Lecture 3

3.1 Sections of a Report

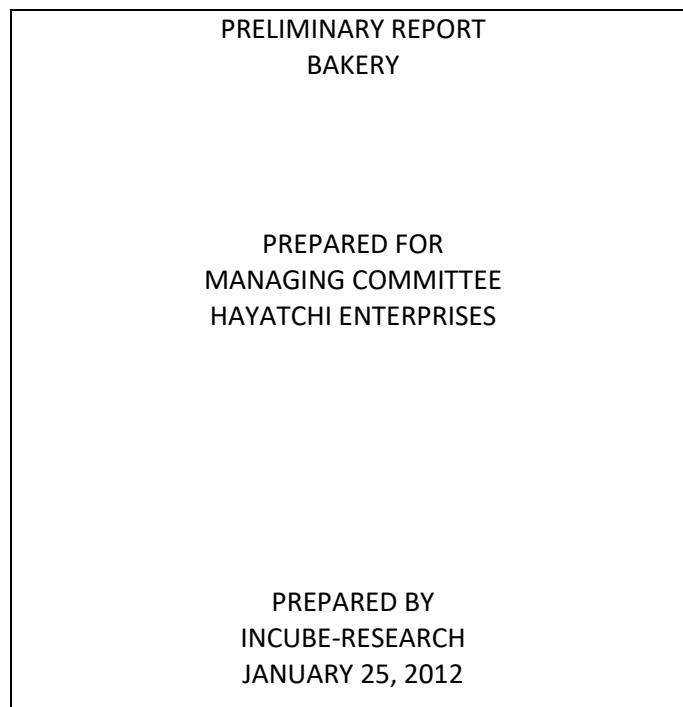A report is structured according to the following sections:

1. Title page
2. Executive summary
3. Table of contents
4. Introduction
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Recommendations
8. Bibliography
9. Appendices

3.1.1 Title Page

The title page is the face of a report. It should be clear and proper both in terms of content and formatting so that the reader may form a good idea of what is the report about.

There are four basic components that should be present in the title page:

1. It should have a **clear title**.
2. It should have **date of submission**.
3. It should have the detail of the person who has prepared the report, that is, **addresser's name**.
4. It should have the **addressee's name**.

PRELIMINARY REPORT
BAKERY

PREPARED FOR
MANAGING COMMITTEE
HAYATCHI ENTERPRISES

PREPARED BY
INCUBE-RESEARCH
JANUARY 25, 2012

Figure 1 Sample title page

3.1.2 Executive Summary

The next section is executive summary, also known as Abstract. This section provides the gist of the whole report. Findings, objectives and recommendations in the report are put in a nutshell in this section.

There are **six** points that are to be considered for structuring the executive summary:

1. You should be clear about your **aims and objectives**. Identify them by keeping in view the environment (business/organizational/academia) and the person by whom you have been assigned the task of composing the report.
2. The **design and methodology** comes next.
3. The **findings** of the report that you have found after carrying out the analysis should be provided.
4. The **conclusion** should cover all the important points covered in the main body.
5. A **set of recommendations** is outlined on the basis of conclusion.
6. **Limitations of the report** may also be given at the end. As the findings of any report cannot be considered absolute, the limitations may be identified so that other people know the areas where they may work further in future.

Figure 2 Sample Executive Summary, covering purpose, method, result, conclusion and recommendation

3.1.2.1 Points to Consider while composing Executive Summary
1. It is always **written in the end** when the report is complete in all respects.
2. It should be written in a manner that **grabs reader's attention**.
3. Keep in mind the nature of the **target audience**. The language used to compose the executive summary may be modified according to the audience's background and level of knowledge.
4. The central idea or **theme** must be presented in the executive summary.
5. It should clearly define your main **aim and purpose** of writing the report.
6. Prepare a **mind map/business plan** so that you are able to compose the report in an orderly manner and within the given time limit.

3.1.3 Table of Contents

The Table of Contents is a sequential list of the report's organizational structure. It is important because it gives reference to the scope of the report and provides references with page numbers.

The decimal system for numbering and differentiating different levels of headings should be used. Such numbering also shows that there are subsections of a section.

Table of Contents   Page

Figure 3 Sample Table of Contents

3.1.3.1   Level of headings

First degree of heading is written using whole numbers; for example,

1. Introduction to Economics

The second degree of heading is written using one decimal place:

1.1 Debit and Credit

The third degree indicates sub-sub-section and is written as follows:

1.1.1 Expenditure and Finances

3.1.4   Introduction

Introduction gives the **big picture** of the overall report. It builds up the **context** and sets the scenario in which the study/analysis will be carried for the target reader. The **subject matter** should be explained in a clear and explicit manner in the Introduction. For example, in a report about the behavioral problems of teenagers of Rawalpindi, the general behavioral problems of these teenagers should be your subject matter. The **problem description** follows; the main problem/issue to be investigated/explored must be stated clearly in a concise manner in this subsection. For the investigation of the main problem, you set some aims and objectives. These aims and objectives are your research questions whose answers you will try to find through analysis. However, in the introductory section, you indicate the probable answers and

your expected results. **Defining the scope** of your report comes next. It gives the reader a clear idea of areas your study covers; it makes your study specific and the reader is able to limit his perception in a certain area. **Report preview** follows scope. This heading informs readers about what is coming ahead in the report. The last heading in the introduction part is **Limitations**. It indicates the boundaries within which the study shall be carried out; it also mentions the time constraints and specifies the sample.

3.1.4.1   Example 1

Today, many organizations and employees are experiencing the effects of stress on work performance. The effects of stress can be either positive or negative. What is perceived as positive stress by one person may be perceived as negative stress by another, since everyone perceives situations differently. According to Barden (2001), negative stress is becoming a major illness in the work environment, and it can debilitate employees and be costly to employers. Managers need to identify those suffering from negative stress and implement programs as a defense against stress. These programs may reduce the impact stress has on employees' work performance.

3.1.4.2   Example 2

This is a Report on the rise of computer gaming addiction among teenagers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to investigate the reasons behind the rise in computer gaming addiction among teenagers. The report will also recommend preventive measures for computer gaming addiction.

1.2 Background

A recent study on game technology (Tan, 2010) shows that nearly 75% of teenagers in Singapore play computer games regularly and the majority of them show signs of addiction. The rise in computer gaming addiction among teenagers is a growing concern and the Ministry of Media Development (MDD) would like to find out the reasons behind this trend.

The report was commissioned by the Director of Corporate Communications, Ms Julie Sim, on 31 May 2010.

1.3 Method of Investigation

Questionnaires were issued to 100 teenagers from 25 educational institutions on 25 June 2010. Three teenagers who were former addicts were also interviewed to get more in-depth views. References were also made to books and newspaper articles.

1.4 Scope

Besides respondents' profile, this report looks into four possible reasons for the rise in gaming addiction among teenagers: boredom, stress, societal influence and addictive game features.