

You have 30 seconds to impress me



When addressing senior executives, every minute counts. Make your point succinctly—without tangents or long stories—and end decisively.

Consider these structural frameworks when organizing your material:

1. What/why/action steps. Summarize what you want to convey in the first 30 seconds. Pinpoint what you expect your listeners to say or do as a result of your talk—and the core message you want to plant in their heads.

Then explain why your central point matters to the audience. Emphasize why they should care, why the stakes are high and why timing is crucial.

Conclude with action steps. Seek commitment for your proposal and make it easy for others to say yes.

2. Good/better/best. Give listeners a three-prong choice. Start with a good option, offer a better alternative and end with what you deem the best one. Highlight the pros and cons of each choice, perhaps using bulleted lists as a visual aid.

3. Start with the end. State your conclusion in your first sentence. This captures an audience's attention and showcases your confidence. Then cite evidence that supports your conclusion.

Avoid the trap of opening with a history lesson (i.e., how we got here), data collection methods and analytical support. If you wait too long to draw your conclusion and ask for others' commitment, you may lose your chance. Busy executives might cut you off.

— Adapted from *Speaking Up*, Frederick Gilbert, PSI Publications.