DESCRIPTION & ORGANIZATION OF CIS PAPER

Double-spaced; 1.2" margins; 11 or 12-point font, preferably Times Roman, APA style— including any figures, tables and graphs. At least one table and one graph is expected, more where appropriate. Typically, Tables *and* Figures *are numbered separately, consecutively; each is accompanied by a meaningful title. Explanatory text precedes the visual. (For more, please review Chapter 6 and Chapter 16). The paper should be well-edited so that it flows smoothly, utilizing effective transitions. No grammatical or spelling errors, of course. Writing should be in formal business style. I prefer third person voice, but I will accept first-person. Whichever you choose, be consistent (Locker's example in Ch. 15 uses the first-person "I").*

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 of intermittent work that you have put into this effort. Note that your personal opinions are irrelevant, except in the (optional) Recommendations *section of the paper. Think of this report as a general briefing paper you are providing to the Chief Executive Officer of a company. The CEO is interested in an objective, factual, thoughtful report. Avoid filling pages with information the CEO could have found by herself in a 60-second search of the Web; your information should go deeper than that. Each person in a research pair should count on contributing 7-8 pages, so at the end of the semester I will expect a well-integrated 14-16 page report from each team. Individuals who work alone should produce a 10-page report. Overall quality of this paper should be reflective of standards that would be reasonable for a potential employer to expect from upper-level university Business majors.*

How to Organize Specific Reports
Presenting Information Effectively

Use these four techniques
1. Say What You Mean
2. Tighten Your Writing
3. Introduce Sources and Visuals Gracefully
4. 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

- Locker discusses headings in Chpt. 15 (although her example is not technically APA style)

- 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 per every 2 pages of text

Parts of the Formal 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. Please see the text regarding how to write and organize the transmittal

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
- 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 [if any] 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. Always contains purpose and scope (May include more; see text.)

- Purpose
  - ▪ The purpose statement identifies
    - •the rhetorical purposes (to describe, to explain)
  - ▪ It may also identify (but these are not applicable to this CIS paper):
    - •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)
- 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
- Most of your references will be incorporated here. 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 information you found. This section could be 3-6 pages of your report.

Body of the Report
As Locker states, 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.

<u>Conclusions</u>
- Summarizes the main points made in the body of the report
- Contains no new information

<u>Recommendations</u> *[Optional for CIS paper]*
- Action items that would solve or ameliorate the problem
- Often combined with "Conclusions" if both sections are short

<u>Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research</u> *[Especially if you do have a Methodology section]* This organizational format differs slightly from Locker's example in the "Analyzing Information and Writing Reports" chapter—but follows APA organization closely. Recall that I have posted some links to examples from the Assignments Described link on PAWS.

<u>References</u> (APA style in both the body text and *Reference* section of your paper)
- 12 - 18 references
- At least 4 academic references (at least two of those 1998 or later)

<u>Appendices</u> *[optional, but survey questions or interview questions, for example, would go here]]*