

# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION (PART 12)**

## **REPORT WRITING**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Hello students, welcome to the series in business communication. Today we are going to study report writing. In this, we are basically going to cover the formats, the patterns and the basic uses of report writing.

### **2. IMPORTANCE OF REPORT WRITING**

Report writing is an essential aspect of organization. It is essentially important because businesses have to carry their routine work and they have to communicate to the audiences and to the organizations whether they are internal or external. Now defining a report, it is a kind of a structured kind of a document where it is a response to a kind of a request or it is account of something or an answer to a question or a solution. Reporting is the life blood of an organization because without reporting the organizations will not have the legal existence; it is a kind of a communication which basically gives a flow of ideas, thoughts and the work procedures to the people. It connects people and persons, one to one and face to face, reporting is important for the organization because it basically gives a legal existence. It increases the productivity, it basically emphasis the uses of the product, it gives you a kind of a legal

protection, analysis the cost structure and basically gives you a kind of a chance which better promotes you in the organization.

### 3. IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Now reporting is basically based on research. What is research? Research to me is as important as or more important than writing the book or the report itself. These are the words by Leon Ores. Now most of the outcome of the research is a systematic attempt to exploit what is known and to make it better, this is by Kevin Kelly. Now in reporting, it is important that you have to analysis the audience, who are your audience, what is their knowledge level, to whom you have to communicate, what are their characteristics? Keeping in this aspect, the characteristics of the audience, you can design your report, now when you come to the reporting aspect, there are basically reporting has kind of functions, they have a kind of pattern and they have a kind of formats. Let's discuss the basic functions of the reports, reports could be informative reports or analytic reports, the patterns could be direct reporting or indirect reporting.

#### **Understanding Report Basics** **informal reports**

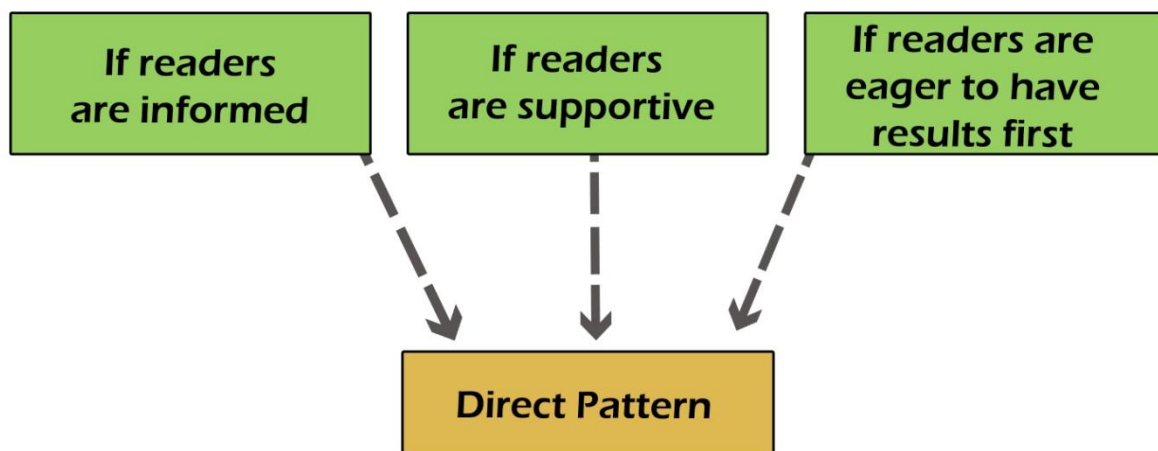
<b>Functions</b> Informative reports Analytical reports	<b>Patterns</b> Direct Pattern Indirect pattern
<b>Formats</b> Letter Memo Manuscript Printed form Digital	<b>Report Delivery</b> In person U.S. mail Fax E-mail or online Online

The formats could be in form of letter, memo, manuscript, printed form or digital form. The delivery could be through the mail ID's or in person, facts or online, uploading on the websites.

