



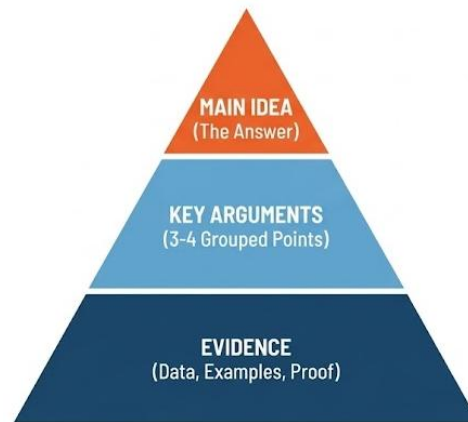
McKinsey Communication Framework

The Minto Pyramid Principle

Lead with the answer.

Support it logically.

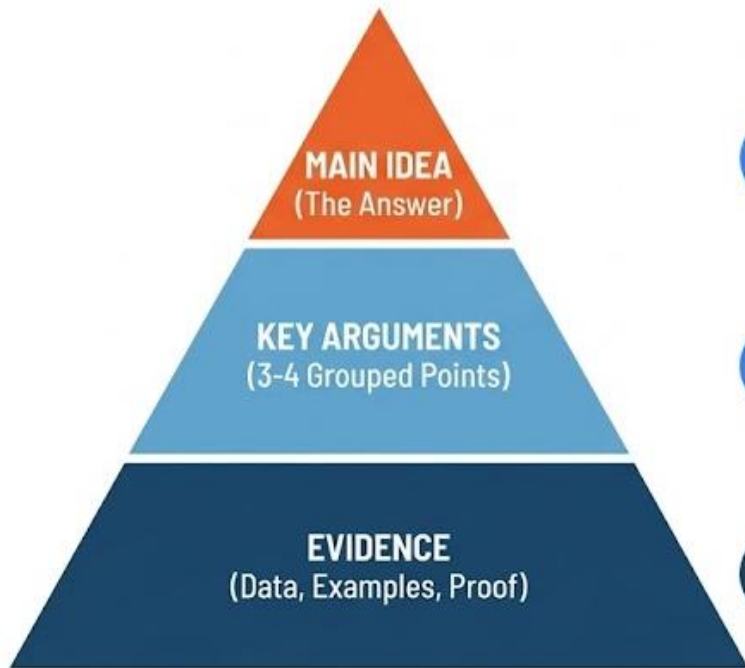
A structured communication framework developed by Barbara Minto at McKinsey & Company for strategy presentations, executive briefings, and consulting deliverables.



www.strategypunk.com

The MINTO Pyramid Principle

Executive Summary: A Framework for Structured Communications



CORE LOGIC PRINCIPLES



ANSWER FIRST.

State your single, clear conclusion upfront. Never bury the lead; deliver the main idea immediately to provide context for the details that follow.



VERTICAL LOGIC.

Creates a continuous dialogue. The main idea prompts a "Why?" or "How?" question, which is directly answered by the supporting arguments below it.



HORIZONTAL LOGIC (MECE).

Arguments at the same level must be Mutually Exclusive (no overlaps) and Collectively Exhaustive (no gaps), ensuring a complete and logical grouping.

WHEN TO USE

- Presenting strategy
- Investor decks
- Board updates
- Commercial proposals

THE SCQA ENTRY POINT

1. SITUATION → 2. COMPLICATION

3. QUESTION ← 4. ANSWER (MAIN IDEA)

Build the narrative by defining the situation, complication, question, and answer.

What Is the Minto Pyramid Principle?



A framework for structured thinking and communication



The Minto Pyramid Principle is a communication methodology that structures messages so the most important point is delivered first, followed by supporting logic — reversing the conventional academic approach of building toward a conclusion.

Origin & Author

Developed by Barbara Minto at McKinsey & Company in the 1970s. First published in *The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing and Thinking* (1987). Now a global standard in consulting and executive communication.

Core Concept

Start with your conclusion or recommendation. Group supporting arguments logically beneath it. Provide data, evidence, and proof at the base. This "answer-first" approach ensures clarity from the very first sentence.

Why It Matters

Executives are time-constrained. Leading with the answer respects their time, enables faster decisions, and ensures your key message is never buried. It is the foundation of all McKinsey communication methodology.

The Three-Tier Pyramid Structure



From conclusion to evidence — structured top to bottom

Main Idea

The Answer — Pyramid Apex

State your single, clear conclusion or recommendation upfront — this is the "answer" the audience is waiting for.

Never bury the lead. One sentence that captures the entire message.

Typically a recommendation, decision, or key insight that directly addresses the audience's core question.

Example: "We recommend entering the Asian market in Q3 to capture \$200M in revenue."

Key Arguments

3–4 Grouped Points — Middle Tier

Logical pillars that support the main idea, grouped by theme using MECE logic (Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive).

Each argument directly answers: "Why is the main idea true?"

Typically 3–4 arguments to avoid cognitive overload.

Example: "Market size is large," "Competitive advantage exists," "Timing is favorable."

Evidence

Data, Examples, Proof — Base

Facts, data points, case studies, and analysis that substantiate each argument.

Quantitative data is preferred — numbers, percentages, benchmarks, and research findings.

Each evidence item directly supports its parent argument above it.

Example: "Asia-Pacific market CAGR of 12% (McKinsey, 2023)," "No dominant local competitor in target segment."

