CitiusTech

Structured Communication & Pyramid Principle

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Contents

- **Need for Structure**
- The Pyramid Principle
- Benefits of Top Down Communication
- Navigating the Pyramid
- Practice Exercises

Structure – The Key to Effective Communication (1/5)

Three aspects to any written communication:

- **Substance**
  - Content
  - Structure
- **Style of Writing**
  - Sentence construction
  - Vocabulary
  - Use of visuals
- **Visual Appeal**
  - Professional
  - Consistent
  - Appropriate use of fonts/colours/highlighting etc.

Ordering of Lists (2/5)

A Shopping List

- Milk
- Potatoes
- Grapes
- Cheese
- Carrots
- Oranges
- Butter
- Apples
- Cream
- Spinach

An Ordered List

All Items

- **Dairy Products**
  - Milk
  - Cheese
  - Butter
  - Cream
- **Vegetables**
  - Potatoes
  - Carrots
  - Spinach
- **Fruits**
  - Grapes
  - Oranges
  - Apples

Structure – The Need (3/5)

- To ensure that documents are
  - Clear
  - Concise
  - Easy to understand
- To avoid ambiguity of key take aways
- To easily translate to action items with accountability

Writing – Two Choices (4/5)

Dear Sonal,

You and I have been friends for a long time. However, recently you said something I did not like. After that I invited you for a party which you did not come for after confirming and……
……

Dear Sonal,

I hate you because :

- You said something I didn't like
- You didn't come to my party
- You borrowed my jacket and ruined it

The Writer's Responsibility (5/5)

- Separate the thinking process from the writing process
- If the writer doesn't structure document, the reader will
- Two problems
  - Higher level of dis-satisfaction and difficulty for the reader
  - Higher chances of mis-interpretations

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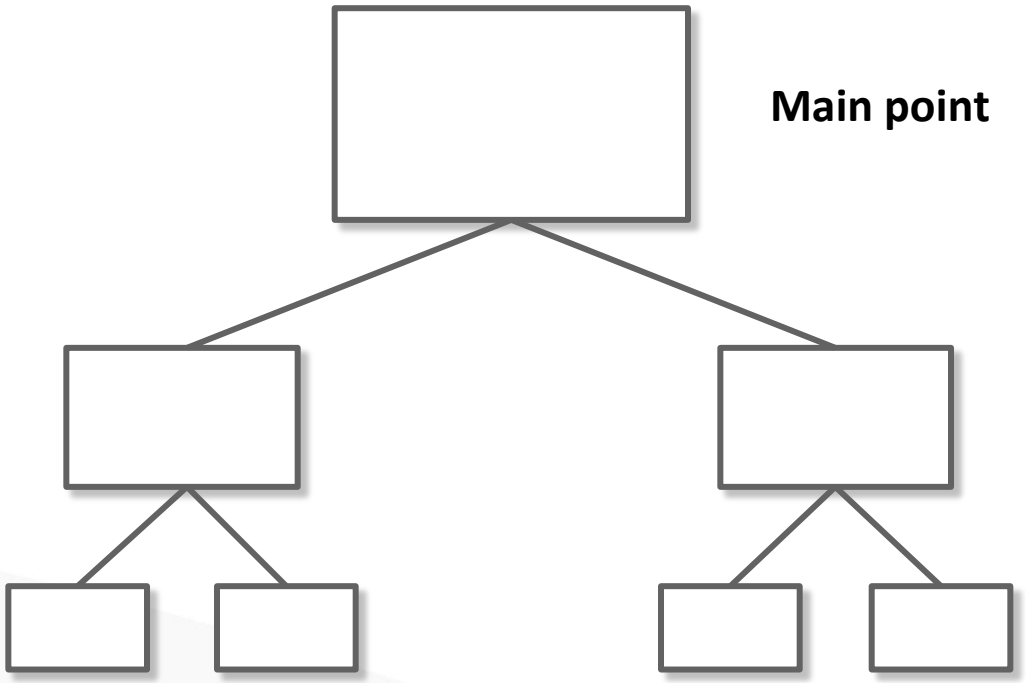
The Pyramid Principle (1/6)