So basically when you have a direct pattern of reporting like, see this diagram.

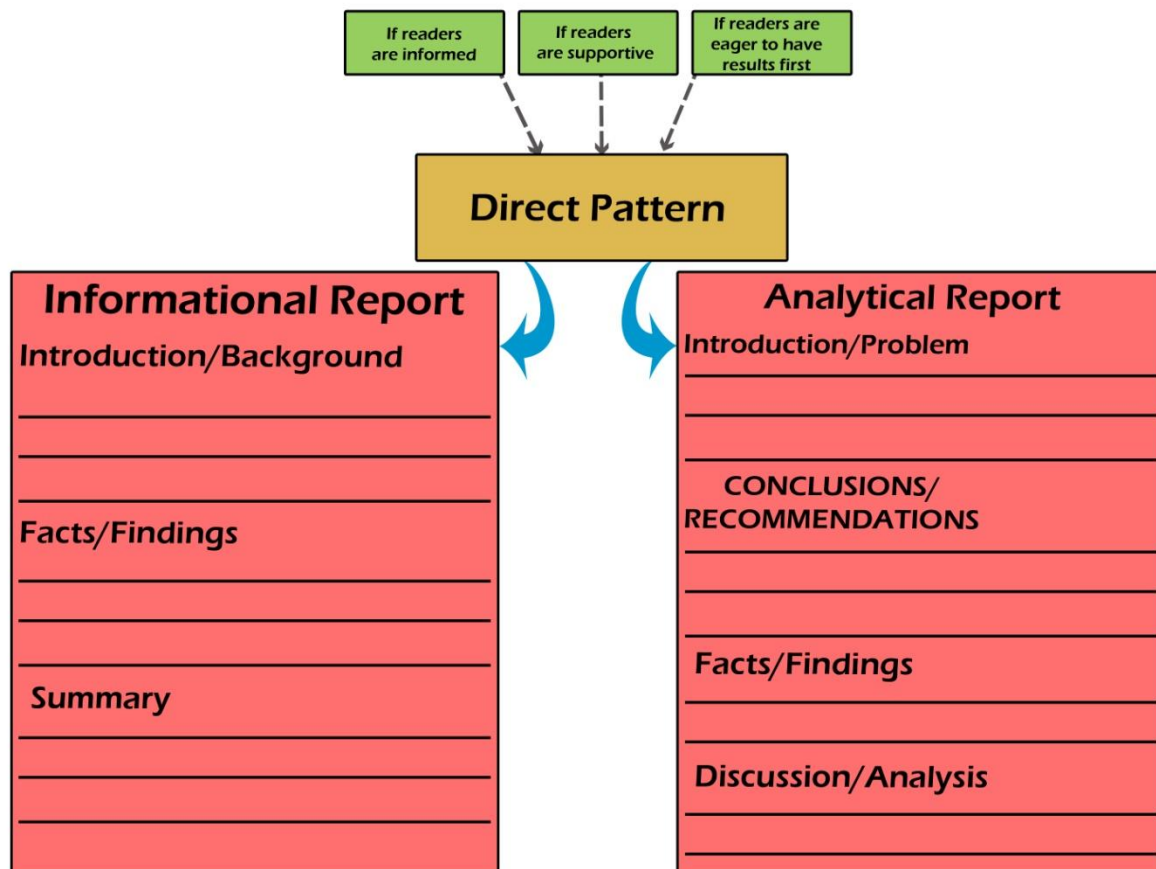
# Patterns

## The Direct Pattern



In this basically we have shown you, there are three blocks, that if readers are informed and if the readers are supportive and if the readers are eager to get the results, you take a direct pattern of reporting to the audiences because they are concerned about what is happening in the organizations, now when you have direct pattern,

