

Be a more effective writer: Think BLUF

What is BLUF?

I only recently learned about BLUF, which stands for “bottom line up front,” from a woman who works in project management at a computer/software company. In her line of work, she says, she has little time to wade through a morass of details, and needs to know the bottom line first (i.e., what is the project is going to cost).

TL, DR

It's not much different in any type of writing. I am sure you've seen people post articles with the disclaimer “TL, DR,” which stands for “too long, didn't read.” People don't have time to read long, detailed articles or emails, *especially if they are reading them on a mobile device*. People want to know what it's about, and then read it slowly when they have time. This is why subject lines and headlines are so crucial—that's your BLUF for emails and articles. Say what it's about.

Don't bury the lede!

With news releases, it is imperative that the first paragraph carry the important information. The rest of the release is filled with the details and quotes. The same holds for news articles. In journalism, when you don't provide the crucial information up front, it's called “burying the lede.”

Take this article from Eater DC: “HipCityVeg Brings its Vegan Versions of Fast Food Favorites to Dupont Circle.” It's about the opening of the restaurant's second location in Washington, DC, and yet, I have to read through **NINE** paragraphs about how and why HipCityVeg does what it does before I find out the exact address of the new location. The address should have

been in the first paragraph, so that somebody who want to actually visit the restaurant, knows where to find it.

What does the reader *need* to know?

When writing a marketing piece, a blog post, an email, do yourself a favor and think BLUF: What is the most important thing your reader has to know? Being bottom line-oriented and putting the important stuff up front, will make you a better, more effective writer.