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I N T E R O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

Doc. No: 011064
Date: 20-Nov-1989 02:49pm EST
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TO: See Below

Subject: ONE-PAGE PRESENTATION MANUAL

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I'd like the committee secretaries to prepare a one-page presentation manual that will lay down the rules for presentations.

It is very important that we make our meetings more efficient so we don't demand so much energy of our senior executives for items that could be done with much more efficiency.

I think the first rule should be that every agenda item should, on the agenda, state the question being asked, or the reason for the presentation.

The same rule should apply to all presentations with a significant set of slides or a book. On the first slide or the cover of the book, it should state the estimated total cost of preparing those slides or book. Every slide, every chart, or drawing in the book should state what one is supposed to learn from that chart.

Too often people make charts and slides in order to fill up a presentation but have no reason in mind, whatsoever, why they are making the chart, and, therefore, it is a waste of time. If people are forced to figure out why they are making it, they will make less and will be sure that the chart presents the message they want to get across.

The goal of a chart or slide is to show that something is irrelevantly small or something is very big, or that two or three items are approximately the same, the result of the slide should be stated and then, maybe, the statement would be more effective than the slide, and all we would need is a statement.

There are several reasons why we may want to bring up an item, one is education. If this is the case, people may not want to be educated, and they don't have to come to the meeting.

The second reason an item might be brought up is if there is a question. The question should be clearly and concisely stated in the agenda. If this is done, we may give the answer without having a presentation.

The third reason for making a presentation is that people don't know the answer, and they want a bull session or a brainstorming session. In this case, they should state this, and say, "I'll present all I know, and I then need your help to go to the next step beyond that."

The fourth reason for a presentation is to present a plan for approval or to present results for review. In this case, it is critical that the presentation not be a snow job to hide the missing things or the things that are not done well or have gone wrong. I believe, for these presentations, the secretary should look at them first and warn people in the agenda what things are left out or warn people which things should be looked at because they are critical, negative, or dangerous. Too often, reports and reviews are carefully crafted to hide from the listeners the things they should worry about or challenge.

These rules may sound brutally frank, but it is brutally cruel to ask tired, busy executives to sit through long presentations when the question wasn't formalized or thought about, or where the whole presentation is developed to hide the significant facts and the listeners have to somehow find out what is being hidden.

KHO:dao
KO:3543
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