Spring 2014 Educational Event

Executive Report Writing: Win Support for Your Next Project

Sofia Empel, IGP, CRM
WHY ARE YOU HERE TODAY?

To *WIN* over senior management and...

*PERSUADE* them to commit resources to your project

To *WIN* over senior management and...
...AND TO DO IT WELL
A good business case:

1. Presents a clear, concise, accurate argument
2. Builds foundation of facts (introduce)
3. States recommendations clearly (sell)
4. Persuades management to act (close)
   - Achieves its purpose—resources (financial, human, etc.)
BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE

7 Steps to Winning Support

1. State the problem
2. Plan your analysis
3. Analyze the situation
4. Identify costs and benefits
5. Recommend a solution
6. Identify risks if solution not adopted
7. Write the report
Practice 1

A business case does not have to be written down.

TRUE or FALSE?
The need for a business case comes about for which reasons:

a) Opportunity to increase benefits or cut costs
b) Mandatory change, such as compliance
c) Correcting something
d) Only a and b
e) All of the above
1. STATE THE PROBLEM

What is a problem statement?

• Clear, concise description of the issue that needs to be solved
  – Focuses the team on the issue at the beginning
  – Keeps the team on track during the project
  – Validates project deliverables as an outcome that solves the issue
I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

--Rudyard Kipling, “The Elephant’s Child”
1. STATE THE PROBLEM

High Level Questions to Ask

• Who does the issue affect?
• What are the boundaries of the issue?
• When does this issue occur? When does it need to be fixed?
• Where is the issue occurring?
• Why is it important to fix the problem?
A problem well stated is half solved.

--Wally Davis, scientist, manager, director
A good problem statement:

1. Provides a clear, concise description of the issue
2. Focuses everyone on the issue before, during, and after the project
2. PLAN THE ANALYSIS

Establish Relationships

- Current users
- Potential users
- Executives
- IT
- Colleagues
- Vendors
2. PLAN THE ANALYSIS

Consider Quantitative Data

- Numerical data that focuses on numbers and frequencies
  - Criteria for judging quality
    - Validity
    - Reliability
    - Objectivity

Reliability  

Validity
2. PLAN THE ANALYSIS

Consider Qualitative Data

- Non-numerical data that describes meaning and experiences
  - Criteria for judging quality
    - Credibility
    - Transferability
    - Dependability
    - Confirmability
To establish a good information management business case, stakeholder opinions are often more important than numerical data.

TRUE or FALSE?
2. PLAN THE ANALYSIS

Plan Methods of Data Collection

- Interviews
- Observation
- Questionnaires
- Work samples
- Focus groups
- Tests
- Other studies
- Literature review
Practice 4

All of the following sources of data may be used to support your business case except:

a) Financial sources outside the company
b) Common sense
c) Case studies from similar projects
d) Historical data
e) Industry analysis and forecasts
A good plan:

1. Anticipates analysis before you start
2. Determines which methods are appropriate to produce meaningful data
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Focus Your Analysis

- Where are we now?
  - Problem

- Where do we want to be in the future?
  - Conclusions

- How do we get there?
  - Recommendations
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Systems Analysis

• Describes the “big picture”
  – Doesn’t focus on specifics, but on how the problem fits into the wider organization

• Provides a general analytical framework

• Identifies relationships between the problem and its outcomes
  – Doesn’t explore the impact of relationships
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Gap Analysis

Current State

GAP

Target State
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Principles Maturity Model

Allows an organization to:

• Identify gaps
• Assess the risk(s) based on biggest gaps
• Determine need for additional analysis
• Develop priorities
In an information management gap analysis, the most common types of gaps include:

a) financial resources
b) usage, performance
c) processes, usage, performance
d) processes, financial resources
e) performance, skills
f) skills, financial resources
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Needs Assessment

- Perform a gap analysis
- Describe “hoped-for” improvements
- Identify needs in non-specific terms
- Establish reasons for change and whether change is warranted
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Principles IG Assessment

Allows an organization to:

• Measure itself against the Principles
• Use benchmarks, specifically 100 IG attributes
• Apply a comprehensive and systematic method of analysis
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Standards/Best Practices Analysis

