

Giving an Update? Tell Me What's New and What's to Do

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Are you one of those people that has to give periodic updates? If so, you had better make it worth your listeners' time because nobody relishes a meeting that's "just an update." In fact, in many people's eyes, an "update" meeting is the one to miss when your schedule is full. Their thinking is the meeting will be downright boring, and, after all, it's just informational.

Bringing people together for the sake of providing information" makes no one happy, primarily because most of us are on information overload anyway. If you focus your content on solving a problem, rather than on just providing information, your meeting will be seen in a whole new light. Listeners will stay attentive.

What you need to do

- First, consider your audience. Often times, the people attending are senior leaders. Your meeting may be one of 20 meetings for that particular day. They have a real need to get information quickly and move on to their next meeting. You cannot waste one minute of their time by burying your points with too much data. They leave behind many pressing projects just to hear what you have to say.
- Before your meeting, ask yourself why your audience needs to know the information you are presenting? What will this information allow them to do? Is it to make a decision to renew a contract? Is it to adjust a marketing plan? Remind yourself to stay focused on these issues.
- To make a decision based on your update, listeners need to understand **what is new and what's to do**. Thus, begin your content with an overview answering those questions. *"Since last quarter, we have seen seven outages that required 22 hours to remedy. Going forward, our recommendation is that you update your software to the current versions. If you do not,*

you risk more serious outages in the future" OR *"For the month of November, there was an uptick of 6.4% in the central region due to the launch of new packaging and two seasonal brands. This is a significant improvement over last November's results where sales only increased by 1.9%. We believe if we launch the new packaging and seasonal brews nationwide, these results will be seen in all regions, and we will end the year more than 3 percentage points higher than last year."* With this type of focus at the beginning, listeners are more likely to pay attention.

- As you continue the conversation, make it easy for listeners to follow your argument. Provide the proof that supports your recommendation. Show the trends and interpret meanings. **Connect** the dots for your listeners. Do not overwhelm them with too many charts and graphs. Remember Excel spreadsheets work best as handouts. Slides that people can't read or quickly understand are meaningless.
- As you conclude, review your key points, repeat your recommendation and the benefits for the listeners. End with a clear call to action. *"So what I need from you is your approval to launch this nationwide."* OR *"What I would like to do is set a date for you to meet with our engineering team to create an implementation schedule for updating your software."*

Updates get a bad rap. However, if your update solves a problem, it will be seen as interesting and worth the listeners' time. Remember, focus your content on **what's new and what's to do**, and you will be right on track.

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