we have again got these two blocks-

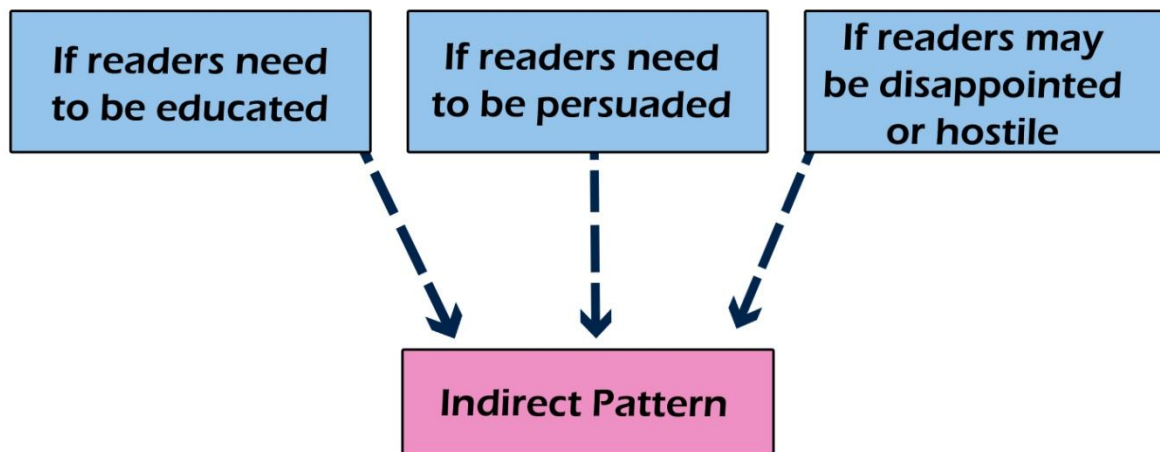


which is the informational report takes a kind of a different format and the analytical forms take a different format. In informational reports, first you have the introduction, and then you have the facts, findings and the summary. But in analytical reporting, you have the introduction first, the conclusion, the recommendation and after that you have the facts, findings and the discussions, so it helps you in a better understanding. Now when you discuss the pattern, we have already discussed the direct pattern, what could be the indirect pattern?

