CIPS FUTURES EUROPE CONFERENCE 2026 · WARSAW · 26 NOVEMBER

Impress your Board

CXO Level Storytelling and Communication Workshop

Telling your story so the C-suite says yes

Simon Barnes · Executive coach and mentor · simonbarnescoaching.com

Today

About me

- 40 years in procurement, 24 at GSK
- Line leadership: international procurement team of 140, supplying 17 manufacturing sites
- Major programme leadership:
  - Transforming production procurement: over £400m of savings identified
  - Global working capital programme: £583m of cash released
- 10 years running my own procurement business
- Executive coach and mentor

You'll leave with

1. A simple structure for any proposal to senior management
2. A one-page pitch of your own
3. One thing you'll do differently next time

How today works

In pairs

1

Build your pitch

One page. The pyramid principle.

2

Coach your partner

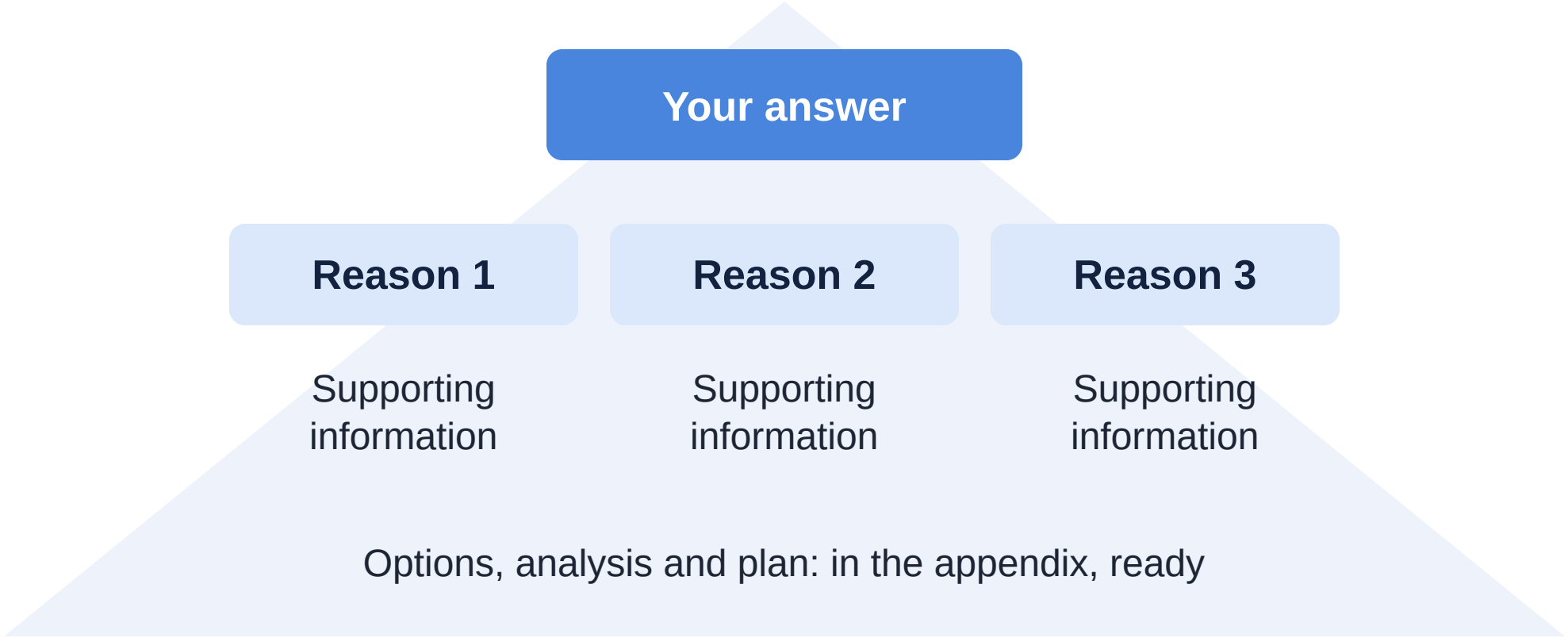
Ask first, then share.

What's said in your pair stays in your pair.

No confidential information. Made-up figures are fine. Just make it convincing.

The Pyramid Principle

Answer first. Then three reasons. Supporting information beneath, only if asked.



