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## The pyramid principle pdf

Published by FT Publishing International (March 16th 2021) - Copyright © 2021 This is the third edition of the international bestseller, The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing and Thinking, written by Barbara Minto. Summary of the Book This title asserts that the mind automatically sorts information into distinctive pyramidal groups. But if any set of ideas are organised into a pyramid structure in the first place, not only will it save time and effort while writing, but will take even lesser an effort to read and understand it. The book explains how you can think creatively, reason clearly, and express ideas with precision; define complex problems and establish the purposes of any document; evaluate your ideas and distinguish their comparative significance; structure your reasoning into an intelligible and clear argument; and analyse your argument to confirm its value. About Barbara Minto Barbara Minto developed The Pyramid Principle through her initial years as a consultant at McKinsey & Company. She now runs her own consultancy, International, Inc., which focusses on teaching the pyramid principle to people whose main training requirement is in the business area. Minto has taught her course to several foremost consulting firms, leading corporations, and government organisations across the world. It's a noisy world, and the people whose attention you're trying to grab are busy. They get hundreds of emails, calls, and messages every day. Your job is to cut through all the noise and make sure your message gets across as quickly and effectively as possible. Whether you're writing an email or pitch deck for your startup, or having a face-to-face conversation, controlling the sequence of your ideas is the most powerful tool you have to get what you are asking for. We'll cover the following: What is the Pyramid of Communication? The Pyramid Principle, also known as the Minto Principle, is a concept in communication that follows an inverted pyramid approach. It was created by Barbara Minto while at McKinsey in the 1970s. It's applicable not only in the executive scene but also whenever crafting a persuasive argument. The pyramid principle suggests beginning with the end and working your way to the beginning. Begin with the conclusion, followed by your main points then lastly, facts and data to support your argument. The point of all this is to cut through the noise and use clear and understandable language. Cutting Through the Noise The Pyramid Principle was created by Barbara Minto at McKinsey as a method of structuring communications for maximum impact. The idea is to start with your main idea, and then use logically grouped arguments to support your position. Put in simpler terms, it starts with asking for what you want, and explaining why you want it. It sounds simple, but using the Pyramid Principle allows you to maximize your time and effectiveness by utilizing a top-down communication style. Executives are often top-down thinkers who appreciate a direct approach, which is why the Pyramid Principle works so well. Alternative Communication Principles Competitors Are Using Along with the Pyramid Principle, there are other concepts competitors may be using — the 7 C's of communication and the Iceberg Principle. We'll briefly cover both below: The 7Cs of Effective Communication The 7Cs of Communication was first coined by Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center in 1952. It's often referred to as the most effective model of communication. Using the 7 C's helps you make your business communication clear and concise. With the 7Cs, the Pyramid Principle becomes second nature, and your message would be: Clear: It should feature the main objective and be easy to understand. Concise: Avoid repetitive and redundant words. Concrete: It should be credible and backed with facts and data. Complete: It should contain relevant information. Correct: It should follow the rules of grammar and spelling. Coherent: It has to be relevant and connected to the main goal. Courteous: It needs to be friendly with no undertones of passive aggression or hostility. The Iceberg Principle The Iceberg Principle follows Albert Merahbin's concept of communication. He states that 90% of communication is about 'how' you say something and 'not' exactly what you say. The 'how' involves aspects of communications such as gestures, facial expressions, and tonal variation. These factors hugely influence how your audience receives your message. It also helps create a positive tone, helping you connect with your audience. What Is a Governing Thought? The basis for cutting through the noise with the Pyramid Principle is the governing thought. A governing thought is the single most important idea in your story. It's the primary message you want your audience to understand. It's the "WHAT" part of your matter and also serves as the introduction. The governing thought is occasionally followed by a framework that seeks to explain it better. This is called the SQ framework: Situation: This is the simple truth contained within a governing thought. Complication: The complication addresses the so-what part of your governing thought. The reason behind the dilemma or difficulty. Question: It serves as the follow-up to the complication. All these components work together to create an answer, which is the governing thought. Supporting Thoughts A governing thought is followed by supporting thoughts. These are facts and data that support the main point (governing thought). According to the MECE Principle, a component of the Pyramid Principle, supporting thoughts should be mutually exclusive; independent of each other but enough to make an argument. Ensure that you don't dive into the facts and data while presenting your supporting thoughts. Aim for at least 3 supporting facts (remember the rule of 3). Data and Facts Accompany each supporting thought with data and facts. Explain your facts as much as you can and ensure that each point carries weight to reinforce your governing thought. What Are the Three Rules of Building a Pyramid Draft? 1. Start with the answer first The Minto's pyramid principle flows in an inverted format. You can begin by stating your answer then proceeding to make your arguments. Pyramid communication takes the form of an inverted pyramid, where the answer is at the top while your supporting ideas and reasons lie at the base. When answering an executive's question, begin with a conclusion followed by your 3 supporting reasons. 