

Tips on writing an great Executive Summary

An executive summary has basically nothing to do with product presentation, and everything to do with a persuasive sales pitch. It is far more than an abstract which merely presents the rest of the document—it's your unique opportunity to convince the reader that your solution provides the best value proposition: the best benefit at the lowest cost.

The more technical your proposal, the more important the executive summary is likely to be. Unlike the abstract, the executive summary steers clear of technicalities to instead concentrate on substantiating the benefits for the customer.

How to Write an Executive Summary

Executive Summary First

By writing your executive summary first, you ensure that the rest of your proposal will be aligned with the persuasive message you want to deliver.

Executive Summary Content

Your executive summary should contain your value proposition, which should be grasped right away by your reader.

It is highly recommended that you read the suggestions below in order to properly and successfully use the executive summary template and sample.

1. Identify **3 main benefits**—no more, no less—that your executive summary will cover, putting them in descending order of importance. This is the way they will appear in your document body, since you want to grab the reader's attention as early as possible.
2. For each benefit, write a simple, declarative, and persuasive sentence by applying the **S.P.A.** rule for your value proposition:
 - a. **State** your benefit by acknowledging your customers' needs—this grabs their attention.
 - b. **Prove** your statement, by giving your customers several references (examples of past performance, clients, case studies, white papers, and so on).
 - c. **Apply** your benefit to your customers, by unveiling the real value that not only the customer but also the entire organization can get out of your offer. Use representation (numbers, facts, percentages, references, studies) instead of marketing puffery or commercial fluff.

You will build **credibility**, thus giving the confidence to your customer to make the right decision.

3. Ask your customer for **action**. It's not the time or place to be shy. You're here to have your offer selected, so use action verbs in your value proposition to show the path of enlightenment to your customer. For instance, recommend your product or services, and give the information necessary to complete the action (who, what, when, where, how), such as how to purchase, or whom to contact at your company.
4. Write your executive summary for best readability meaning the lowest grade level possible. This way, you ensure that no barrier hampers your reader's full understanding of your point.
5. Correct, edit, and revise your executive summary—but only when you're finished writing it.
6. Since things sometimes get a little more complicated than you might expect, remember to consult a lawyer for further information before considering your executive summary as definitive.

Abstract vs. Executive Summary: The Differences

In most people's minds, if *abstract* and *executive summary* do not usually consist of the same written material, the difference between the two terms is at least the source of uncertainty and confusion.

To understand the exact differences between abstract and executive summary, and thus to stand out from your competitors, read the article [Abstract vs Executive Summary](#).

Executive Summary, Tips, Dos and Don'ts

Here are some tips on how to write your executive summary—and how not to write it.

Dos and Don'ts of Executive Summaries:

- Be persuasive (follow the executive summary format: state, prove, and apply).
- Don't be demonstrative (don't focus on features).
- Write your executive summary with active-voice sentences.
- Use strong, enthusiastic, and proactive language.

- Convert passive-voice sentences to active voice as much as possible.
- Write simple, short sentences intended for reading by an executive.
- Keep your executive summary short (1 page for every 20 to 50 pages).
- Write your executive summary using an executive summary template.
- Don't provide unnecessary technical details. Remember, an executive should be able to read it.
- Avoid excessive jargon, and write the definition first.
- Correct spelling, punctuation, style, and grammar errors.
- Write primarily for your customer, not for yourself (use the name of your customer's organization more often than yours—and don't start with a description of your organization).
- Write primarily about your customer (the benefits), not about you or your product (the features).

Your Executive Summary Template

1. **State** your 3 main benefits, thus acknowledging your customers' needs: this grabs their interest.
2. **Prove** your statement by giving your customer several references (examples of past performance, clients, case studies, white papers, and so on).
3. **Apply** your benefits to your customer by unveiling the real value that not only the customer but also the entire organization can get out of your offer. Use representation (numbers, facts, percentages, references, studies), not vague marketing copy.
4. Finally, call your reader to **action**, and give all the necessary information for action (who, what, when, where, how).

The executive summary presents your unique selling point (USP) in order to persuade your reader to buy into the recommended solution or services.

The proposed format ensures that your message is oriented towards your customer. Indeed, you are not proposing a mere solution: you are addressing your customers' needs.