



Impactful structure in communications - three easy ways to order your content

Andy Bounds

Structure is important.

If your communication has a clear one, it might work.

If it hasn't, it definitely won't. Other people must be able to follow your structure. But, if you communicate your content in the same order that you developed it, you're probably taking them on a journey they didn't need to go on – yours.

Instead, here are three ways to create an easy-to-follow structure:

#1: The 5Ps (ideal for making a persuasive, logical argument)

I like this one. It's easy to remember (everything begins in P!); and helps you create a compelling story:

- Position – 'our world is currently like X'
- Problems – 'and X is causing us problems, because of Y, which means Bad Thing Z'
- Possibilities – 'given this, we only have three viable options, which are...'
- Propose – 'I recommend we do the second option, because ...'
- Please (Call To Action) – 'therefore, please can you...'

#2: "Why Vision Act?" (great for leaders communicating to their teams)

This one starts with the leader creating the need for change. She then gives clarity and direction by focusing on the (long-term) desired future. The final step is to close with the (short term) actions necessary to achieve it:

- Why – why change is needed
- Vision – the long-term future vision is for us to look like...

- Act – therefore, the next steps are that we should start X, stop Y and continue Z

#3: Walloping (can be very impactful when presenting to senior teams)

Most senior teams I've spoken to don't rate the presentations they see from their reports. They're too long, un-structured and without a clear Call To Action.

What a waste... both of the Execs' time and all those lost opportunities for the presenters. This Walloping Structure below is quite polarising – it certainly isn't appropriate in all cases. But, when it is, it's very impactful. And it's a great way of getting yourself heard if you're delivering a short presentation in the middle of a full-day board meeting:

- Wallop - hit them with a big problem - 'did you know, we're needlessly wasting £4million every month'
- Down - make the wallop worse, to build the pain - 'that equates to nearly £50million a year. Every year. A couple of years from now, this is going to be around the £100million mark'
- Up - bring them back up by explaining your proposal, and the impact it will bring - 'we have an opportunity to stop this. It's ...'
- Please - as with the previous two structures, finish with a Call To Action. This will be they endorse your proposal, plus maybe 1-2 other actions you also want them to take

These three structures work well, though your best option depends on the situation of course. But, whichever one you choose, always create content by starting with the structure, and then adding the

flesh later. It's easier for you. It's easier for the recipient. And, when it's easier for you both, it's much more likely to work.

Action Point

Review your diary. Which imminent communications would benefit from a good structure? Then, identify which of the above three - or another - technique will help you create something of value for your recipients.

© Copyright, Andy Bounds

About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success. Marketing legend Drayton Bird said Andy had taught him '... more about effective communicating than a lady who'd taught two American Presidents'.

Are you following me on [twitter](#)?

To receive my weekly tips on how to communicate more effectively, click: <http://www.andybounds.com/advice/tips2/>

Short of time? Here are my Quick Wins: <http://www.andybounds.com/advice/quick-wins/>

Co-ordinates

E-mail: andy@andybounds.com

Web: www.andybounds.com/tips



Important Notice

© Copyright 2015, Bizezia Limited, All Rights Reserved

This article appeared in Better Business Focus, published by Bizezia Limited ("the publisher"). It is protected by copyright law and reproduction in whole or in part without the publisher's written permission is strictly prohibited. The publisher may be contacted at info@bizezia.com (+44 (0)1444 884220).

The article is published without responsibility by the publisher or any contributing author for any loss howsoever occurring as a consequence of any action which you take, or action which you choose not to take, as a result of this article or any view expressed herein.

Whilst it is believed that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publication, it is not a substitute for obtaining specific professional advice and no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to its accuracy or completeness. Any hyperlinks in the article were correct at the time this article was published but may have changed since then. Likewise, later technology may supersede any which are specified in the article.

The information is relevant primarily within the United Kingdom but may have application in other locations.

These disclaimers and exclusions are governed by and construed in accordance with English Law.
Publication issued on 1 May 2014