See indirect pattern of reporting -

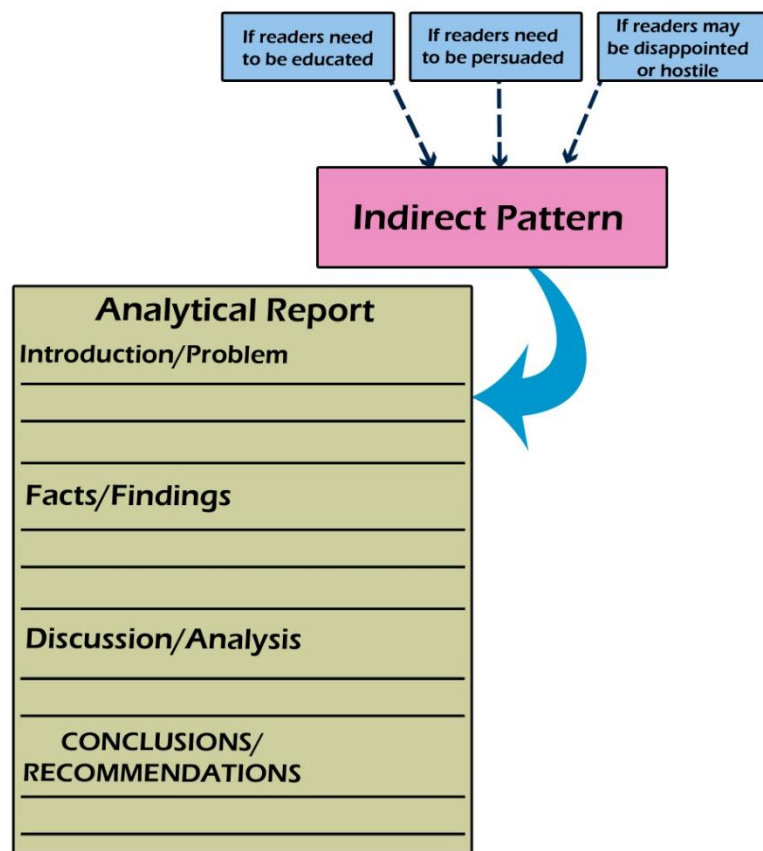
# Patterns

## The Indirect Pattern



is used when the audience is little hostile, they are uneducated or the audiences have to be motivated or persuaded. In this directly you cannot communicate to the audiences, so you have to design a report which directly first overcomes the resistances of the audiences and then comes out to the facts and the findings. The indirect pattern basically has one kind of format that is it involves a kind of an analysis.

This analysis is given in this format-



first you have the introduction, the facts, and then the discussions and then you have the recommendations and the conclusions.

Now report formats could be various forms,

## Report Formats

Letter	Letterhead stationery. Useful for informal reports sent to outsiders.
Memo	Memo style. Useful for informal reports circulated within organizations.
Manuscript	Plain paper. Useful for longer, more formal reports.
Printed form	Standardized forms. Useful for routine activities, such as expense reports.
Digital	Viewed online. Useful for collaboration and for posting to company intranet.

you could have a letter, you could have a memo, and you could have a manuscript, printed form or the digital form. Now let's discuss each aspect in details. First what is letter? Now letter is a kind of an informal way of reporting, it is genuinely used to communicate one person to another in the internal form of communication, it is used on a letter head, basically you have a stationery which is printed already in the organization and this is also you can send these letters to the outsiders because it is of low cost. Memo, memo is a style where it is an internal form of communication; it is a printed document where you have to fill the routine information and pass from one department to another. Manuscript, it is a plain paper kind of reporting, it is useful for longer, descriptive and analytical aspects. Printed form, now these basically are formats available in the organizations which are genuinely less expensive

and they could be used as photo state copies to communicate again and again to the people, they could be used as kind of remembrance to the audiences. Digital is basically it is viewed online, this is uploaded on the website, this is used for collaborations, for press releases, for immediate communication to the external world, and the websites are the best option form of the reporting.

#### **4. GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING INFORMAL REPORTS**

Now let's study, this is the second module, we will study the guidelines for developing the informal reports. Now what are informal reports, informal reports are kind of structures of written communication which are genuinely internal form of communication, they basically try to solve a problem or a purpose. You have to gather a data, and then organize the data, write the first draft and edit and revise and send it to the people. Where to gather the data from? You have to look into company records, make personal observations, use survey or questionnaires, conduct interviews or try to select printed material from books, journals, newspapers and these resources basically are a kind of a secondary source of information.



You have to develop an appropriate writing style. When you design informal reports, what could be your writing style?

I have shown you this block-

## Report Writing Styles – Informal Style

Informal Writing Style	
<b>Use</b>	Short, routine reports Reports for familiar audiences Noncontroversial reports Most reports to company insiders
<b>Effect</b>	Feeling of warmth, personal involvement, closeness
<b>Characteristics</b>	Use of first-person pronouns ( <i>I, we, me, my, us, our</i> ) Use of contractions ( <i>can't, don't</i> ) Emphasis on active-voice verbs ( <i>I conducted the study</i> ) Shorter sentences; familiar words Occasional use of humor, metaphors Occasional use of colorful speech Acceptance of author's opinions and ideas

which beautifully giving you the characteristics of designing an informal report. First let see what are the uses of the informal reports? Basically informal reports are short, they are routine reports, they are genuinely non conventional reports and most of the reports are for the company insiders. This basically gives you impact of warmth, it basically gives you impact of personal touch and a kind of a communication which genuinely people are connected to each other. The characteristics of these reports are, it is used for first person, that is I, we, you, this is the kind of the proposition or this is the kind of thing we are using in the

grammatical form because this is you communicate to the other people. Then use of basically contradictions is not allowed like you cannot do this or you don't do this, these are not allowed. Then you have to use shorter sentences, you have to use occasional humor or basically it is a kind of a colorful kind of a communication which genuinely gets an easy acceptance from the people.

