: Two layouts.

[They all look from one to the other of the remaining layouts. They alternately make motions to speak, but then don't. Mildred tilts her head from side to side as she studies the layouts.]

MILDRED

Ah, um...

[Walter just has a blank expression on his face as if wishing he were somewhere else — fishing.]

WALTER

Don't you, ah

[Laura squints over the top of her glasses.]

LAURA

I, ah, is it?

LIZ

Well, you and Walter were the ones who showed the old layout to Karl and Joe and company. What other concerns did they have?

LAURA

Walter?

WALTER

I remember Larry was concerned about the size of the company name, too.

LIZ

All of these layouts solve *that* problem. Don't you think?

WALTER

Yeah. I think so. But then, I liked it the way it was.

LAURA

No. Actually. It's funny; I thought it was perfect before, but now that I see it like this, I like it this way better.

MILDRED

Yes. I *like* these.

LIZ

So, obviously, we should look at the size of the title and the size of the numbers in the background pattern.

Is it easier to read with the title in large print and the pattern in small print? Or... with the title in small print and the numbers in large print?

LAURA

I don't know....

WALTER

I... Ah...

MILDRED

I think, with the numbers bigger, you're less inclined to fix on them; so, your eye just naturally goes up to the top of the page to read the company name first.

LIZ

Yes. And, with the smaller pattern, your eye picks up on the title right away.

LAURA

So, with version two here, we'll say that it directs the eye to the company name first, while this other version the eye tends to focus on the title first.

LIZ

Yes. So, which do we want to do?

LAURA

I don't know. Let's show them both to Karl, with these explanations, and see what he thinks.

WALTER

That makes sense.

LIZ

Don't you think it would be better to decide here and just show them the one layout?

WALTER (INTERRUPTING)

No, it's better to have them both out there....

LIZ (CONTINUES TALKING OVER WALTER)

And if they have some kind of problem about the company name or the title being too prominent, just tell them about the other layout – Maybe hold it in reserve.

LAURA

No.

WALTER

I agree, Laura. We should show both versions and tell them that in the one version the readers are first aware of whose Annual Report it is and then they pick up on the title or theme. Whereas, in the second version, they'll see the title first — get an idea about what the report is about — and, then, look to see whose book it is.

LAURA

That should work.

[As Liz replies, she moves to the chair.]

LIZ

Fine, if that's the way you want to play it...

But, we have to have a decision by tomorrow morning. Sydney says that they're ready to start matching colors at the printer and we have to have this to Winston by eleven thirty.

WALTER

No problem.

LAURA

Yeah. We can do *that*.

[As Mildred replies, she moves to sit in the other chair by the coffee table.]

MILDRED

Yes. And we don't even want to show them this *other* layout?

LAURA

I don't know. Let's look at it again.

[Liz retrieves the “discarded” layout from the corner and places it back on the coffee table, shaking her head the whole time.]

VQ-Slide of all three layouts, again.

[Liz and Mildred roll their eyes behind her Laura’s back. Walter continues staring at the layouts as if seeing them for the first time.]

LAURA

You know, *that* one’s not bad.

LIZ

I don’t think so. The title ’s just lost...

[Liz gets up and joins them at the table again. Mildred remains sitting jotting notes in a small notebook, not even looking up as she replies.]

MILDRED

I agree.

WALTER

Yeah, but think about it: If we’re saying that this pattern forces the reader to see the company name first and only then will they see the title, that’s accomplished with this one, too, with the title all the way on the bottom of the page.

LAURA

And it’s certainly more readable in white.

LIZ

Great, so you show all three of them to Karl, Larry and Charlie and they all pick this one. Then Joe sees it and rejects it *'cause the title 's on the bottom the page*. So, we have to go back to Karl et al and sell *them* on the one Joe's picked.

LAURA

Well, that could happen with only two choices. Karl and company could pick one and Joe could pick the other one and we'd have to go back and sell Joe's pick to them.

WALTER

Right. It's all negotiation, especially this year. Maybe we should just go with Larry's pick?

LAURA

No. It's Joe's *last* Annual Report – and he's told Larry that, too.

WALTER

Just kidding.

[Liz circles back to her chair as she replies.]

LIZ

But the point is, we don't have a lot of time to go around in circles with this

[Laura steps back thoughtfully, then moves over next to Mildred's chair.]

LAURA

O K. Mildred, you get on the phone with Winston and see what our absolute, drop-dead time for this is. And how much it'll cost us if we don't get it to him by, say, the day after tomorrow. I think Charlie is away 'till then.

MILDRED

We went through this last year — and it cost us a *bundle*. I don't think we'll want to go past their deadline. But, I'll call and find out the latest time we can get it there tomorrow morning.

