CONCEPT

Strategic Business Writing Skills for Executives and Senior Leaders

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Technical depth: Conceptual · **Practical mode:** Case study

Introduction

Senior leaders direct organisations largely through what they write and sign: strategy statements, memos, stakeholder letters and organisation-wide messages. When these documents are long, unfocused or ambiguous, teams interpret direction differently, decisions stall, and written commitments create exposure. This Core Concept course equips executives to judge, shape and approve strategic documents against recognised plain language principles and proven structures, and to set a consistent standard for the writing produced in their name. Through case documents from several sectors, participants build an Executive Writing Playbook for their own office or function.

Course Objectives

- Evaluate executive documents for clarity, structure and reader fit using ISO 24495-1 plain language principles and readability diagnostics
- Choose the right document structure for a decision, direction or accountability message, from BLUF memos to narrative formats
- Frame strategic direction in writing using Rumelt's kernel of diagnosis, guiding policy and coherent actions
- Direct and edit the drafts of others, including AI-assisted drafts, to a consistent house standard
- Judge the legal, reputational and cross-cultural exposure in written commitments before release
- Produce an Executive Writing Playbook for adoption in the participant's office or function

Target Audience

- Senior executives who sign off strategy documents, leadership letters and organisation-wide messages
- Heads of division accountable for written direction to large, dispersed teams
- Executive office leaders who shape and approve correspondence issued on behalf of the top team
- Senior leaders responsible for annual review, investor or partner narratives
- Senior leaders of strategy and corporate affairs functions who set the organisation's written voice

Course Outline

Day 1: The Executive Writing Landscape

- Writing as a Leadership Instrument: Decision, Direction and Accountability Documents
- Reader Analysis Using an Audience Priority Matrix
- ISO 24495-1 Plain Language Principles: Relevant, Findable, Understandable, Usable
- Readability Diagnostics with Flesch Reading Ease and Sentence-Length Profiles
- Current-State Review of Executive Documents Against a Writing Quality Rubric

Day 2: Structures and Models for Strategic Documents

- Bottom Line Up Front BLUF Structure for Executive Memos
- Narrative Memo Format: The Six-Page Written Argument
- Rumelt's Kernel of Strategy: Diagnosis, Guiding Policy and Coherent Actions
- Grice's Cooperative Maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relevance and Manner
- Integrated Reporting Framework for Value-Creation Narratives

Day 3: Shaping and Directing Strategic Communication

- Strategy Statement Review Against the Kernel Test
- Stakeholder Letters and Leadership Messages: Structure and Sign-Off Criteria
- Tone Calibration Grid for Authority, Empathy and Candour
- Structural and Line-Edit Checklist for Reviewing Others' Drafts
- Email Governance: Subject-Line Conventions and Action Request Formats

Day 4: Risk, Sensitivity and Quality Control

- Red-Flag Wording Review for Legal and Reputational Exposure
- Indirect Structure for Bad-News and Sensitive Decision Messages
- Generative AI Drafting Oversight Using NIST AI RMF Governance Functions
- Controlled Language Rules for Translation-Ready Text
- Document Approval Workflow and House Writing Standard Governance

Day 5: Case Work and the Executive Writing Playbook

- Strategy Announcement Case Study: Diagnosing a Memo That Failed to Land
- Annual Review Narrative Case Study: Balancing Candour and Confidence
- Own-Document Rewrite Against the Plain Language Rubric
- Executive Writing Playbook Assembly: House Standard and Templates
- Peer Review Panel and Playbook Defence

Skills You Will Gain

- Plain Language Editing
- Strategic Narrative Framing
- Document Architecture
- Tone Calibration
- Editorial Oversight
- Written Risk Judgement
- AI Drafting Governance

Why Attend This Course

- Take away an Executive Writing Playbook and one rewritten document from your own organisation
- Spend less time rewriting drafts that reach you in the wrong shape
- Release sensitive messages knowing their wording has been tested for risk and tone
- Exchange approaches with senior leaders from other sectors who write for boards, staff and external readers

Conclusion

Clear executive writing lets an organisation act on its leaders' intent without repeated clarification. This course moves from reader analysis and plain language principles, through the structures that suit memos, strategy narratives and correspondence, to the tone, risk and AI-drafting issues that call for executive judgement. The final day turns that material into an Executive Writing Playbook and a rewritten document from each participant's organisation, giving them a house standard to apply to everything that leaves their desk.