## 5. GUIDELINES FOR WRITING FORMAL REPORTS

Now when this report writing is formal in the organization, the same block shows you the beautiful characteristics of the formal styles which basically change.

### Report Writing Styles –Formal Style

	Formal Writing Style
<b>Use</b>	<p>Theses</p> <p>Research studies</p> <p>Controversial or complex reports (especially to outsiders)</p>
<b>Effect</b>	<p>Impression of objectivity, accuracy, professionalism, fairness</p> <p>Distance created between writer and reader</p>
<b>Characteristics</b>	<p>Absence of first-person pronouns; use of third person (<i>the researcher, the writer</i>); increasingly, however, the informal style is acceptable</p> <p>Absence of contractions (<i>cannot, do not</i>)</p> <p>Use of passive-voice verbs (<i>the study was conducted</i>)</p> <p>Complex sentences; long words</p> <p>Absence of humor and figures of speech</p> <p>Reduced use of colorful adjectives and verbs</p> <p>Elimination of "editorializing" (author's opinions, perceptions)</p>

The formal styles could be when you write a thesis or you collect a research data or it is a kind of a popular document which you have to preserve in the organization, the impact could be the impression in terms of brand building or impact in terms of communicating for a legal purpose. The characteristics is like it is absence of humor and absence of warmth or kind of a personal touch is absent but it is a kind of a more professional and more legal kind of a document where you have to genuinely give a kind of a shape in form of executive bonding and come out with facts and figures which are genuinely relevant for the companies shaping the vision of the future. Now when you write reporting, the basic objective is, it has to be a kind of a document or a communication document which basically portrays your image in the organization, so it has to genuinely convey the issue of the company, basically separates the fact from the opinion. Facts are different; your opinion is different, so your opinion should not color the reporting aspects, the language should be moderate, they should not be severe, your anger should not be there and whatever things you are coating, please give the citations, citations are important. Now when you go for reporting, your headings are important, use appropriate headings. Headings like if you are writing one page continuously, people are not going to read it. So cut short and give a beautiful kind of a colorful gathering of the paragraphs in form of headings. Now when you use the headings, it is important that the first level heading should be centered and it should be bold or it should be underlined. Second level of heading should have a margin. It should be from the left margin. Third level of heading should be indented but all the headings do give a meaningful kind of a structure to your reports. The effective use of headings is important because genuinely it carries a mystery, it gives the audience a kind of appeal, so don't try to use kind of hyperlinks or kind of commas in between, the headings should be a kind of a proper sentence which should genuinely not give the whole meaning or it should not discover the total impact of what is given in the message. It should have a mystery so the audience could be attracted and read it. Now when you prepare typical informal reports, the informal reports are of six types, let see, what are the six types of reports? They

are first is information reports, progress reports, justification reports, feasibility reports, minutes of meetings and summaries. Let see each of these in details, what is information report? Now information report is a kind of a daily routine report where the total working procedure is documented. Like suppose your boss is asking you, please give me a report about the pre paid legal services in the organization, what will be their benefits? So what are you going to do? You are genuinely going to scan the data informally, collect this and documented, but how to do it. See this diagram-

