

Executive business case structure

An all-purpose formula

CONTENT

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WHY THEY SHOULD CARE

[Importance of this conversation, part 1: Must-solve problem/ vision/ motivation]

"We must solve problem x. It's unavoidable, even given other competing priorities!"

- Why is the problem big and urgent?
- Why can't we solve it with existing & lower-risk approaches?
- Why now?

[Fit with listener's priorities]

"You probably already realized it, but just to be explicit, this of course is critical to your xyz effort/ goal/ vision."

- Why does it help what the listener wants to achieve?
- Why is it not a distraction?

[Insufficiency of existing efforts]

"We are not reinventing the wheel - the x, y, and z easier alternatives won't solve this."

- Why not an existing alternative or simpler "good enough for now" option?
- Why is the solution to create a new initiative rather than update existing ones to deal with this issue?



[Sanity check/ solvability/ why us]

“As far as I can judge, we have found the best path forward for your agenda right now.”

- Why can this be done?
- Why should you be the ones to solve it?
- What’s in and out of scope?



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WHY IT MAKES SENSE

[Importance of this conversation, part 2: business value]

“The opportunities we found could be worth \$xyz of revenue (or profit) in x months/ years.”

- What is a realistic range, focusing on orders of magnitudes?
- How might the listener follow your math, with simple back-of-envelope estimates?
- Is even a “realistically pessimistic” scenarios still attractive?

[Best option (in the real world)]

“People offer all kinds of wild ideas for dealing with this. But realistically, the top solutions (or businesses) to capture the opportunity are x, y, and z. Among them, x is best because abc.”

- Which solutions can happen in parallel?
- Which ones can happen in sequence?
- Which ones require a choice (i.e., can't do them all)?
- Can we accelerate toward the really valuable one(s)?
- Can we simplify to get 80% of value from 20% of solutions?
- How well do they align to our other priorities outside this project?

[Justification for solution: unfair advantage]

“We can play in this space and beat x, y, and z competitors/ next-best alternatives.”

- Why don't competitors meet user needs well enough?
- Why won't apathy keep users from acting at all?
- If there “are no competent competitors,” is this opportunity actually real?



[Justification for solution: reasonable effort]

“We can implement solutions in x years with great/ reasonable certainty at an ROI of x%.”

- Predictable milestones with ability to halt before over-investing?
- Ways to start getting returns on investments soon, even if in small amounts?

[Justification for solution: Risk management]

“As ever, there are some unknowns left. But we have clear line of sight to activation.”

- Work like past work/ capabilities that are tried & true?
- Downstream risks checked out and under control?
- Go to market plan for early traction clear?
- Budget and resources lined up?

[Solution specifics]

“Would you like to hear any of the specifics?”

- [Note that this is entirely at your conversation partner’s discretion. People commonly make the mistake of leading with this and offering it whether their listeners care to hear it or not. Or to be more explicit: This makes up much of your job but not theirs. Only offer it if that’s what they want! Even then, keep it short and get back to *their* agenda]



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WHY IT CAN SUCCEED

[Ask]

"We need x from y person. Then we're off to the races."

- Reasonable?
- Approval needed? From whom?
- What: Resources, people, money?
- Asking for specific reasons, not just "in general?"
- Air cover?
- Evangelism?
- Leniency?
- Political issues?

[Aggressive, thoughtful planning]

"We are going after this responsibly but hard!"

- Can we accelerate the timeline toward 50% of our estimate?
- Can we simplify to get 80% of value from 20% of work/ solutions?
- How can it help or be helped by our broader or other priorities outside this project?

[Accountability]

"Unless you prefer something else, we will next update you at x milestone in y time."

- Things to know until then?
- Meanwhile, we have:
 - Clear, speedy activation plan with milestones?
 - Agreed roles & responsibilities and secured resources?
 - Accountability and stakeholder visibility in place?

