

# Report structure that works for readers

*Your writer self is getting in the way of great reports!*

Shelly Davies 

writing joy & badassery

# How did you learn how to write reports?

- At university
- By copying previous examples

# When you sit down to write a report, what's on your mind?

- Audience
- Content
- Tone, voice, using the right words
- Sounding professional and credible
- Following the rules of good writing

# As a reader, when you pick up a report...

- What do you want to see?
- What do you want to know?

# Imagine what your reports would look like...

- If you wrote them like a reader
- If you put yourself in your readers' shoes

# Say hello to your WRITER SWITCH

- Your reader self leaves the room
- You revert to what you've been taught instead of what you know instinctively
- What you've been taught gets in the way of writing that works for readers
- Your writer self is getting in the way

# Imagine what your reports would look like...

- If you turned off your writer switch
- If you wrote like a reader
- If you put yourself in your readers' shoes

# Here's what the research tells us that readers want

*Check in with yourself as we go through to see if it feels true  
to you as a reader...*





# 98% of readers skimread

**To:** All employees  
**From:** Oliver Castle, President  
**Subject:** REORGANIZATION OF THE COMPANY

As you well know, our company has had considerable difficulty this year with the stalled economy, inflation, with the labor difficulties we've had at several plants, and with the development of our new products, especially in the home products system. This situation has forced the management team to assess our entire company and its operations with a view to finding a better way to organize it for improved profits and long-term efficiency.

Some of our departments have been growing and shrinking without much rhyme or reason, and before this occasion we had not made the effort to take a really hard look at what we were doing. Instead, we were patching things here and there with the aim of eliminating duplication when we could and pulling together groups that belong together functionally.

Now we are announcing a major reorganization to take effect on 18 January. We will announce the details on 12 January including dates when new managers will hold meetings with various employees to whom the information is pertinent. We will also, at that time, distribute a complete schedule setting forth who will be working for whom. In the meantime, we are announcing the following changes so the managers in charge of the affected divisions and departments can prepare for the reorganization.

Charles Jones will assume duties as Director of the new Office Products Division, leaving his present post of Manager of Office Equipment Supplies. Janice Moreland will move from Vice President for Research to Vice President for Operations. Jack Spotter will be the new head of the Research Department, moving from his position as Assistant Vice President for Operations. Maxwell Richardson is leaving his post as Assistant to the President to fill the position of Assistant Vice President of Operations. Marilyn Belt will become Director of the new Home Products Division, which used to have only project status. These changes in department managerial positions will take place on 5 January. Current Assistant Directors will remain in their positions at that time unless otherwise notified.

Then, on 12 January, changes at the level of Assistant Directors will go into effect. Jed Franklin and Marsha Zettonelli will become Assistant Director of Office Products and Assistant Director of Home Products, respectively, from their current positions as Assistant Director of Finance and Director of Budgeting. The staffs of these departments will be informed in an email notification from their managers about whether they will be moving with their current managers or staying in their current departments. In most cases there will be no change, as we are trying to keep as many departments intact, with experienced staff, as possible.

## Reorganization of the company

**To** All employees  
**From** Oliver Castle, President  
**Subject** REORGANIZATION OF THE COMPANY

**Background** As you well know, our company has had considerable difficulty this year with:

- the stalled economy
- inflation
- labour difficulties at several plants, and
- development of our new products, especially in the home-products systems.

The management team decided to assess our entire company and its operations and find a better way to organize it for improved profits and long-term efficiency.

**Management changes** I am announcing the reorganization of the company and establishment of a new Home Products Division. The new management positions are described in this table.

Name	Previous Position	New Management Position
Charles Jones	Manager, Office Equipment Supplies	Director, Office Products Division
Janice Moreland	V.P., Research	V.P., Operations
Jack Spotter	Assistant V.P., Operations	Director, Research
Maxwell Richardson	Assistant to the President	Assistant V.P., Operations
Marilyn Belt	Assistant to the Plant Manager	Director, Home Products Division (new division)
Jed Franklin	Assistant Director, Finance	Assistant Director, Office Products
Marsha Zettonelli	Director of Budgeting	Assistant Director, Home Products

**Email notification of staff changes** The managers of these departments will inform their staffs via email if they will be moving (with their manager) or staying in their current departments. In most cases there will be no change; we are trying to keep departments intact, if possible.

