

## Reporting Tips – How to compile a written report

The purpose of a report is to communicate. Your job, therefore, is to create a straightforward piece of writing, which, step by step, conveys to the readers clearly and unambiguously what happened, why and your recommendations. An investigation is pointless if you do not do this.

SO:

**PLAN** the structure of your report using either the TOP-SET headings or by deciding the sections you require and writing each on a Post-it. Fill in the details of each section using smaller or different coloured Post-its (you can stick them all on a wall/board and do this gradually, giving yourself time to think). The Post-it method allows you to move stuff around and be flexible.

**WRITE** your report working from your planned structure. This method of working cuts out many time consuming edits and results in a clean, clear, well-constructed report.

**JUST DO IT** or 'Don't get it right, get it written'. Even experienced writers can sit there paralysed trying to think of the right word/spelling/structure. It is hard just to get on with it but, if you do, the chances are it will be pretty close to what you want first time and you can edit it, tidy it up, get someone else to have a look later on. This works best if you create your skeleton plan with Post-its first and write from that.

**CLARITY** is very important; you want your meaning to be crystal clear. So steer clear of jargon, big words and long, rambling sentences. You are not aiming for elegant writing here; remember it is all about communication and getting your message across.

The **SUMMARY** is an important part of your report; many more people will read it than will read the full thing. Basically you are providing the information Who, What, When, Where followed by Why (the underlying and root causes uncovered by the investigation) and then your recommendations based on these. A summary is often placed at the beginning so that it is accessible and so that the reader can decide whether they want to /need to read further.

**RECOMMENDATIONS** are crucial and the whole reason for the investigation. These are the actions based on all of the underlying and root causes that your analysis threw up. It is important that ALL of the underlying and root causes are referred to and some sensible action recommended.

**CAUTION** - It is important that you use neutral language without emotion much as you may have strong feelings that e.g. 'management has been very lax and just didn't have enough presence or input' - it is your job to present a clear and objective case for actions based on the analysis of the data uncovered by your investigation so that the same or similar will not happen again. Finger pointing and emotional recriminations undermine this.