[Mildred leaves the office and, before she can shut the door, Helen manages to shout into Laura.]

HELEN (OS)

Karl called you — twice, Laura, and he's on the line again...

LAURA

Oh great — What 's he want?

HELEN (OS)

He *says* it's important.

[Mildred exits. Laura goes to her phone and then holds her finger up to Liz and Walter, to indicate that they should stay.]

LAURA

Yes, Karl.

[While on the phone, Laura lights up a cigarette and talks with it dangling from the corner of her mouth. Liz half listens, as she writes some notes to herself in a notebook. Walter walks over to sit next to Liz.]

LAURA (CONTINUES, ON THE PHONE)

Yes, we've got them now. ... Uh huh.

No, not those pages yet, we're still waiting to hear from the Controller's office.

No. I haven't heard anything about *that* yet.

Yes. I will, just as soon as I know.

Right.

[Laura hangs up the phone and moves back to the table while talking.]

LAURA (CONTINUES)

That - man - is driving me up the wall. I've told him five times that the financials aren't due until next week - but *every* day, he asks again.

WALTER

The man's like a cat. He retains information for only 15 to 30 seconds — max. And can only plan for the next minute or two. Everything's immediate.

LAURA

Yeah. He must be great in bed.

LIZ

Oh please. I don't want to even think about *that*.

WALTER

Can you imagine? "Sorry, dear, what was it we were doing?"

LIZ

Ew. Stop!

LAURA

So. What else do we need to decide here?

LIZ

Do we want to show Karl — and company — one, two or three of these layouts?
And.

Do we have enough time to play around by giving them a whole bunch of choices?

WALTER

I think we should take all three layouts up there. We'll tell them that in this first version, the readers are drawn to whose Annual Report it is and then they pick up on the title or theme. Whereas in the second version, readers first see the title and then look to see whose book it is.

[Liz shakes her head - frustrated - and then answers dismissively.]

LIZ

Yeah. Yeah...

WALTER

And in the third version, the readers are first aware of whose Annual Report it is and then they pick up on the title ... a little later than in the first version.

LAURA

O K. That works for me.

LIZ

But, if the first and third versions do the same thing, why bother with both?

LAURA

Because you *know* one of them is going to ask what the previous version looked like. And we can point to this one and say it was like this but with blue type, but Joe thought the title got lost at the bottom of the page.

WALTER

Yeah, and *that* will be their signal *not* to choose that one.

LIZ

So, if we're going to "tell" them not to pick it anyhow, why show it?

WALTER

No. No. It'll be O K. It's all in how we present 'em.

LAURA

But she has a point, Walter. And Joe did, kinda, say that he didn't want the title on the bottom of the page.

LIZ

Yeah. So, we can't show *him* a new version *with* the title on the bottom.

WALTER

That's a good point. We can't show him something he *definitely* said he doesn't want.

LIZ

So, you're only going to take the two versions up there?

VQ-SLIDE SR changes to two layouts.

WALTER

Yeah. Is that O K with you, Laura?

LAURA

Let's do it this way. Let's take these two up. And we'll bring along the third one and just leave it in the portfolio.

WALTER

If one of them wants to see what the last version looked like we can bring this one out.

LAURA

Right. And we repeat that bit about Joe not liking the title on the bottom...

LQ-Lights out.
VQ-SLIDE SR FADES

[Laura and Walter move table back next to desk. Laura exits SL, Liz and Walter exit SR taking the layouts with them. After a brief pause]

LQ-lights come back up full very slowly

[Laura, with a different jacket, sits at her desk on the phone. Liz and Mildred (dressed differently) appear and stand in the doorway SR carrying a small box. Laura nods at them and motions for them to sit as she continues on the phone. Liz and Mildred move to the coffee table and each take an Annual Report out of the box. Walter (wearing a different jacket) appears in the doorway SR and, when Laura notices him, she motions for him to come in. Walter makes his way to the coffee table as Laura hangs up phone. Until the very end of the scene cast must be careful to keep the covers of the Annual Reports facing themselves so audience doesn't see them.]

LAURA

They're here?

LIZ

Just arrived.

EXECUTIVE DECISION

MILDRED

Just enough copies for the board meeting tomorrow.

WALTER

How to they look?

[Liz hands Walter an Annual Report and Laura moves over to join them. Mildred hands Laura a copy.]

LIZ AND MILDRED (TOGETHER)

Finished. At last!

LAURA

What do you think, Walter?

WALTER

Exactly what we decided.

[All three open their copies to reveal that the cover that is nothing like the ones they had been discussing.]

VQ-SLIDE SR final cover design

LQ-Lights out
SQ-Music up

VQ-SLIDE SR & SLIDE SL FADE

