

5 Ways for Engineers to Create Logic that Will Win Over Their Readers

Readers look to logic to make sense of a text, and good logic is one of the best ways to convince readers. Without clear and sound logic, you risk:

- Dissuading readers from trusting you
- Lessening the chances that clients will work with you
- Frustrating and confusing readers
- Portraying you and your organization in a poor light

So, how do you create logic that is sure to win over your readers? Ensure that your documents include the required three parts—a claim, reasoning, and evidence.

1. Start with the main claim.

Look at your document as a whole. Your main claim is what you ultimately want your reader to agree is true. Also, look at each paragraph and section of your document: What do you want your reader to believe regarding that paragraph or section?

2. Find evidence to support the claim.

Evidence may include facts, references to outside sources, tables, graphs, charts, etc. How many pieces of evidence you need depends upon your readers, their biases (do they already believe you or are they skeptical?), your position or role at your organization, and your authority on the topic.

How much evidence you include also depends on how extreme the claim is. For example, if you claim in your proposal that your readers should choose your company for a project, then you may need to give a few pieces of evidence to convince them. However, if you claim that Bigfoot is real, then you'll need a lot of evidence (sorry Bigfoot believers).

3. Use reasoning to connect each claim and piece of evidence.

Think of reasoning as logical conclusions that tie the evidence to the claim. Reasoning is the glue for a logical argument; without it, the argument (and the document) fall apart.

Yet, writers often provide the claim and the evidence, but fail to include the reasoning. Rather, writers expect that the readers will see the evidence and claims and come to the writers' same conclusions. This is not so, though! Writers need to tell readers what they're thinking, how they're thinking, and why the reader should think in that same way.

Reasoning can be several sentences, a phrase, or a word. The key is to create a connection between the evidence and claim.

4. Draw lines from the evidence to the reasoning to the claim.

Highlight all words that are evidence in one color, all words that are reasoning in another color, and all claims in a different color. This is a great visual way to see the pieces of your logical argument and identify what you may be missing.

Then, physically draw a line from each chunk of evidence to its reasoning passage and to the related claim. If you can't draw these lines, then you may be missing a crucial part of logic or your logic may be insufficient.

5. Ask: Why wouldn't my reader believe me?

Rather than looking for why you (the writer) are right, list reasons why the reader may disagree with you. Look for holes in your logic, unconvincing or missing reasoning, an imbalance of claims versus evidence, etc. By asking yourself this, you can beat readers to the punch by answering their questions and refuting them before they even get a chance to say "no." This is a situation where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Application Tool

Element	Answer
Are my claims clear?	
Is each claim supported by sufficient evidence?	
Do I have reasoning connecting each piece of evidence to the related claim?	
Have I addressed possible reasons why my reader may disagree with me?	

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