2. Compile a summary of your arguments After formulating an answer, create a summary of your argument's main points. Use the rule of 3 to do this; make sure your reasons begin with the strongest point. It's an effective method of persuading your clients or audience when giving a presentation. Here's why the rule of 3 is an excellent strategy to use during sales pitches: 1. It maximizes your time with your audience The time allocated to sales representatives is very brief; the rule of 3 helps you structure and present your argument within a short period. It allows you to capture your audience's attention 2. You are forced to prioritize The rule of 3 forces you to choose the top three answers and find a way to present them in a well-structured argument. 3. It makes you look confident and decisive Using the rule of 3 helps boost confidence during your presentations. Start your pitch by listing your reasons; this strategy makes you look decisive and composed. It also helps the audience remember your points. Summarizing your arguments helps with your flow during the presentation. It also allows you to arrange your train thought in a more seamless sequence. 3. Arrange your arguments in a logical order and support them with data points Ensure the reasons supporting your conclusion are related and complement each other. Arrange them in a logical order; this can be according to; How much time each one takes Structure and components Importance/ rank Combine this approach with the rule of 3 strategies, and you're guaranteed to hook your audience. Pyramid communication is an excellent tool for communicating with senior executives and with clients. How Do You Use the Pyramid Principle? First, we set the stage with the introduction, starting with the governing thought. Then we go into the SCQA sequence, and finally use horizontal and vertical logic to support our arguments with both deductive and inductive reasoning. Setting the Stage with Introductory Flow Since your takeaway is at the very top of the pyramid, your introduction is particularly important. It sets the stage, and gets your audience excited for your main idea and its supporting arguments. The following flow is an effective way to set up the main idea of your pyramid. Situation: The context, the time, and the place. Something everyone can agree on. Complication: The problem, relevancy, sense of urgency to listen or act. Question: The question that naturally arises following the complication. This is the start of the question and answer flow. Answer: Your main idea. The SCQA Approach To apply the Pyramid Principle, we use the SCQA framework. SCQA stands for: Situation Complication Question Answer Situation This is the context of the problem you are trying to solve and consists of the simple and indisputable truth of the matter. It's the first step that involves looking beyond the symptoms since it answers the "why". Complication In this part, we assess the reason behind the problem. We call it "the so what" of the problem. It answers the "how". Question This part involves formulating a hypothesis, by asking questions. Here, you pose questions about the situation, eventually coming up with answers. Answer In this section, we come up with answers to the questions formulated in the previous section. After confirming your hypothesis to be true, you can begin to structure and arrange the information. This way, you can present it before an audience in chronological order. We see this in action when using horizontal and vertical logic while creating an introductory flow. Using Horizontal and Vertical Logic At the top of the pyramid is the point you're trying to make—the key takeaway. Underneath that are three arguments to support your idea. Each of those arguments should be built on reasons that support it. The top of your pyramid has to be actionable, and it is supported by the arguments that follow below. Essentially, you're starting with what you want and then supporting that with three reasons explaining why you want it. When presenting your arguments, put them in logical groupings. Rank your arguments in order of importance, and keep them in discrete groups—if you're talking about key metrics and sales automation, make all your points about key metrics before moving on to sales automation. Presenting your ideas in this order lets you use both vertical and horizontal logic. Vertical logic is the storyline, the question-and-answer dialogue. As you travel down the Pyramid, you're starting with your main idea, posing questions, and answering them with your supporting arguments. The horizontal logic of the pyramid uses either inductive or deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is the method you're probably most familiar with. It involves making a general statement, and using specific examples to validate that statement: Birds can fly. I can fly, therefore I am a bird. Inductive reasoning is the opposite, inferring a specific statement from a set of general supporting arguments. Building the Pyramid: An Example The Situation When we look at the company sales data, we see that there has been a decline over the years. We also face increased competition, even though we introduced new features two years ago and relaunched the product. These new features required a new factory to be built, which also increased costs. We have to increase market share to attain an economy of scale. Pyramid Principle Applied To regain profitability we have to improve market share by cutting prices: Lower prices will increase sales. Lower prices vis-a-vis competitors will increase our market share. Increased volume helps us create economies of scale. Using the Pyramid Principle, you can directly and effectively target your message. It's not the only method for telling a story, but it's an effective, direct approach that leaves no room for fluff, allowing you to focus your message on what you want, and why you want it. How to Apply the Pyramid Principle to Pitching Ideas It's as easy as 1, 2, 3! Allow me to explain in three simple steps: 1. Begin with your conclusion Your conclusion is a summary of your governing thought. It's the single most important idea in your sales pitch, the primary message. 2. Create a list of your supporting arguments. The second step is to compile a list of your reasons but don't go overboard by explaining them. These are your supporting facts. A helpful pointer, use the rule of 3. It's guaranteed to maximize the time with your audience and make you look decisive and confident. 3. Accompany your supporting facts with data Back up your supporting facts with additional information such as pie charts, statistics, and graphs. These help reinforce your governing thought and add credibility to your argument. And voila! You'd be amazed how clearly you communicated your ideas and pitch, and more importantly, at the positive reactions you get from your audience.

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