The structure of all effective communication is a pyramid of logically related ideas



Main point

1st Level Support Points

2nd Level Support Points

Exercise – Ideas about London for a Vacation (2/6)

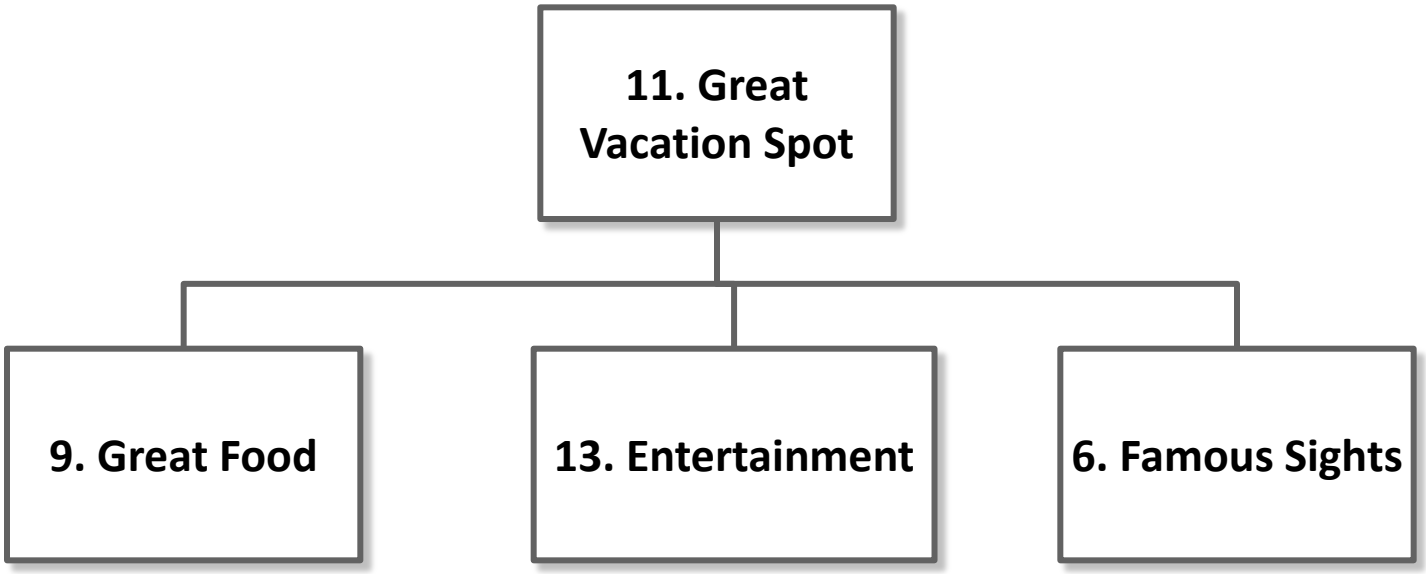
1. Broadway
2. Large variety of cuisines
3. Buckingham Palace
4. Famous Sights
5. Lots of restaurants
6. Night Life
7. Great Food
8. Big Ben
9. Great Vacation Spot
10. London Eye
11. Entertainment
12. Give children rides

Task

Find relations between the points and structure them.

Which is the highest level point?

Exercise – London is a Great Vacation Spot (3/6)



2. Variety of cuisines
7. Lots of restaurants

1. Broadway
11. Theatre
13. Night Life

1. Buckingham Palace
5. Madam Tussads
11. London Eye

The Pyramid Principle (4/6)

- Why Pyramid ?
  - The mind automatically sorts information into pyramids in order to comprehend
  - Writer should pre-sort the information into pyramids
    - Less effort for the reader
    - Less ambiguity
- Concepts
  - Every piece of written communication should have a main message
  - Pyramid is created ‘bottom-up’ but communicated ‘top down’
    - Sort out the ‘so whats’ to create the pyramid
    - Communicate top down

Three Rules (5/6)

Summary

- Ideas at any level must be summaries of ideas below them, because they derive from them

Logical Levels

- Ideas at any particular level must be logically ‘at the same level’

Logical Order

- Ideas at any level must be in a clearly visible logical order of priority

Pyramid Principle (6/6)

Dear Rob,

James called to say he can't make the meeting at 3 pm. Harry says he dosent mind making it later,or even tomorrow, but not before 10:30, and Don Clifford's secretary says that Clifford won't return from Frankfurt until tomorrow, late. The conference room is booked tomorrow , but free on Thursday . Thursday, 11:00 looks to be a good time. Is that OK for you?

