Winning the 8-second challenge

THE POWER OF
BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)
IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

write for
impact

8 seconds

is the typical attention span, says Microsoft research*

**8 seconds =
27 words** or

**1 heading &
1 sentence** or

2 sentences
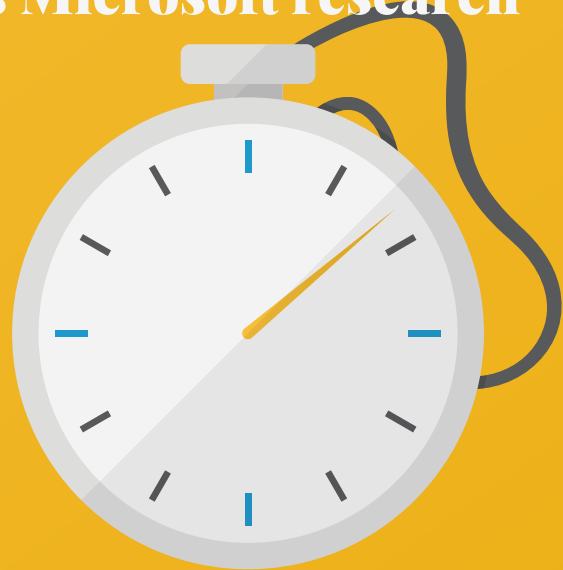
Use the BLUF framework to maximise impact in 8 seconds and engage readers.

Bottom Line Up Front

Origin of BLUF

The Bottom Line Up Front concept comes from military communication where quick and precise messages are crucial. On the battlefield, there's no time for waffle. No time for mistakes.

In the workplace, we battle information overload, competing demands, and diminishing attention spans.

BLUF helps your readers cut through the clutter and quickly find what they need to get things done.

Bottom Line Up Front

✓ **Clear writing reflects clear thinking. BLUF ensures you think about the bottom line before you write.**

✓ **Address these reader-centred questions in the first 27 words or fewer.**

What is this about?

Why should I care?

✓ **People who apply the BLUF framework are**

- ✓ More confident … they are clear and concise
- ✓ More persuasive … they use reader-centred language
- ✓ More productive … they save time for writer and reader.

3 steps for crafting a BLUF

Step 1

Identify the key message for your reader, and why they should care
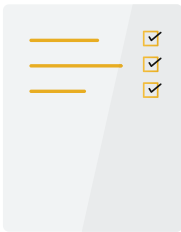
Step 2

Summarise this in fewer than 30 words. That's 1 or 2 sentences, or a heading and a lead sentence

Step 3

Place it at the start of your communication

✓ Include essential supporting information underneath the BLUF

✓ Use clear and concise language

✓ Read draft aloud and edit for accuracy, brevity, and persuasion

Bottom Line
Up Front

Apply to emails, team chat apps, presentations and longer documents

BLUF in emails

To: manager

cc/bcc:

Subject: Join us for a 90-minute briefing on new project tracking and reporting software – 8 April

Message: Hi project managers,

We are excited to invite you to this session on the introduction of our new project tracking and reporting software.

The digital team will host the session from 10am on 8 April in the level 4 conference room, displaying the new software's ability to boost project collaboration, transparency, and results.

Please use this link to accept by 31 March.

The new project software delivers significant benefits. You can streamline your workflow and improve collaboration with team members, stakeholders, and clients. With real-time data and automated reporting, you can make informed decisions and stay on top of project timelines, budgets, and milestones.

This session is a must-attend for all project managers who want to stay ahead of the curve and achieve better project outcomes.

We look forward to seeing you there.
Best regards,

BLUF in messaging channels

slack

> **!** Express complete reader-centred messages, not part messages, to maximise the productive benefits of these team chat apps

✖ hey, I have a question about the project scheduling

No context… what's the question and why are you asking?

✖ hey, question: will we complete the project's phase 1 before the end of Q3?

