



Writing effective reports

Course benefits

Report writing is an essential skill for both the individual and the business. For the individual it is a career skill that can make a huge difference to how they are perceived within their field. For the business the ability to communicate clearly both internally and externally is a key indicator of likely success.

In this activity-based course, you gain the skills to quickly create effective business reports. Reader-focused, persuasive documents result in greater business efficiency, increased profitability and a higher level of employee and customer satisfaction.

This course is structured so that your own templates can be integrated into the course flow and the course can be customised to your exact business needs.

You learn how to ...

- ▶ Plan your reports to target your readers and achieve your objectives.
- ▶ Produce convincing recommendation reports that are easy to read, understand and act upon.
- ▶ Use the pyramid structure of reports to appeal to differing groups of readers.
- ▶ Improve understanding of your documents by structuring information in a way that is helpful to your readers.
- ▶ Increase your confidence in delivering a successful report that enables the business to make a meaningful decision.
- ▶ Become a more powerful and persuasive report writer.

Duration

One day.

Who should attend?

Anyone who wants to improve their report writing skills. The course is appropriate for managers at all levels, professionals and employees who have to prepare reports on a regular basis.

Activity-based training

In this course you will carry out exercises focus on specific issues related to creating reports. This activity-based experience can be customised to include exercises to deal with reports from your own business. The course exercises include:

- ▶ Analysing and prioritising the audiences for your report.
- ▶ Selecting and implementing an idea generation technique.
- ▶ Developing criteria and explaining alternatives to form the recommendation section of a report.
- ▶ Developing a reader-focused structure for report information.
- ▶ Signalling with sentences to get your message across to the reader.
- ▶ Writing a great Executive Summary.
- ▶ Using checklists to focus your revision process.
- ▶ Writing a short report.

Included with the course are checklists and roadmaps to focus each stage of the process and a CD containing course exercise materials, checklists and roadmaps for use back in the workplace.

In addition a report template is included, incorporating best practice design and structure as taught in the course, and a substantial amount of document automation to facilitate the quicker production of reports.

Course outline

► **First-class business writing: the value to your business**

Adding value to the public image of your business
Making your business more effective
Increasing profitability

► **Focusing on your readers and your objectives**

Focusing on your reader, not yourself
Understanding your readers:
 Communication styles
 Experience
 Purpose
 The customer's knowledge and expectations
 Politics and sensitivities
Determining the report objective

► **The report writing process**

Managing the process
Planning
Pre-writing
 Collecting and organising information
 Preparing your structure: modelling, brainstorming, outliner tools
 Testing your structure
Drafting
Revising

► **The report template**

Front matter
 Objectives
 Scope of work
 Statement of problem or remit
Executive Summary
Report body
Conclusions
Recommendations
Back matter

► **Writing the report**

The Report Paradox:
 Readers don't take short reports seriously
 Readers don't want to read long reports
 How to overcome the Report Paradox
Building a pyramid of information
Stating the problem
Reader-focused structure and style
 Dovetailing your information with your reader's requirements
 Adopting a style that works for your readers
Effective conclusions
Recommending a solution
 Developing criteria
 Explaining alternatives
How to overcome writer's block
Back matter
 Annexes, Appendixes, and Appendices
 Glossary of Terms

► **Creating a great Executive Summary**

Identifying the levels of interest of your readers
Aligning your reader's levels of interest with your Executive Summary
Good and bad Executive Summaries
Creating a great Executive Summary

► **Writing persuasively**

The structure of persuasion
How decisions are made
 How long does a decision take?
 Familiarity and recognition
 Single-issue decision making
 Return on investment
Establishing credibility
 Addressing potential reader objections
 Using data from multiple credible sources
 Your professional qualifications
 Aligning your message with the beliefs of the business
Accuracy
Saying what you mean

► **Avoiding common pitfalls**

Reviewing your writing
 Critical elements in grammar and punctuation
 ...and why they are critical
 Indispensable editing techniques
 Spelling and typographical errors
 Checking and amending your document
 Proofreading tips
 Fused and fragmentary sentences
 Homophone and homonyms
 Commonly misused words and clichés
Time management
 Avoiding deadline doom