

E&P Business Writing

Communication is a vital leadership skill. Written communications play an important role in business and throughout their careers, E&P managers will have to produce reports, proposals, papers to gain approval for routine planning, new initiatives, or major change. Listed below are some guidelines to help you get the response you want from busy readers.

“Clarity of writing usually follows clarity of thought”

(The Economist Style Guide)

Planning

Define your objective – what do you want the reader to do? Is it for information, discussion or decision? Approve a development project, farm-in negotiation, or agree an exploration strategy?

Understand your audience:

- Reader context – who are they, what matters to them, what do they know, what else are they looking at?
- Reader questions – what is this for, why should I care, what am I being asked to do, what do I need to know, what’s the benefit?
- Reader response – how will they respond - agree, disagree, not understand, ignore?

Executive Summary

Start with your exec summary – distil your message into (ideally) one page of max 6-10 points.

For an E&P business proposal this might include:

Economics – Resource - Strategic Fit – Market Assessment – HSE – Costs & Risks – Contract & Fiscal Terms – Benefits

End (or even start) with a call to action, leaving no doubt as to what you expect the reader to do.

Make it clear what you want the reader to do

Writing

Get the right structure:

Make sure a logical flow leads the reader to the objective eg

- Problem/opportunity
- Solution/idea being proposed
- Risks/challenges to overcome
- Benefits and future success
- Close and call to action

Let the narrative flow through the headlines so even if readers skim over the main text, they still get the message.

A picture paints a 1,000 words - use graphics and signposting where possible.

Use the right language and tone of voice:

Clarity and brevity are vital; elegant, flowing prose is not.

Paraphrasing George Orwell’s rules for good English:

- Short words rather than long ones – *“Use new drilling method”*, not *“Utilise innovative approach to hydrocarbon extraction”*
- Active voice rather than passive – *“The first well will provide critical data”*, not *“Critical data will be provided as a result of drilling the first well”*
- If you can cut a word out, always cut
- Keep sentences short
- Avoid foreign words, jargon or acronyms unless you know they are familiar to the reader (so *LNG & CAPEX* but probably not *STOOIP* or *SCADA*). As a rule, use the full phrase at first.

Editing

Be ready to spend as much time editing as you do writing; the final version may look nothing like your first draft

- Does every sentence help the reader to a decision? Cut any that do not
- Do any points leave the reader confused, uncertain or asking for more information? If so, clarify
- Do any sections invite unnecessary challenge or disagreement? Strengthen your case
- Does the narrative flow logically and support the key message? Re-order and cut if not

Corporate branding: ensure document is “on-brand” and follows the company style guide.

Proofreading

Get someone else to proof-read if you can. If not, try to wait a few hours after editing before proofreading

Basic errors look sloppy and give a bad impression; at worst, they confuse the reader and damage your arguments. **Look out for:**

- Typo’s – spelling & grammar mistakes, numbers that don’t add up
- Layout – word, line and paragraph breaks
- Fonts & typefaces – consistent sizes, bold, italics
- Images & Graphics – captions, references

Final Tip: consider the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease Test, and aim for a score of well over 50 - visit www.readability-score.com.

Courses

- 3 Day MBA in Oil & Gas
- Contracts & Negotiations
- Risk Management in Oil & Gas
-and others

Other WBC Guides:

- Petroleum Economics
- Unconventionals
- Exploration Management
- Reserves

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