

The Art of the Executive Summary

Transforming hundreds of pages of complex investigative data into a single, powerful document that drives action.

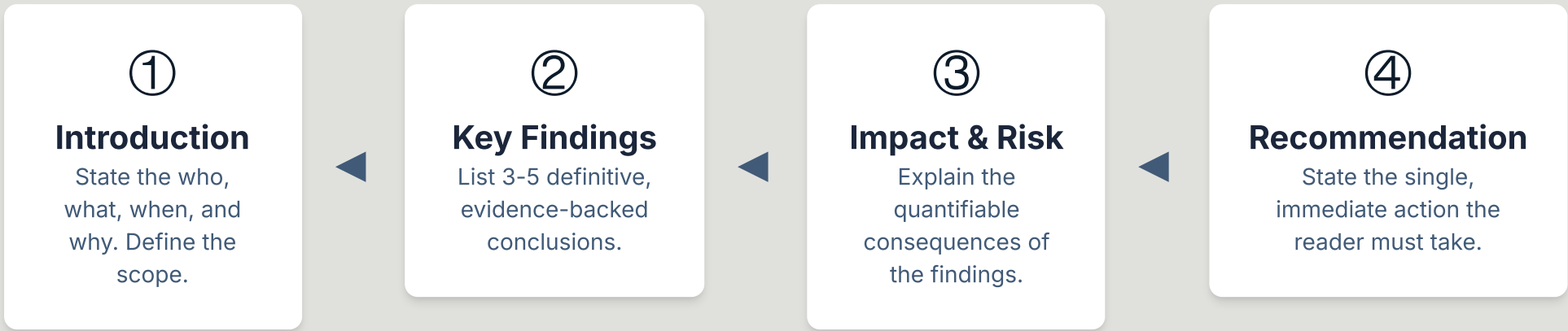
The Challenge: Information Overload

An investigation can generate overwhelming amounts of data. Executives and legal counsel have limited time and need the critical facts, fast. The Executive Summary is often the only document they read.

95% of senior leaders admit to only reading the summary of internal reports.

The Solution: The One-Page Mandate

A successful Executive Summary follows a strict, four-part structure. It's a linear process designed to deliver clarity and compel a decision, all within a single page.



Know Your Audience

The summary is for decision-makers, not investigators. They need clear answers to three core questions, free of jargon and technical detail.



Is this a problem?

Focus on severity and impact. How big is the risk to the organization?



What did we prove?

Present definitive facts. What are the undeniable conclusions?



What must I do now?

Provide a clear, actionable directive. What is the immediate next step?

The Art of the Finding: Be Definitive

Findings must be stated as proven facts, not suggestions. Avoid passive, tentative language that creates ambiguity and weakens your conclusion.



Avoid This (Weak)

- "It appears funds may have been transferred..."
- "The subject stated they were unaware..."
- "A review suggests the policy was broken."



Use This Instead (Strong)

- "The Investigator determined \$50,000 was transferred..."
- "Evidence proves the subject completed required training..."
- "The actions violated policy Section 4.2.1."

Crafting an Actionable Recommendation

The recommendation is the most critical part. It must be a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) directive. Never leave the decision up to the reader.



Poor Recommendation

"Further review should be conducted to determine the best course of action."



Strong Recommendation

"Recommend immediate termination of Employee X and notification to Legal by EOD 10/30."

Anatomy of a Perfect Executive Summary

The final document is a balanced composition. Each section is concise and purposeful, contributing to the overall goal of driving a clear, evidence-based decision.

Suggested Section Proportions

Introduction Key Findings
Impact & Risk Recommendation



Executive Summary: Project Nightingale

Introduction (20%)

Investigation into unauthorized data access on 10/20/25, initiated to identify the source and scope of the breach...

Key Findings (40%)

- Employee X accessed 500+ confidential files...
- Actions violated data handling policy 7.3...

Impact & Risk (20%)

Poses significant regulatory risk (GDPR) and potential financial loss estimated at \$250,000...

Recommendation (20%)

Recommend immediate termination of Employee X and engagement of external counsel by EOD...