

Writing effective Audit reports

Course outline

Day 1 Audit reports – your shop window

- The 5 dilemmas of audit reporting
- Video from IIA president
- What is a best practice report?
- Who do you need to convince?
- Top tips – communicating results
- The challenges of audit reporting
- Grabbing attention
- Getting the message across
- Getting action
- The need for impact
- Which of 6 reports shown would you be likely to read
- Ideas on creating impact
- How do you know a good report when you see one?
- What Management expect – recent survey of chief executive
- IIA professional standards
- Who are the reports really for?

Exercise 1 What are the factors that separate an excellent report from the rest?

The problems with audit reports

Exercise 2- 35 questions about your audit reports issued during the last 12 months

- The 35 questions (all based on best practice) – how did you score?
- What are the factors preventing the achievement of these best practice measures
- 30 Tips, techniques and ideas to help you score a maximum
 - How to get 95% of recommendations implemented
 - Use of charts and photos
 - Dealing with minor issues
 - Future focus
 - Order of importance of the issues
 - Actions rather than recommendations
 - Action plans
- Discussion of the implications
- How to assess the needs of the audit customers

Analysis of actual reports

- Explanation of a proven method to evaluate audit reports

Exercise 3 Analysis of 3 actual reports

- Feedback and discussion

Assessment and evaluation of your own reports

- A model for assessing reports will be outlined

Exercise 4 Self evaluation against the model provided (*delegates are requested to bring along 2 recent reports- purely for their own reference*)

- Discussion of key issues and identification of opportunities for improvement

The Executive Summary

Exercise 5 Comparison of 3 executive summaries

- The role of the Executive summary
- 20 tips for writing better summaries
- Targeting the Executive summary to the reader
- The benefits of writing the Executive summary before the main report.
- Asking a non-technical person to read it

Exercise 6 Role-play a meeting with senior management to discuss the report

- Feedback and discussion of the issues

Exercise 7 Writing an Executive summary – based on the role-play

Day 2 Best practice internal audit reports – the way forward

Writing reports with impact

- Messages rather than content
- Outcomes rather than output
- Solutions not problems
- Auditor and reader mindsets
- Why audit reports are taken as a criticism of management
- Ways to make the reports more positive
- Benefits and deliverables
- Conclusions
- How to draft a report with impact – discussion of banner headlines and their relative impact
- Language and impact
- Simple and Complex language
- The use of ‘power words’ in your communications
- How to get on the same wavelength as your customer
- Highlighting the issues that matter
- Audit observations
- New paper on audit observations will be shared

Exercise 8 Writing the objectives and scope

The main report

- Keeping it simple
- The report process
- Writing the main report
- Dealing with writers block
- Audit Objectives
- Scope
- Forming and expressing the audit opinion
- Wording tips
- Tone
- Writing effective coherent sentences and paragraphs
- The editing process – tips for success
- The power of Senior management comments
- Circulation lists
- Formatting ideas
- How to avoid repeating any sections in the Executive Summary
- Words and phrases to avoid
- How to reduce the number of words
- Why the spellchecker sometimes does not help you

Exercise 9 Picking the biggest paragraph from a report

and rewriting it in one third of the words originally used.

Finalising the report

- Recommendations and actions plans
- Management Comments
- The need to be on your customers side
- Follow up audits – using the action plan
- How to get management to take responsibility for actions
- Ways to improve the follow-up process
- Issuing the report
- Presenting or issuing reports (inc use of e-mail and the Intranet)
- Alternative methods of reporting e.g. PowerPoint
- **Examples of excellent reports will be provided**
- The need to be on your customers side
- Reporting performance indicators
- Tracking actions
- Steps to success

Exercise 10 Follow up of reports