## Information Reports



first is I have given you three blocks, first is introduction, findings and conclusion. Now look to the introduction, explain why you are writing this report? Describe the credibility of the data or whatever the facts you are finding, provide a kind of background and preview what is already

happening in the organization. Then come to the findings. Second headings or the second block says; organize chronologically, alphabetically typically by the importance from most complexes to simpler or from most valuable to less valuable. Now see you have to have a kind of sequence of ideas that is important because you carry the audiences from most important to the least important issues. Group similar topics together, use appropriate headings and then come to the conclusion. Now what is conclusion? This is important because you are summarizing the findings. You are suggesting an action; you are expressing an appreciation for the acceptance of the report in the organization. So this is all about information reporting. Now let's come to the progress report, what is progress report? Progress report basically explains the progress of any project in the organization; you have to fill up whether weekly, monthly or six monthly depending upon the length and the duration of the project. Now progress report is important because this basically puts you in a better shape to see where you are and where you want to go. Now when you see progress reports, let's see, how you make progress reports? First is specify the opening of the purpose and the project which you are already doing in the organization, provide the background information of the project, describe the work already completed and explain the work which is currently in your hands. Anticipate the problems and try to give their solutions and suggestions. Discuss the future also, what will be done in the next few months or what will be the last resort or division of your report, then is the recommendation reports. Now what are recommendations reports? These are justification reports, justification report that is you justify a strategy that this should be incorporated in the organization. It could be a change of equipment, changing a procedure, hiring a new employee or consolidating the present happenings of the organizations into a kind of a big happening or into a kind of a big procedure. Now this recommendation basically comes from the employees because they genuinely face problems in the organizations which have to be assimilated in their work procedures.

## 6. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

When you make these kinds of reports, it is important that you determine the structure.

### Reader Response Determines Structure

Reader will  
likely agree with  
recommendations

#### Direct Pattern

- Problem
- Recommendations
- Facts
- Discussion

Reader may  
oppose  
recommendations

#### Indirect Pattern

- Problem
- Facts
- Discussion
- Recommendations

Now structures could be again, when the readers do accepted and when the readers do not accepted. When the readers do accepted, you have direct pattern and when readers do not accepted, you have indirect patterns. Now this is important, this block is very important because here see the sequence of the writings and the yellow remark will basically emphasis what will be the most important aspect of both the styles of the communication. First is direct pattern, here you have a problem, second

is recommendations, third is facts and fourth is discussion but in indirect pattern, you have problem, supported by facts, discussions and then recommendations because here the audience is difficult. You basically have to give a kind of cost and a detailed analysis so in order to convince the people that you want to carry this aspect in form of procedure or in form of kind of change in the organization you want. Now recommendation reports are important because directly it is impacting your life and it is also impacting the vision of the organization. It has to be agreeable to both, the readers and to the takers. Use indirect form of reporting which is better suggested, identify the problem and react to it positively in a kind of a mild language. The direct problems would be just giving a solution to a problem where the audience is already wanting a solution, they are fed up with a particular situation, that is a kind of a stressful fatigue kind of a situation, so you give a solution that would be genuinely accepted from your part because as a consultant, you basically design this report. So this is an easy way of communication.

## **7. FEASIBILITY OF REPORTS**

Now let's come to feasibility reports, what are feasibility reports, why feasibility reports are important? These are the basic viability reports; they basically give you the sustainability of a particular project into the organization. Whether this project will be actually happening in the field situation or in the actual life, what will be the pros, what will be the cons or what will be the problems which you will face is discuss in the feasibility report. This is the course of the action, for example your company must decide whether you want to add a child care center in your basic organization. Now designing a child care center in your organization is a difficult procedure because you need a kind of a talent, you need a kind of a loveable kind of an environment was the children are looking after definitely in a better way. So you basically try to build

