

Business Case Executive Summary

The executive summary demands a whole different approach to writing than the rest of the proposal, one that balances efficient delivery of key information with a persuasive, well-substantiated pitch. Above all, the executive summary must demonstrate a clear understanding of the potential client's needs. Below are a few key points to keep in mind.

When you are writing your executive summary, you should keep your intended audience in mind at all times and write it for them. If your audience includes your boss or Chief Executive think: *how much do they already know, and how much do you need to explain?* The language you use needs to be fairly formal, whether or not the summary is intended for publication. It usually has three sections: introduction, main body and conclusion.

The **introduction** explains what the paper is about, including what action needs to be taken as a result. It doesn't need to be more than one or two sentences. For an executive summary of a published paper, it is not unusual for the first paragraph to be more attention grabbing.

For example, from a recently-published report about green energy and the Internet:

For the estimated 2.5 billion people around the world who are connected to the Internet, it is impossible to imagine life without it.

The Internet has rewoven the fabric of our daily lives – how we communicate with each other, work and entertain ourselves – and become a foundation of the global economy.

[Source: Greenpeace, Clicking Clean].

This example still sets the scene: the importance of the Internet, but the idea here is to keep people reading, not just provide information. Again, it's all about your audience and what they need or want.

The **main body of the text** outlines the key findings and/or recommendations from the report or paper, which this is the summary. Finally, you need a **conclusion**, which outlines the take-home messages or action needed from the person reading the report. Bullet points are a useful form to highlight the key points, and this is where your three to five messages come in.

Below are a few sample sections of an executive summary:

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section should provide general information on the issues surrounding the business problem and the proposed project or initiative created to address it. Usually, this section is completed last after all other sections of the business case have been written.

1.1. Issue

This section should briefly describe the business problem that the team will address. This section should not describe how the problem will be addressed, only what is the problem.

1.2. Unique Solution/Anticipated Outcomes

Once you have established the issues that need to be resolved, you have to now convince the reader that you have come up with a unique solution to the big problem.

1.3. Market Potential

Elaborate on the big problem by providing stats for your industry. How much is spent annually on similar products or services and how fast is it growing.

1.4. Recommendation

This section summarizes the approach for how the project will address the business problem. This section should also describe how desirable results will be achieved by moving forward with the project.

1.5. Justification

This section justifies why the recommended project should be implemented and why it was selected over other alternatives. Where applicable, quantitative support should be provided and the impact of not implementing the project should also be stated.

A few things to remember:

1. There is a finite amount of space. Make sure to make every word count.
2. You can add sections as necessary, but should always include the problem, solutions, and recommendations.
3. Make sure that you are responding to the questions the case is asking.
4. Use headings to express information, instead of the standard- Introduction, Body, Conclusion, Financials, etc. Remember that your audience is limited on time.
5. Be consistent with your design.
6. Use bullet points, headings, and graphs where necessary.

Sample Executive Summary With Explanation

The executive summary begins by stating the purpose of the report.

Moreno presents the points in the executive summary in the same order as they appear in the report, using subheadings that summarize the content of the main sections of the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes Electrovision's travel and entertainment (T&E) costs and presents recommendations for reducing those costs.

Travel and Entertainment Costs Are Too High

Travel and entertainment is a large and growing expense category for Electrovision. The company spends over \$16 million per year on business travel, and these costs have been increasing by 12 percent annually. Company employees make roughly 3,390 trips each year at an average cost per trip of \$4,720. Airfares are the biggest expense, followed by hotels, meals, and rental cars.

The nature of Electrovision's business does require extensive travel, but the company's costs are excessive: Our employees spend more than twice the national average on travel and entertainment. Although the location of the company's facilities may partly explain this discrepancy, the main reason for our high costs is a management style that gives employees little incentive to economize.

Cuts Are Essential

Electrovision management now recognizes the need to gain more control over this element of costs. The company is currently entering a period of declining profits, prompting management to look for every opportunity to reduce spending. At the same time, rising airfares and hotel rates are making T&E expenses more significant.

Electrovision Can Save \$6 Million per Year

Fortunately, Electrovision has a number of excellent opportunities for reducing T&E costs. Savings of up to \$6 million per year should be achievable, judging by the experience of other companies. A sensible travel-management program can save companies as much as 35 percent a year (Gilligan 39-40), and we should be able to save even more, since we purchase many more business-class tickets than the average. Four steps will help us cut costs:

1. Hire a director of travel and entertainment to assume overall responsibility for T&E spending, policies, and technologies, including the hiring and management of a national travel agency.
2. Educate employees on the need for cost containment, both in avoiding unnecessary travel and reducing costs when travel is necessary.
3. Negotiate preferential rates with travel providers.
4. Implement technological alternatives to travel, such as virtual meetings.

As necessary as these changes are, they will likely hurt morale, at least in the short term. Management will need to make a determined effort to explain the rationale for reduced spending. By exercising moderation in their own travel arrangements, Electrovision executives can set a good example and help other employees accept the changes. On the plus side, using travel alternatives such as web conferencing will reduce the travel burden on many employees and help them balance their business and personal lives.

Her audience is receptive, so the tone in the executive summary is forceful; a more neutral approach would be better for hostile or skeptical readers.

The executive summary uses the same font and paragraph treatment as the text of the report.