• RIM-specific sources of information
  – ARMA International, Standards and Best Practices web page (www.arma.org)
  • By Virginia Jones and updated by Mary Margaret Fletcher
A needs assessment provides management with which of the following:

a) Final solution to fix the problem
b) Blurry vision of what future users want
c) Desirable steps to achieve solution
d) Differences between current and target state
e) Similarities between current and target state
3. ANALYZE THE SITUATION

Feasibility Study

• Perform a needs assessment
• Identify two or more alternative solutions
  – Brainstorming
• Analyze the alternatives in depth
• Recommend a solution from the alternatives
The final goal of a feasibility study is to provide management with which of the following:

a) functional requirements
b) business requirements
c) user requirements
d) desirable steps to achieve solution
e) list of alternatives
Practice 8

- Systems Analysis
- Gap Analysis
- Needs Assessment
- Feasibility Study
- Maturity Model

Gap analysis
“blurry vision”
“big picture”
identifies differences
desirable next steps
When executives refer to a financial impact analysis, they are usually referring to:

- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Cost-benefit analysis
Typically senior executives care about all of the following except:

A. Financial impact
B. Productivity, efficiency, effectiveness
C. Competition
D. Operational details
E. Security
4. IDENTIFY COSTS & BENEFITS

Return on Investment (ROI)

ROI (%) = \frac{\text{benefits} - \text{costs} \times 100}{\text{costs}}
4. IDENTIFY COSTS & BENEFITS

ROI Benefits

• Intangible
  – Increased productivity
  – Reduced time

• Tangible
  – Cost savings
    • e-discovery, information retrieval, storage
  – Cost avoidance
    • Compliance failure, old technology maintenance
4. IDENTIFY COSTS & BENEFITS

ROI Costs

• Tangible
  – Technology
  – Labor
  – Training

• Intangible
  – Lost RIM productivity during implementation
  – Failure or faulty implementation
  – Loss of investment
Executives expect an ROI analysis, even though it may not tell the whole story.

TRUE or FALSE?
4. IDENTIFY COSTS & BENEFITS

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Steps include:
- Identify (1) costs and (2) benefits
- Assign monetary values to all variables
- Add all costs together
- Add all benefits together
- Compare costs and benefits
- Make recommendations based on comparison
4. IDENTIFY COSTS & BENEFITS

Benefits Realization Study

The steps are as follows:

– Identify expected RIM benefits of solution (before)
– Take a baseline measurement of the current state of RIM benefits for existing situation (before)
– Measure the benefits at intervals (after)
– Address any shortcomings (after)
– Report the results periodically (before and after)
5. IDENTIFY THE RISKS

Risk Analysis

• What risks should management be aware of before committing resources to a solution?
  – Financial risks
  – Technical risks
  – Operational risks
A risk can be either negative or positive.

Practice 11

TRUE or FALSE?
A good analysis:

1. Tailors each individual analysis to the problem
2. Analyzes data so the findings are clear, credible, and address the relevant issues
6. RECOMMEND A SOLUTION

Evaluate the Alternatives

• Select the best option based on your analysis
  – Don’t be vague
  – Avoid “foot in two camps” compromise
  – Explain your decision based on the evidence
6. RECOMMEND A SOLUTION

Decision-making Advice

In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.

--Theodore Roosevelt
7. WRITE THE REPORT

What’s Next?

• Decide how to present the data
  – Narrative
  – Graphs
  – Charts
  – Tables
7. WRITE THE REPORT

Write the Report

Title page
Contents
Executive summary
I. INTRODUCTION*
II. ANALYSIS*
   A. Findings*
   B. Conclusions*
   C. Recommendations
References
Appendix
What is the Purpose of Each Section of a Report?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title page</td>
<td>Includes title; author; name; address; recipient; date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>Lists sections and page numbers (more than 5 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>Stand-alone document to convince the reader to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>What is the purpose, background, methodology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings (main body)</td>
<td>What are the facts of the investigation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>What patterns did you discover?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>What actions do you propose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>What sources did you use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>What information supports your points?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A good business case report:

1. Clearly states the problem
2. Describes the methodology
3. Uses credible analyses
4. Presents findings in a well-organized, concise, and understandable narrative
5. Persuades management to action
Questions?

Sofia Empel, IGP, CRM
sofiaempel@infocentricstrategies.com