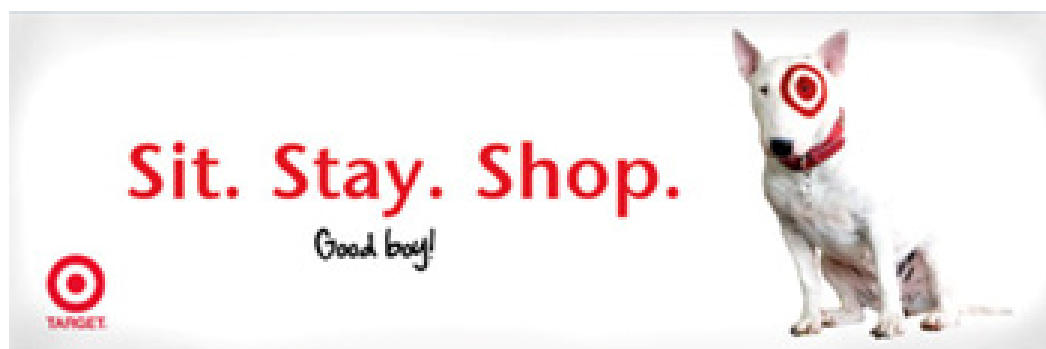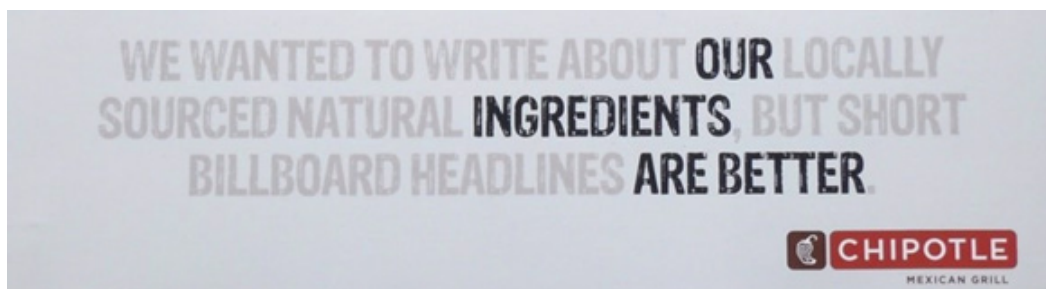Question asked but why are you asking?

✔ hey, question. will we complete the project's phase 1 before the end of Q3? Finance needs this info by this Friday for CFO reporting and next FY forecasts

This complete message saves time for sender and receiver.
Provides a clear WHAT and WHY.

BLUF in PowerPoint slides

Think of your slides as a series of billboards.

Read these billboards and notice how the writer cleverly captures the bottom line message for time-poor readers.

WE WANTED TO WRITE ABOUT **OUR** LOCALLY SOURCED NATURAL **INGREDIENTS**, BUT SHORT BILLBOARD HEADLINES **ARE BETTER.**

CHIPOTLE MEXICAN GRILL

YOU MADE IT EXIT 32

THE DETROITER TRAVEL CENTER

Sit. Stay. Shop.

Good boy!

