

How to Get C Level Executives Interested

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When making a proposal to C level Executives, those CEO's, CIO's, CTO's or CFO's, it is necessary to remember their focus is on solving problems and making the company successful. They are not interested in how an issue was resolved, but that it is no longer a problem. These are very busy people. How you open or position your topic is critical. Right from the get-go, your ideas must be clearly expressed. As you continue, remember clarity and conciseness. If you say something well, it gets heard.

1. **Start by setting some context.** Obviously, Executives go from meeting to meeting. In a few sentences, provide background, even if you have sent an Executive Summary ahead of time. *"Last month, you asked me to research options to a key component in our manufacturing process due to rising costs. There are three possibilities."*
2. **State your recommendation.** Executives have a breath of knowledge, but they don't have your depth. They look to you for suggestions. From the perspective of the Executive, what is important for the individual to know about the issue? *"Of the three choices, I strongly recommend XXX over the other two."* The more vivid your language, the more readily the Executive will pay attention. Strong adjectives and adverbs are just the thing to make an Executive see how important dealing with a situation is. *"We need to act immediately since sales have sky rocketed and the supply of our current component is low."*
3. **Stress benefits.** Executives focus on things like the bottom line, market share and return on investment. If the Executive considers your option, the individual will want to see the benefits. Be aware that they are not easily swayed with platitudes. If you can quantify or add metrics, it will help to win them over. *"With this new component, I believe we will*

save 1.4 million in the next sixteen months. Our engineers tell us that the initial results are positive. The component has been reliable in 5/6 tests."

4. **Prove your points.** A lot rests on an Executive making the right decision. The challenge you have as the speaker is to sort through all that you know and elevate your ideas to the Executive level. It is always a temptation to go into too much detail. Be sure to keep it high level. As you move further into the conversation, define the risks and the opportunities. A chart of the pros and cons will help to clarify at a glance, assuming your chart or visual does not look like an eye chart. Specific examples are also important. In fact, some experts say they are mandatory when trying to influence.
5. **Be prepared for push-back.** Too much is at stake for an Executive to make a mistake. Anticipate that there will be questions. Figure what their decision rests on and you will know the bulk of the questions. Always answer succinctly. If they want more information, they will ask a follow-up question. Have at the ready hidden slides or handouts.
6. **Summarize.** You have undoubtedly heard the old axiom, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you have told them." Never leave without a strong summation. If there are actions you need to take, be sure to list them. If there are actions the Executive must take, specifically state what they are and by when. Get confirmation that you are both in agreement.
7. **Consciously deliver your message.** Keep your focus on the Executive at all times. Do not be intimidated. They want you to be successful. Demonstrate your confidence by looking the person in the eye, by pausing often to let your points sink in and by leaning into the table. Use your hands to punctuate your ideas. Look, act and sound like you belong!

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If you follow the pointers listed above, you will get your ideas across. You will influence Executives.

***Question:** What issues have you had in communicating with Executives that you are still not sure of? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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