

BOTTOM LINE, UP FRONT (BLUF)

Lead with your point.

BLUF is a communication technique, borrowed from the military, for leading with your point instead of building up to it. It puts the most important information at the beginning of a communication, whether written or verbal, so the recipient immediately understands what is needed.

Rather than making someone work through background and context to find the point, BLUF leads with **what they need to know, what they need to do, and when they need to do it**. Using BLUF requires the communicator to determine the essential message and desired response *before* providing context. The result is greater clarity, less back-and-forth, and better answers, faster.

WHEN TO USE IT

- You need a decision, approval, or response
- You're writing to someone with limited time or attention
- The message needs to move quickly
- Your point keeps getting lost

WHAT IT SOLVES

- Messages that bury the ask behind pages of context
- Misinterpretation that turns into rework
- Reply-all threads that spiral because nobody caught the point

HOW IT WORKS

Open with the point

State the decision, request, or conclusion in one clear sentence. Then add only the context needed to support it. Make it clear who is responsible for the next action and when it is due. Keep anything additional below the main point, not in front of it.

EXAMPLES

BLUF: Please approve the revised project timeline by 4:00 p.m. Thursday so we can confirm the new launch date with the client.

BLUF: The client kickoff scheduled for Monday has moved to Wednesday. Please inform your direct reports ASAP. Let me know by end of day, if this creates a client concern or puts another major milestone at risk.

PITFALLS

- ✗ Coaching your team to use it without modeling it yourself
- ✗ Failing to include the timeframe when you require a response
- ✗ Using it on already short messages
- ✗ Softening the point until it's vague
- ✗ Leading with background