

Executive Summaries

Time and Expertise

- You do work because other individuals either lack time or expertise to do the same work
- By the same logic, decision-makers probably lack time and expertise to read your whole report

THIS IS NOT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT VALUE THE WORK

Saving Time

Write an executive summary to

1. State the problem you will address
2. Present your results
3. State policy implications

How long should the whole document be?

It is intended for a busy reader; and is a stand-alone, 1-2 page actionable document of no more than 1000 words.

--Lauren N. Brodsky
HKS Lecturer in Public Policy

Planning an Executive Summary

- Read through your report
- Find the most important statements and results
- Just like you did in the technical report, decide how to convince the audience that the results matter

Writing your Executive Summary

1. Write a compelling introduction to the problem
2. Take those sentences you found, and restructure them into a coherent document
3. State policy implications directly and clearly

Introducing...

Focus on that introduction! If you don't capture your audience's (your boss') attention here, the rest of your work is wasted.

Restructuring Major Results

While you might START with sentences from your report, rework them to fit the shorter style of the summary.

- Start with good stuff, finish with even better stuff!

Policy Implications

These are the "so what" of your report. Executive summaries are often read by individuals without expertise in the field, so this is your chance to guide the audience toward the conclusion.

A Report Isn't a Report...

Until you finish the Executive Summary

Examples

Some guides to writing Executive Summaries that I collected