

How to Write an Executive Summary

An executive summary is a brief summary of an important business document. While it's the first thing people will read, it's the last thing you should write. An executive summary should be well put together as it could be the first thing your potential investor reads and it needs to make a huge impression on them. Below, each step will be laid out and described to help you come up with a powerful summary of your document that will grab attention. Then, some tips will be mentioned to ensure you give the best summary in only a couple of paragraphs. An executive summary is usually no longer than one page so it's important to fit the key points in it and have more in-depth descriptions in the actual document.

Key Points

Those that write a business document that is more than four pages in length should plan to write an executive summary. The first step is reading over your document and taking note of any key points. If you're writing a business plan, you may decide the Technical, Marketing, Finance, and Human Resources sections of the document are the main components. The same segments can also be used in other business documents as well.

Introductory Statement

The next step is writing the summary for each main topic. You may include an introductory statement if you wish. Keeping with the business plan example, if your executive summary is going over the components mentioned above, the Technical section should address propriety processes or materials, the physical demands of your product, and how it'll be manufactured. Each section should only have a few sentences written about it.

Relevant Data

Any data related to your product, such as geographic, demographic, and psychographic information on your target audience goes in the Marketing section. The Finance segment is to show when your company would break even, if there have been any investments made so far, and how much money is needed to continue. Within the Human Resources part, you'll need to include who does what, what technical skills are required, and the availability your business will have with human resources. At the end of the summary, have one or two sentences to really grab the reader's attention and convince them for why you're a winning business.

Summary

The summary should also mention any conclusions or recommendations you have. Unlike popular books, you don't want to leave your reader guessing; instead, have everything clearly addressed in the summary. Once you've written the first draft, proofread it multiple times, being very thorough each time to find any mistakes or to make any necessary changes. When reading through it, there are certain questions that should be answered for the reader. Some of these questions include: how will the



customer benefit from your proposal, how is your approach less expensive or more efficient, what's different with your product compared to your competitions', and are you reputable?

Using a template

Today, the majority of word processing software has templates for different documents. There may be an executive summary template that can get you started. An executive summary should be no longer than one-tenth of your business document. While this may not give you much space to write a summary that covers everything, you want to cover as much as possible with the minimum amount of reading required. If you do any descriptions in the summary, make sure the most important information is first. Executives are busy, and the busier they are, the less likely they are to continue reading a long, drawn out summary.

Sell your writing

Keep in mind that your executive summary is trying to sell your idea that the business document further explains. Some people may not take the time to read your full-size document, and will base their decisions on your summary. Therefore, writing a compelling summary is crucial to gain investors. There are certain things to remember to include in your summary to truly grab the attention you're looking for.

First impressions count

The first sentence of the summary should convince the reader why your idea is so great. The longer it takes you to give important information in the summary, the less likely it is an investor is going to even get that far to see it. Include impressive names, like a company you're already working with, or an investor that founded a popular brand name. Although you want the best information in the first paragraph, keep it specific, not conceptual.

Identify your market

Investors want to see that you're going to solve a current or emerging problem, or there's a great opportunity out there for your product. Show how you're going to reduce costs while increasing revenues and speed. Clarify what it is you're offering, and to who will be your target audience. If you already have investors and customers, mention it here. If you don't, include when you believe you will. Make clear how you'll make a profit, and from who. Tell executives any impressive levels you want to meet in three to five years.

Also, take a few sentences and devote them to telling reader how much opportunity you have. Investors would rather put their money toward something where the market is growing and well-defined. Make it clear that you know there is going to be competition, but you have unique benefits and advantages. Although you may think you need more than a couple of sentences to explain this, you don't. The team you're working with will also leave an impression on any prospective investors. Quickly explain career achievements your team members have accomplished. Don't drop a name of a person you couldn't get a reference from.



Getting the Funds

Obviously, you want to convince investors that your product is going to make a lot of money in a short amount of time, and without a high cost to start. When asking for money, ask for the minimum amount needed to reach the next milestone. Once that has been accomplished, you can ask for more. If you believe you will come back and ask for more, mention how much in this summary.

Honesty is the best policy

Don't lie in your summary. While an entrepreneur may be excited about their project, keep enthusiasm separate from misrepresentation. Don't use complicated sentences, keep it simple. Ensure the whole summary is in a positive tone. Sell yourself to investors and convince them that what you can do is unique.

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