The Five Parts of a Project Executive Summary

Project executive summaries are extremely important, because they help top management to find both relevant information as well as employee achievements quickly. Since each business project is unique, project executive summaries also tend to be somewhat unique, every time. However, like every other thing in life, there are good rules to follow while checking project executive summaries. And the things the management needs to check is whether a project executive summary addresses the concerns of the stakeholders through its essential five parts – focus of the project, goals, summary, key findings, deliverables, and appendix (if any).

In this article we briefly go over the five essential parts of a project executive summary, and they may have different headings or titles associated with them in different documents, and may extend to many more parts - these remain the essential sections without which an executive summary would fail to do its job.

- **Project focus:** This is the first part of any executive summary and it describes the problems that were sought to be addressed through the project. This part also summarizes the business needs that caused the problems the project addressed - for example, these might be needs like increasing sales, opening a new office, expanding market presence, reducing procrastination among employees, error reduction, restructuring - and any other specific business needs identified where the project intended to bring about or effect change. This part of an executive summary should not only identify the business needs, but also provide justification for spending resources to address those needs. As a rule, managers try to make this section the most engaging, because otherwise stakeholders would lose interest in reading the rest.

- **Project Goals:** The next part of a project executive summary usually concerns itself in listing the goals of the project. While the previous part lays down the business needs, like "opening a new office," this part mentions the specific goals like "renting office,"
“hiring local staff,” “completing rental agreement,” “securing finance,” and etcetera

- **Summary of the ES:** The executive summary, by itself can become a formidable document for many, and especially for those who have little time. Hence it is necessary to include a summary of the document, once the business needs and project goals have been enumerated. Experience shows, that most top management read the "business needs" or "project focus" part and then skip directly to the "summary" part of the document. If they either like what they see, or are concerned by what they see - they continue. This is why a great deal of attention needs to be given to this section of an executive summary, and in essence it should tell the story of how the work was done and goals and deliverables achieved. The summary can also include an impact analysis of the project for good measure.

- **Key Findings of the Project:** The summary is usually followed by the key findings of a project, and the purpose of this section is to make the management aware at a glance of the key points of value uncovered during project execution. Findings include what the project team learned including both of opportunities and pitfalls as crucial for business while doing the project.

- **Deliverables:** This section enumerates the results of the project and what has been added to the inventory in knowledge and referable materials. Deliverables can include documents like process overview, detailed documents, charts, graphs, checklists, implementation plans, training plans, guidelines for future projects and etcetera.
  Sometimes, if the number of crucial documents required to prove claims made in the executive summary or required to highlight are large in number, then it is the custom to create an appendix and attach such documents there.

A properly created executive summary is essential for understanding business processes and recycling knowledge. It is also essential for quickly highlighting business and employee performance.