

Write for Decision-Makers

A practical guide to turning information into clear, concise and decision-ready communication.

HOW TO USE IT

Before sending a paper, email, proposal or briefing to a decision-maker, use this guide to sharpen the message. Make it easy for the reader to understand the issue, see what matters and know what you need from them.

1. LEAD WITH THE POINT

- ☐ Can the reader understand the main issue within the first few lines?
- ☐ Have I stated why this matters now?
- ☐ Have I avoided making the reader search for the purpose of the message?

2. MAKE THE DECISION CLEAR

- ☐ Is it obvious whether I need a decision, approval, direction or simply awareness?
- ☐ If approval is required, have I stated exactly what is being approved?
- ☐ Have I separated the decision from background information?

3. GIVE ENOUGH CONTEXT - NOT EVERYTHING

- ☐ Have I included the facts needed to make an informed decision?
- ☐ Have I removed history or detail that does not affect the decision?
- ☐ Can supporting detail be moved to an attachment or appendix?

4. SHOW THE OPTIONS

- ☐ If there are alternatives, are they presented clearly and fairly?
- ☐ Have I explained the practical implications of each option?
- ☐ If I am recommending one option, is the reason clear?

Write for Decision-Makers

Continue your final review before you send.

5. MAKE RISKS VISIBLE

- ☐ Have I identified material risks, constraints or dependencies?
- ☐ Have I distinguished known facts from assumptions?
- ☐ If there is a consequence of delaying the decision, have I stated it?

6. BE SPECIFIC ABOUT ACTION

- ☐ Is the next step clear?
- ☐ Is it clear who will own the action after the decision?
- ☐ Are deadlines, dates and responsibilities specific?

7. WRITE FOR A BUSY READER

- ☐ Can the message be scanned quickly without losing the main point?
- ☐ Are headings, bullets or short paragraphs helping the reader navigate?
- ☐ Have I removed repetition, vague wording and unnecessary jargon?
- ☐ Could I make this shorter without removing something the decision-maker needs?

AINIE WAHID QUICK TEST

If the decision-maker only had 30 seconds, would they understand **what the issue is, why it matters, what you recommend and what you need them to decide?**