

Question First

Story Generation Worksheet



A simple methodology, developed at McKinsey and used by consulting firms worldwide, that vastly improves the effectiveness of communications by first establishing a shared “story” or perspective from which to consider a shared question. This is a simplified version, focused more on action implications than on supporting detail. QuestionFirst can be used in conjunctions with a stakeholder analysis, helping you to adapt your storyline for distinct audiences.

Section	Example	Your Outline	Supporting Material/Examples
<p>Situation <i>Readily recognizable summary of the current situation, including initiatives already underway. (2-3 points max)</i></p>	<p>Increasing regulatory requirements for security coupled with more frequent and disabling attacks throughout IT sector.</p>		
<p>Complication <i>An unexpected complicating factor, requiring a response (either opportunity or threat). May need proof/examples. (1-2 points max.)</i></p>	<p>No single organization in IT is responsible for security, leading to either duplication of effort or difficulty responding to changing security needs. For example, three organizations separately developed xyz capability in FY’03.</p>		
<p>Central Question or Issue <i>The underlying issue or dilemma that needs to be addressed (1 point max)</i></p>	<p>How can we ensure maximum security standards and best practices are applied universally with a minimum of resources invested?</p>		
<p>Action/ Recommendation <i>Recommended action or next steps to address the central issue/question. Be prepared with supporting detail that links the solution to the central question. (3-4 points max)</i></p>	<p>Single point of contact in IT, with three primary functions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Up front collaborative review of security practices 2) Ongoing best-practice sharing via on-line newsletter 3) Early-warning announcements re: upcoming threats 		
<p>Ask/Request <i>Request for action or decision from listener</i></p>	<p>May I have Barbara contact you to discuss a plan for your group?</p>		

Adapted and simplified, based on “The Minto Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking, and Problem-Solving”, Barbara Minto, 2003