

CIS605 PAPER

DESCRIPTION

TOPIC: As described above and discussed in class.

WRITING AND STYLE. As described on various “Writing” and “APA” Web links from the CIS605 course page and discussed in class.

OBJECTIVITY. Material included in the paper should fall within the defined scope and relate to the stated purpose. Content should be well-researched—primarily from reliable, unbiased sources—and should reflect the 6-to-8 weeks persistent work that you have put into this effort. Note that your personal opinions are not material, except in the (optional) *Recommendations* section of the paper. Think of this report as one you might provide to the Chief Executive Officer of your company. The CEO is interested in an **objective, factual, thoughtful report**. Note **reference requirements**.

METHODOLOGY. As described on various Web links from the CIS605 course page, and discussed at some length in class. Again, this is not a research methodology course; nevertheless, this inquiry, as with all investigations, must be based on some basic methodological approach.

LENGTH AND QUALITY. Twelve-to-fifteen pages, of professional quality.

FORMATTING. The paper should be double-spaced; with 1.2” margins; 11 or 12-point font, preferably Times Roman, in APA style—including any figures, tables and graphs. Tables and/or graphs should be incorporated into the body text as is appropriate and convenient for your reader (but do not drown your reader in graphs—use appendix for excess). Tables and Figures are numbered separately and consecutively; each is accompanied by a meaningful title. Explanatory text precedes the visual (see APA guidelines). The paper should be well-edited so that it flows smoothly, utilizing effective transitions. Writing should be in formal business style. I prefer third person voice, but will accept first-person (“I”). Whichever you choose, be consistent.

ORGANIZATION

Parts of the Formal Report

Please follow the guidelines below when writing and organizing your research report.

Title Page

Contains four items:

- The title of the report
- Whom the report is prepared for
- Whom it is prepared by
- The date

Letter or Memo of Transmittal

Keep it short. This is essentially a one or two paragraph cover letter introducing the report. It is not a summary.

Table of Contents

- List the headings exactly as they appear in the report
- List all the headings if the report is less than 25 pages; page numbers right-flush
- In a long report, pick a level of headings and include that level and above

Executive Summary

(For this report, put the Executive Summary on a separate piece of paper)

- Tells the reader what the document is about (150-250 words)
- Is not a “tease”— it summarizes the basic findings of the report for a busy executive who may not have time to read the full text. (In this regard it is similar to the abstracts of professional journal articles you have read. The executive summary will also include a brief statement of your recommendations and the reasons for the recommendations)
- Should be easy to read, concise, and clear
- Has a more formal style than other forms of business writing

Report Body:

Introduction. Contains your purpose and scope.

- Purpose
 - The purpose statement identifies
 - the rhetorical purposes (to describe, to explain)
 - It may also identify:
 - the organizational problem the report addresses
 - the technical investigations it summarizes
- Scope
 - Identifies how broad an area the report covers
 - Allows the reader to evaluate the report on appropriate grounds

Background (of the situation, not a full-blown history of topic itself)

- Is included even if the current audience knows the situation, since reports are often filed and read again years later by a very different audience
- May cover many years or just the immediate situation
- Incorporates most of your references. (In an academic paper this portion of a report is called a Review of the Literature.) Strive for a well-integrated account of the background and context of the issue at hand. Include a description of relevant case studies, model implementations (or implementation failures) here. Writing should flow smoothly, synthesizing the pertinent background information you found. This section could be 3-6 pages of your report

[Body of the Report (your headings as needed)]

This section focuses on the specific problem at hand. If you are doing in-depth library research, the preceding section will likely blend right in to this one (and you will decide on unique organizational headings as needed). If you are conducting some data-gathering (methodology), then this section will have an Assumptions, Methodology, and Findings.

Conclusions

- Summarizes the main points made in the body of the report
- Contains no new information

Recommendations

- Action items that would solve or ameliorate the problem
- Often combined with “Conclusions” if both sections are short

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research This section is short and follows APA organization closely. I have posted some links to examples from the course Web page.

References

APA style in both the body text and *Reference* section of your paper; note my Web links for appropriate formatting (http://paws.wcu.edu/gjones/links_writing.html).

- 8 - 12 references
- At least half of these academic references (currency is also a factor here)

Appendices

[Optional, but survey questions or interview questions, for example, would go here]

Presenting Information Effectively

Use These Four Techniques

(a) Say what you mean (no need for embellishment or fancy language); (b) keep your writing tight (avoid verbiage); (c) introduce your sources and visuals gracefully; (d) use transitions, topic sentences, headings and (where appropriate) sub-headings.

Headings in Reports

- Headings are usually short phrases that describe the material until the next heading
 - Informative headings tell the reader what to expect in each section
 - Headings must use the same grammatical structure
- APA heading style is recommended (<http://www.docstyles.com/apacrib.htm#Headings>)
- Appropriate headings are critical to the organization of the paper
 - Material that follows a heading must be related to that heading (including all subheadings, of course
 - As a rough guide, one would expect no more than one main heading for every two or three pages of text