TARGET

HELPING 23,000 BUYERS A YEAR INTO NEW HOMES

Edina Realty.
The edge you need

BLUF in PowerPoint slides

Each slide heading should summarise a conclusion, recommendation, or call to action.
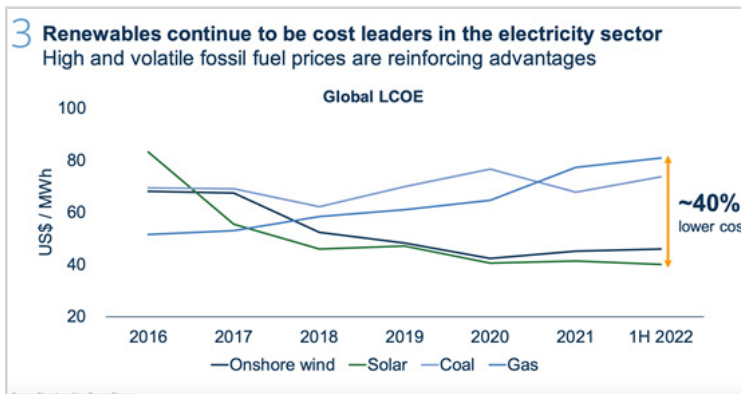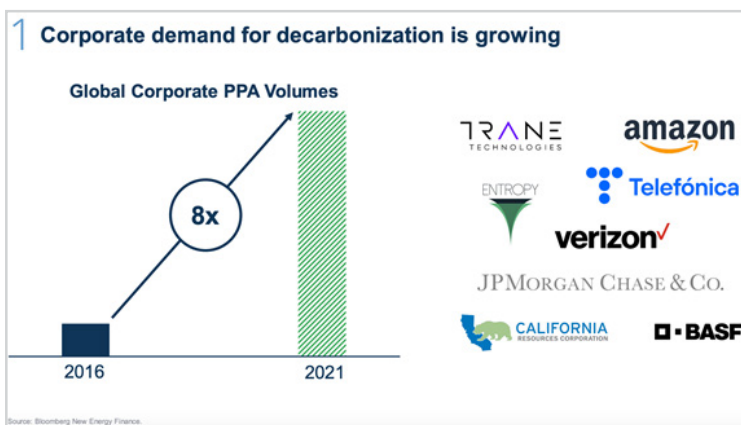
The reader gets the bottom line message in each heading.
Visuals quickly and persuasively reinforce the BLUF

BLUF in longer documents

> **!** The reader sees the bottom line message about digital transformation in the heading and first paragraph

Heading page

The Digital Transformation Continuum: Embracing continuous change for sustainable business success

Executive Summary

Digital transformation is not a one-time event, but a continuous process of innovation and adaptation. In our rapidly changing digital landscape, we must remain agile and competitive to remain successful.

This report explores the concept of the Digital Transformation Continuum, which emphasizes the importance of embracing digital transformation as a continual journey, rather than a one-time project.

The report discusses the importance of building a culture of innovation and adaptation, and highlights key success factors for achieving a sustainable digital transformation. It also presents case studies of successful digital transformations, showcasing best practices and lessons learned.

Overall, the report shows that digital transformation is not just about implementing new technologies or processes, but a mindset and culture our organization must embrace. Adopting a continuous approach to digital transformation enables businesses to remain competitive and position themselves for long-term success.

Wrapping up

Structure written and verbal communication with BLUF to ensure your main message is clear and quickly understood. It's a powerful technique to engage short attention spans or present complex content.

Contact Write For Impact if you or your team would like training or coaching to make BLUF a routine way of communicating.

hello@writeforimpact.com.au
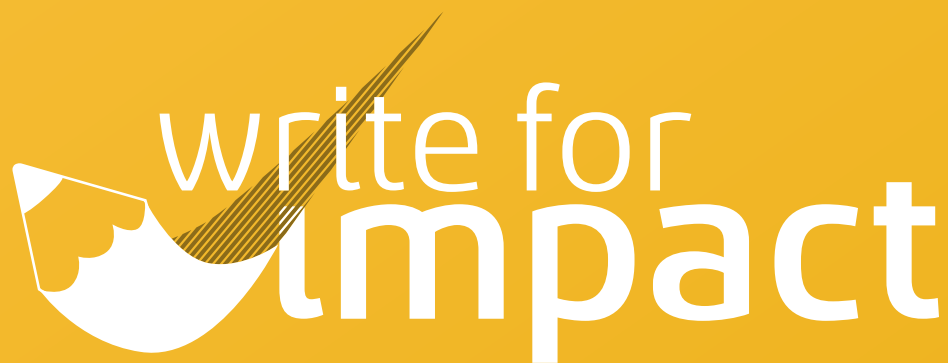
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