Dear Rob,

Can we reschedule today's meeting to Thursday at 11:00 ? This would be more convenient for James and Harry, and would also permit Clifford to attend

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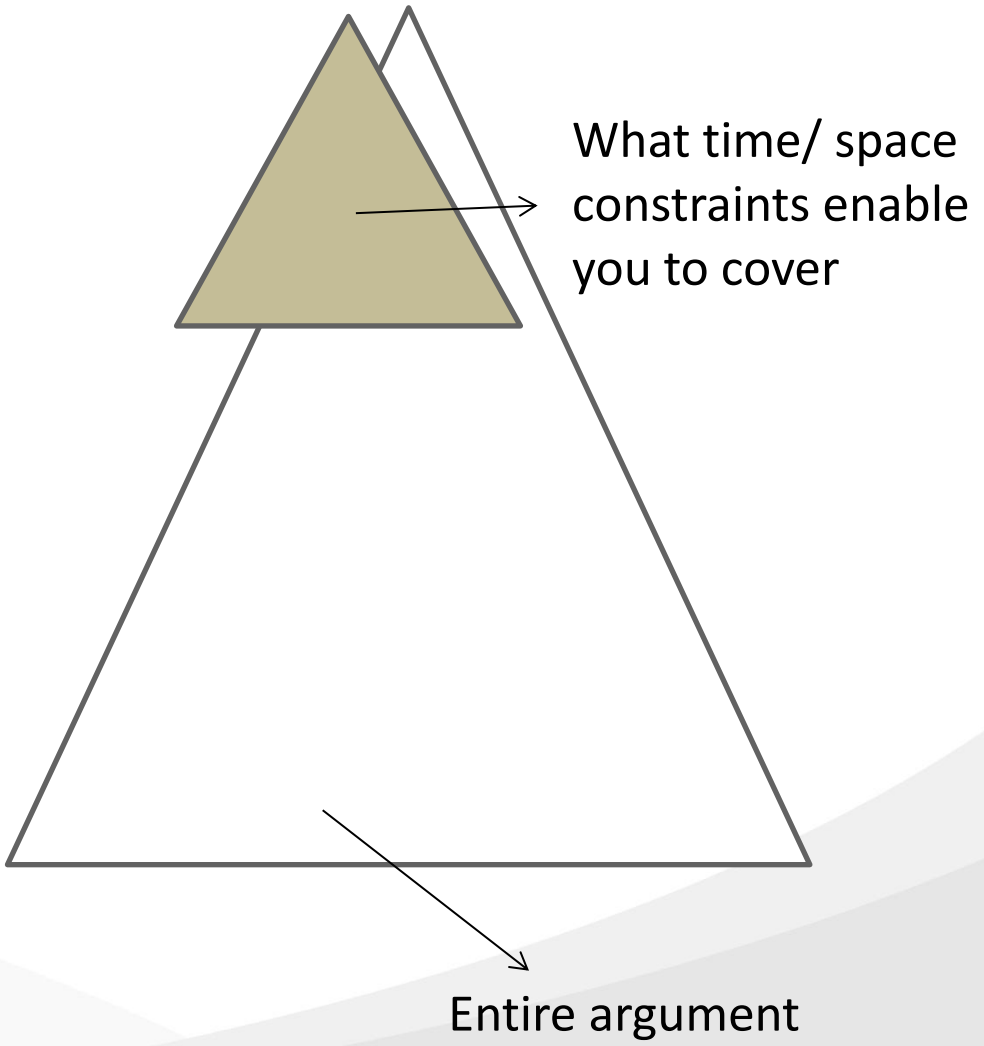
Why Top Down Communication

- Creates a question –answer dialogue with the reader
  - Each level raises a question which is answered by the level below
- Enables us to create maximum impact in minimum time and space
  - Key to establishing executive presence



