

## **Shape Your Message with a Strategy You Can Count On**

**By Bonnie Budzowski**  
**President, inCredible Messages, LP**

Have you ever had the task of engaging people with differing needs in the same message? Do you wonder how to address executives and technical specialists with the same message? Here's a strategy you can count on.

At first, provide the material as an overview. In presentations, use a short description, perhaps illustrated by an uncluttered slide. In documents, discipline yourself to provide an executive summary (even if there are no executives involved). Make this overview both concise and complete, so that if a person receives only this piece, it will provide the essential information or argument.

Follow the overview with a deeper layer. Use the skeleton of the overview, but add supporting explanations, examples, flow charts, or statistics, as needed. In a document, this layer follows the executive summary. In a presentation, this layer is the heart of your message.

When finished with the second layer, summarize the skeleton of the overview. Reiterate the importance of the information or the action you request.

As take-away material, provide a detailed handout, an appendix, or a link to in-depth content a skeptic or a technical specialist will require.

This strategy allows the listener or reader to grasp key concepts quickly and to process supporting material with the bigger picture in mind. It allows the receiver to make an initial judgment about the priority or feasibility of your information. It provides the detail needed, but allows the receiver to access that material on his or her own terms.

Use this strategy to shape your next message. You'll engage the executives, technical specialists, and the folks in between.

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