Four Core Logic Principles Drive the Framework



1. Answer First

Start with the main idea or recommendation. Do not build up to the conclusion; deliver it immediately to provide context for the details that follow. This respects the audience's time and focuses their attention.

Never bury the lead

2. Vertical Logic

Creates a question-and-answer dialogue between levels. Every point must raise a question in the reader's mind (e.g., "Why?" or "How?"), which is then directly answered by the points immediately below it.

Each level answers "Why?"

3. Horizontal Logic

Points grouped together must belong to the same logical category. They must follow a clear structural order, such as chronological (time), structural (parts of a whole), or degree of importance.

Consistent logical grouping

4. The MECE Principle

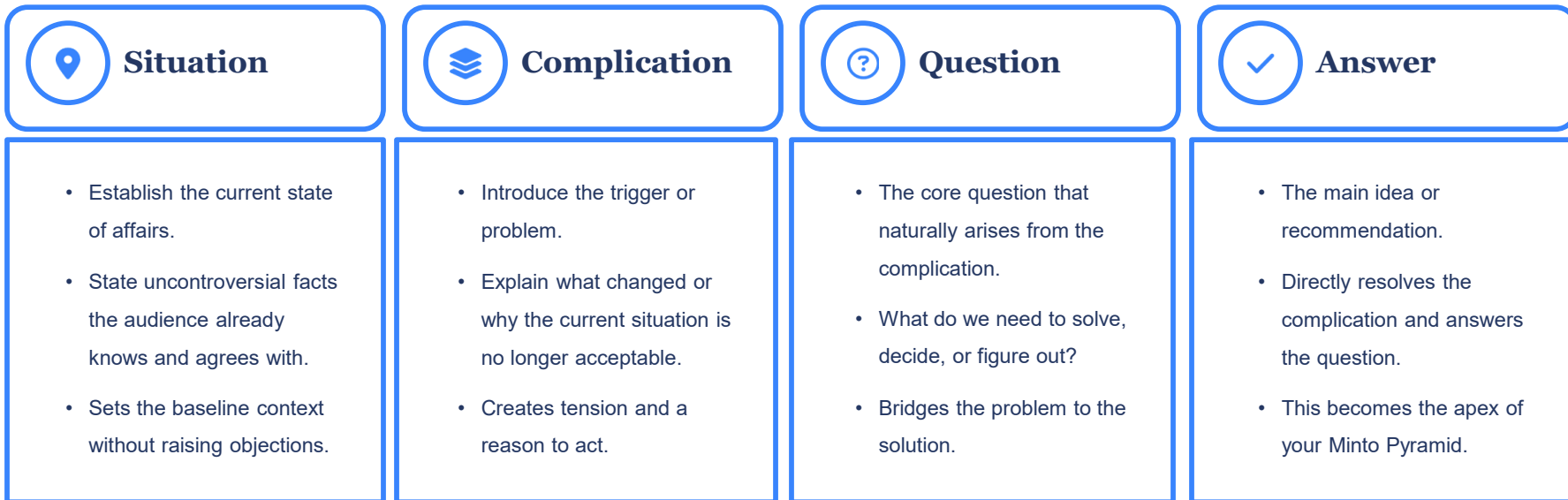
A critical test for horizontal logic. Grouped points must be **Mutually Exclusive** (no overlaps to avoid confusion) and **Collectively Exhaustive** (no gaps to ensure completeness of the argument).

No overlaps, no gaps

The SCQA Model: Structuring Your Narrative



How to build the narrative entry point before presenting the pyramid



Deductive vs. Inductive Reasoning



Choosing Your Argument Style in Business Communication

Deductive Logic

A linear progression of thought where each point builds on the previous one.

1. **Major Premise** (Rule)
2. **Minor Premise** (Fact)
3. **Conclusion** (Therefore)

Deductive Use Case

Best used when the audience is likely to resist the conclusion.

By getting agreement on the undeniable premises first, the final conclusion becomes logically inevitable and harder to reject.

Inductive Logic

A grouping of related ideas that share a common similarity.

- Observation A
- Observation B
- Observation C

Conclusion: Synthesized meaning

Inductive Use Case

The preferred method for consulting and executive communication.

It is faster, easier to absorb, and allows the audience to focus on the core message immediately without following a complex chain.



"If A is true, and B is true, then C must be true"

Use for hostile audiences or proving a controversial point

"A, B, and C all point to the same overarching theme X"

Use for executive briefings and standard business reporting

High-Impact Use Cases Across Strategy and Leadership



The Minto Pyramid Principle is universally applicable across high-stakes business communications where clarity, brevity, and impact are paramount.

Strategy Presentations

Aligning stakeholders on strategic direction by leading with the core recommendation and supporting it with market and financial data.

Investor Decks

Capturing investor attention immediately with the investment thesis, followed by growth metrics, unit economics, and team capabilities.

Board Updates

Respecting board members' time by summarizing the current state and key asks upfront, before diving into operational details.

Executive Briefings

Delivering rapid, actionable insights to C-suite leaders who need to make quick decisions based on synthesized information.

Commercial Proposals

Winning client trust by stating the proposed solution and value delivered first, supported by methodology and case studies.

Context	The "Answer First"	Supporting Evidence
Consulting Deliverables	Core strategic recommendation	MECE framework analysis
Internal Memos	Key decision or policy change	Rationale and impact assessment
Project Updates	Overall status (R/Y/G)	Milestones, risks, and next steps

Apply the Pyramid Principle: Your Next Steps



A step-by-step guide to structured communication