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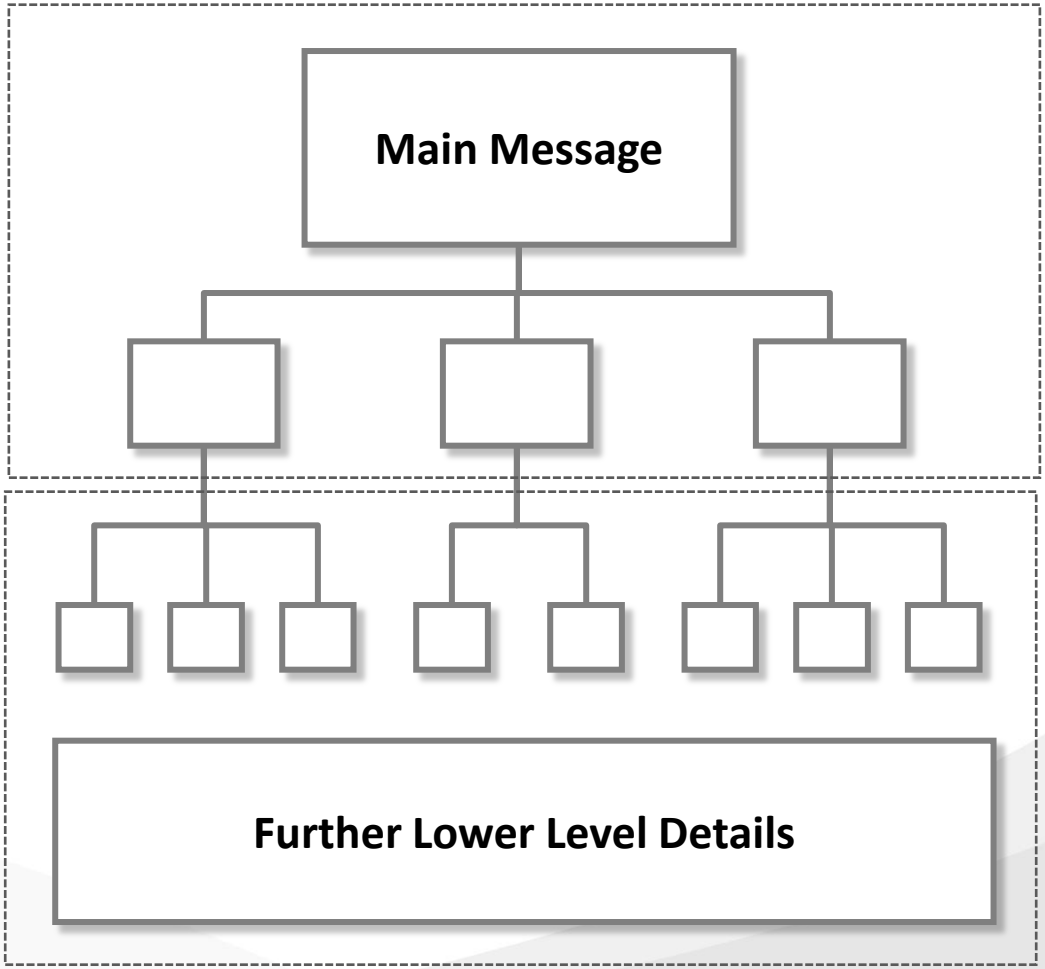
Navigating the Pyramid (1/3)

- The pyramid can be navigated in different ways
- Two decisions to be taken
  - How much of the pyramid?
  - Top down vs. Bottom up



Factors determining choice of approach (2/3)

- Audience
  - Senior vs. junior
  - Positive or Neutral vs. Negative or Hostile
- Type of Message
  - Positive vs. Negative
- Time/Space Constraints
- Objective
  - Impact Vs. Buy-in

Which approach would you use? (3/3)

- Very senior audience but a negative or controversial message
- Negative feedback to a junior colleague
- Senior audience with whom you want to create an impact
- Meeting where you want to build consensus and get buy in from a new user group
- News regarding manpower reduction in the company

You have to use your judgement when various factors conflict, which they often do !

THANK YOU