Building Better Decks

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This Presentation

I. Introduction
   • What’s a ‘deck’?
   • Kinds of decks

II. Key Questions

III. Structure and Content

IV. Do’s and Don’ts
I. INTRODUCTION
What’s a ‘Deck’?

• A medium for **concise** presentation of:
  ◦ A problem or issue
  ◦ Relevant facts
  ◦ Analysis of options
  ◦ Recommendations

• Can take printed form, or be presented as slides or in other electronic format (e.g., on computer/cellphone screen)

• Not just words – also images, graphs, videos
Kinds of Decks

a) **Presentation Deck**
   - Shorter; fewer words; more visuals (graphics, etc.)
   - Designed to be spoken to, not read from
   - ‘Roadmap’ for a verbal presentation or briefing

b) **Reading Deck**
   - An easy-to-read version of a memo or paper
   - Usually one theme or issue per page
   - Limited number of bullets, each making a self-contained point
   - Goal is clarity in laying out issues, options, recommendations – often for decision
II. KEY QUESTIONS
If a Reading Deck …

1) Who is the audience?
   ◦ Is it a very senior person, or your immediate boss?
   ◦ Are they a decision-maker?
   ◦ Did they ask for it, or is this your idea?
   ◦ Do they like to read, or not?
   ◦ How well do they know the issue?
If a Reading Deck …

2) What is the purpose?
   ◦ Immediate decision/action?
   ◦ Information?
   ◦ Update, as part of a continuing dialogue?

3) What is the issue?
   ◦ i.e., what is this deck all about?
If a Reading Deck …

4) What is the occasion?
   - Is it for overnight/weekend reading?
     - If so, does it need a cover note?
   - Or, is it for a small briefing session?
     - If so, who else will be there?
     - Will you be taking them through it, or will they have read it already?
     - How much time do you have?
If a Presentation Deck …

1) What is the audience?
   • Large-group presentation or small?
   • How many people?
   • What’s the room? What technology?

2) What’s your purpose? Are you trying to:
   • Inform?
   • Persuade?
   • Advise?

3) Who is the presenter – you or a more senior person?

4) How much time do you have?
III. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT
Whatever the deck …

- Be clear on the purpose, right at the beginning
- Have a clear, logical storyline
- Think about needs and perspective of your audience
- Make sure you have identified the issue(s) correctly
In a presentation deck ...

• Use bullets:
  ◦ To **focus** attention of audience on key themes, issues
  ◦ **Not** to convey content

• Aim at no more than 10-20 slides

• Use last slide for ‘key take-aways’
In a reading deck ... 

- Be sure to have:
  - Table of Contents
  - Executive Summary (one page)
- Break deck into sections or chapters
- Distinguish between ‘facts’ and ‘recommendations’
- Make sure recommendations fit on one page
In speaking to a deck …

- Don’t read it – speak to your audience!
- Look the audience in the eye – show you know what you’re talking about
- Don’t talk too fast; fewer words are better
- Speak with purpose – to make a point, not simply to convey information
IV. DO’S AND DON’TS
Do:

◦ Be clear about purpose
◦ Pay attention to needs/preferences of your audience
◦ Keep things simple:
  • Just enough words on each page
  • Keep deck itself as short as possible
◦ Have a ‘bottom line’
Don’t:

- Put too many words into a presentation deck
- Make the deck too long
- Try to say too much
- Crowd a reading deck with pictures
- Get too fancy with graphics or images
Bottom Line

- A deck is a **tool** – use it properly and it will do the job for you
- Use it the **wrong way** and you will confuse and frustrate your audience
- Remember: writing decks is an **essential skill** for policy people inside and outside government