

Executive and Board Reports Raise or Diminish

Compliance Officer Status

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Key Points:

- **Using meetings as “show and tell” opportunities is generally a mistake**
- **Keep reports short, to the point with the focus on outcome, not outputs**
- **20 tips for effective presentations and reports to leadership**
- **7 questions to anticipate after a presentation or report**

Most executives spend a majority of their time in meetings, as presenters or participants; therefore, Compliance Officer briefings and presentations are often viewed as an added burden. In many cases, Compliance Officers find themselves almost in a race to provide information before interest is lost. The key to a successful presentation is to summarize the situation/policy issue at a “high level.” There is no time for a long drawn-out and boring explanation of the matter or details about process and output data. Compliance Officers are expected to know the details of issues, but executives do not necessarily want to hear them. They want to know concisely what the issues are, why they are important, how they are being addressed, and when resolution can be expected. As such, it is important for the Compliance Officer to present upfront the purpose and objectives for the presentation as well as any proposed solutions to problems. Failing to get to the point, or evidence of being unprepared for questions, will have minimal positive results. Using meetings as a “show and tell” opportunity to explain (or boast) all their work in progress using output data, Gantt charts, etc., can also be a big mistake. Leadership is interested in the outcome of the process in terms of reduced exposure to unwanted acts or events that could give rise to liabilities.

The following are tips to consider when planning for executive and board presentations, briefings, or training sessions:

1. Outline in advance the key essential points to be covered, focusing on what is necessary.
2. Within the first two minutes, state key points and recommendations, leaving details to follow.

3. Highlight the key points, leaving out extraneous and unimportant information.
4. Eliminate unnecessary information and cut to the heart of critical information or factors.
5. Avoid introducing unnecessary details or deviating from the briefing.
6. Executives don't want to hear of problems; they want options and solutions to them.
7. Focus on how problems are being managed or decisions to be made to address them.
8. Provide clarity, without sacrificing completeness.
9. Know the subject matter of what is being presented backwards and forwards.
10. It is best to present without notes and remain focused on participant reactions.
11. Move quickly in the presentation, but at a manageable pace to provide needed information.
12. If possible, offer fresh perspectives to issues being presented.
13. Pay attention and observe how the message is being received and if early conclusion is needed.
14. Expect meeting circumstances may be distracting to participants, if so, cut it short.
15. Know in advance those who are likely to be very supportive and those who may not.
16. It may be worthwhile consulting with some parties in advance to gauge level of support.
17. When asking for a decision, it is best to be able to offer options and choices.
18. When proposing a decision, be as neutral as possible in presenting it.
19. Think about how information being provided will affect those present at the meeting.
20. Aim to finish a few minutes early to permit questions.

Although details may not be part of a presentation, it is important to be prepared to answer questions and concerns with details. The most common questions most often include:

- Why is the information being presented important to them?
- How serious is this issue area and why?
- What gave rise to the issue?
- What actions or decisions are expected and why?
- How would suggested actions address the issue?
- What resources would be necessary to address the issue at hand?
- Are there any potential problems, issues, or objections that might result from actions?

For more answers to compliance FAQs, see www.compliance.com/faqs/

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About the Author

Richard P. Kusserow established Strategic Management Services, LLC, after retiring from being the DHHS Inspector General, and has assisted over 2,000 health care organizations and entities in developing, implementing and assessing compliance programs.