**Effective dates** The effective dates for these changes are listed below.

- **January 5:** Changes in Corporate Officers and Division Chiefs
- **January 12:** Changes in Assistant Directors positions and announcement of details of reorganization
- **January 18:** Reorganization takes effect



# 98% of readers skimread

- So use statement headings

# Readers come with questions

1. What is this ABOUT?
2. How is it RELEVANT to me?
3. What's the BOTTOM LINE?

We have to tell them those three things first. They are boxes we MUST tick so that a report works!

Here's what that looks like...



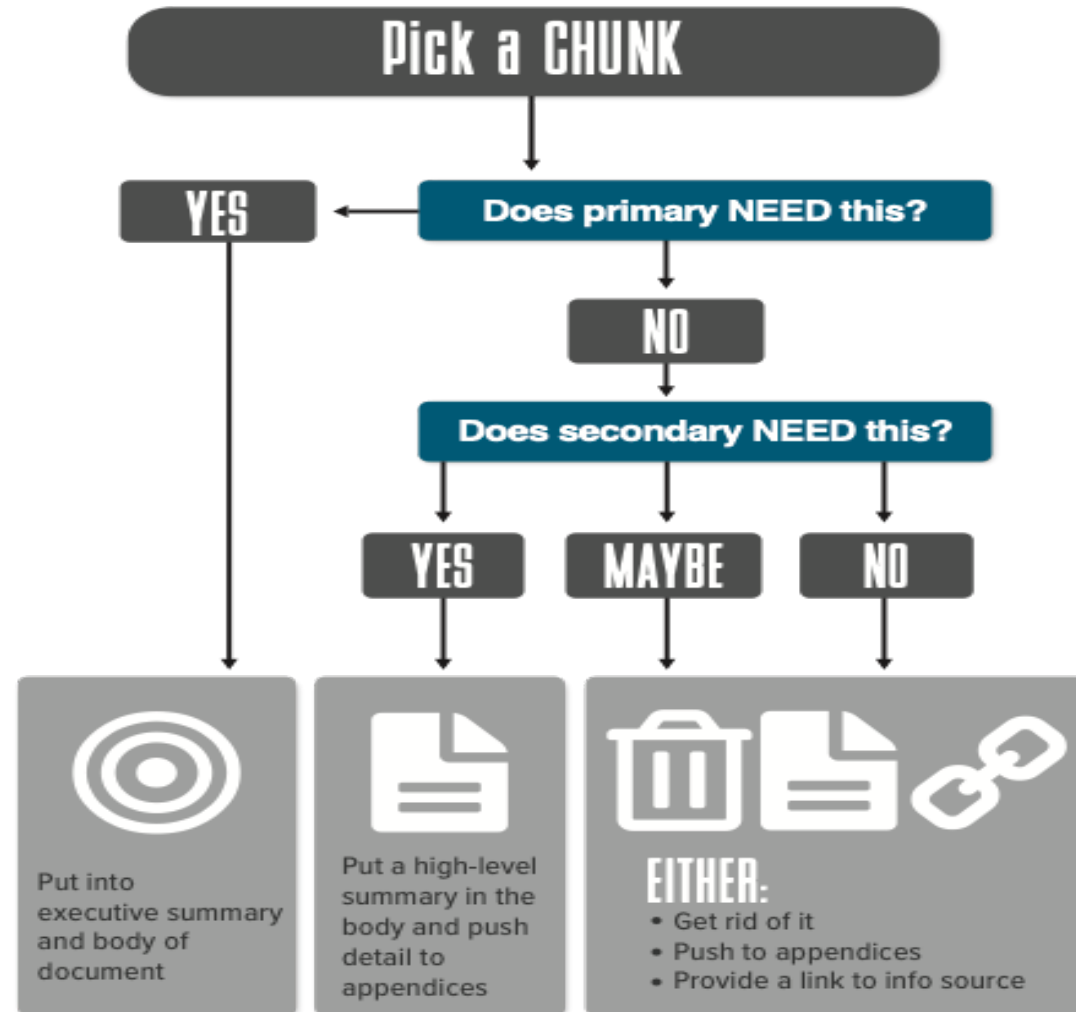
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# Then, what else do they want to know?

- Answer their questions in order
- Don't forget we can use the filter

# THE MAGIC FILTER

how to decide what goes where, and how much



# Write like a reader

- It takes courage
- It WORKS
- If you're worried about resistance, watch webinar number 4!



And remember - stay in touch!

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