up this report by first announcing your decisions immediately. Then you give the background and the basic factual information why do you need a child care center? Give the benefits of your proposals, describe any problems which you face and then what will be the solutions if the problems arise. What will be the cost aspects and how in longer term, the vision of the company would enhance? Then come to the reporting in form of designing the minutes. What are the minutes of meetings? Meetings are an important part of the organizations and every day you do face a kind of a situation where do you organize meetings but unnecessary wastage of time talking to people would genuinely land you up in problems. Meetings are legally important for the organizations, they have to be recorded, they have to be summarized because they give you protection, and they basically give you solutions to most of the problems in the organization. So you have to summarize the proceedings of the meetings but how to do it. First is, first step is include the name of the group in which you are working, the date, time, place and the name of the meeting. List the name of the attendants and absentees. Describe the dispositions of the previous meetings, confirm the previous meetings, records today's meetings, include the motions taken by each person by name, then also record the vote of thanks and also the actions to be taken. Conclude with your name signature and the signatures of the participants. This is a kind of a legal documentation of whatever you have done in the organization or a kind of a solution which you have designed for a particular problem. Then summaries, what are summaries? Now summaries are a kind of compressed data from a longer publication. A 500 pages report summarize to 15 % of its aspect. It could be a business report or it could be a magazine article or a book article from a very big research which could be uploaded on the website or it could be taken up in the newspaper or into the print media. Now summaries are important because they basically define the goal and the purpose of the document for which the studies have been done for years together. May be a ten year document summarize to such a way that you could read it within 15 minutes. Highlights the research methods, findings, the conclusions and the recommendations, try to omit the illustrations and the examples,



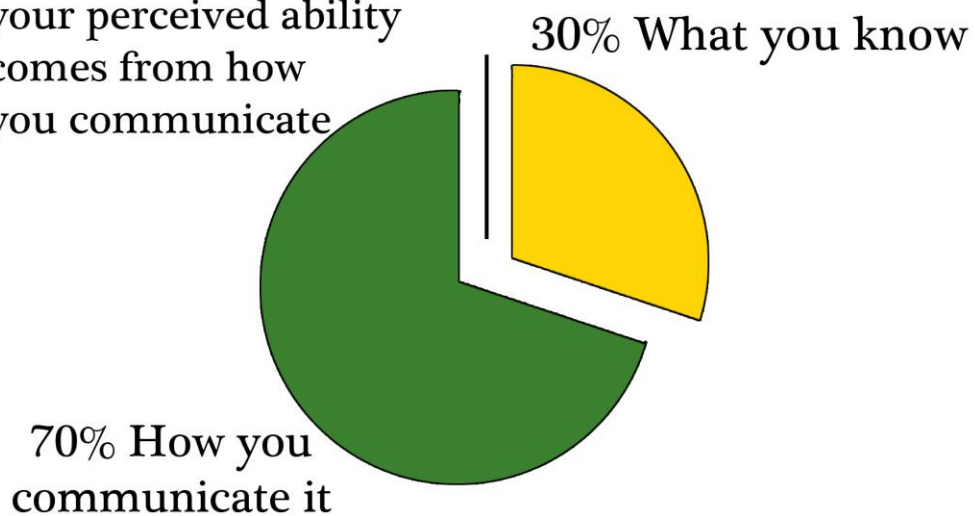
organized the readability for the audiences so that they understand it in a better way.

## 8. CRITICAL SUCCESS FROM REPORTING

Now let's see what is the critical success in your life which you get out of reporting? Critical success which these factors when you incorporates makes your life beautiful. Let's see this diagram,

### Critical success factor for life

The majority of  
your perceived ability  
comes from how  
you communicate



here I have shown you a pie chart, 70 % how you communicated and 30 % of what you know. So the majority of your perceived ability basically comes from how you communicate. It's not what you know but it is designing the way of communication is important and that is the dressing of communication is important and basically gives the shape and vision to your personality. Your personality carried to the organizational personality which basically gives success to the organization. It is these aspects of communication and these forms of reporting which basically give a legal shape to the organization, which give a paper work or they dress up the organization to such that they stand in the market to create the brand and the value. People do believe in reporting because this is the thing which they could see and they could read it otherwise the abstract values and visions which are inside the employees and the emotions cannot be depicted only by verbal communication. It is this written document which basically shapes the basic aspect of the inner aspects or it is the inner brand or it is the inner goodwill of the company which is carried in the reports. Good reports are important assets; they go a long way in designing the shape and the value of the organization, thank you students.