Build it bottom up. Tell it top down.

Based on Barbara Minto, *The Pyramid Principle*

Why it works

4

Three reasons land; ten don't.

Cowan (2001)

1st & last

are remembered best. Put your answer first, and finish by asking for the decision.

The serial position effect

Easy

to follow feels more credible. Clear structure makes "yes" easier.

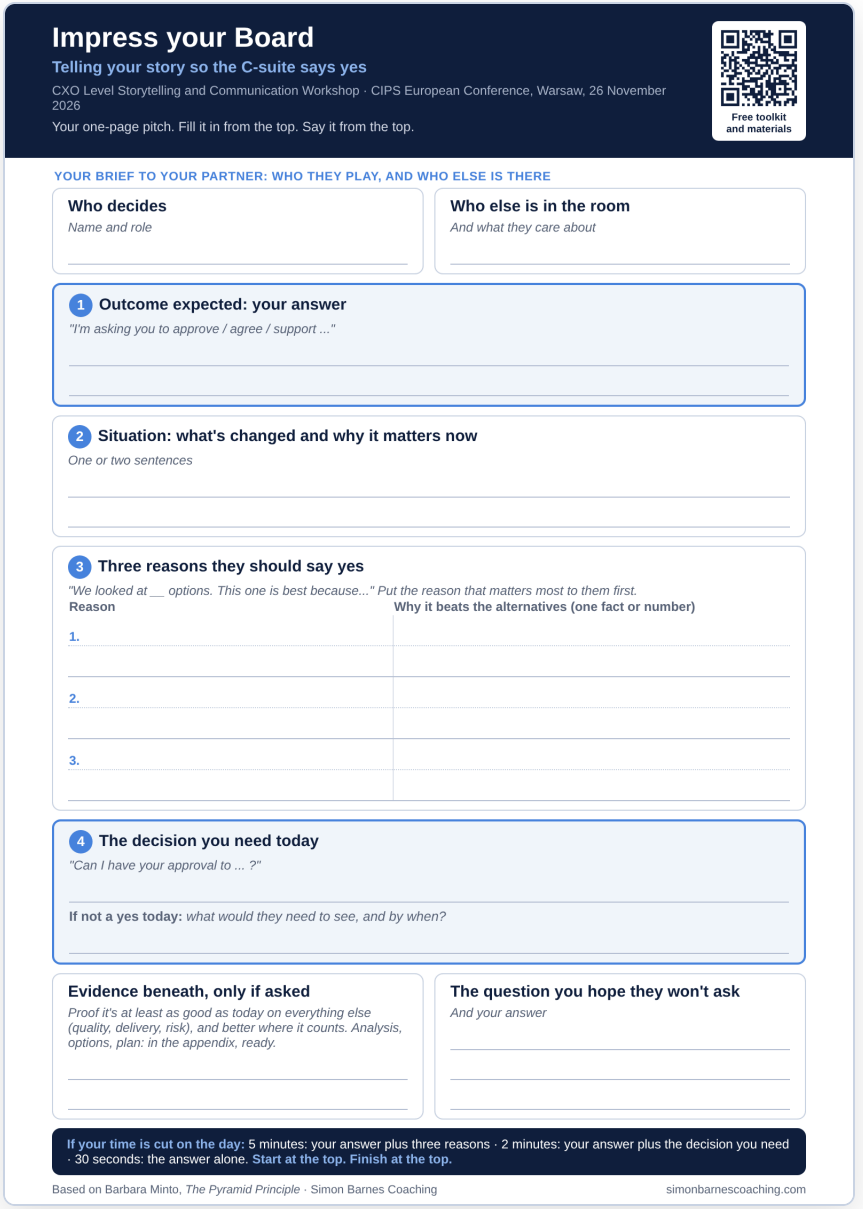
Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow (2011)

Short at the top. Solid underneath.

Your one-pager

Start with boxes 1 to 4

1. Your answer
2. What's changed, and why now
3. Three reasons they should say yes
4. The decision you need today



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CXO Level Storytelling and Communication Workshop · CIPS European Conference, Warsaw, 26 November 2026

Your one-page pitch. Fill it in from the top. Say it from the top.

Free toolkit and materials

YOUR BRIEF TO YOUR PARTNER: WHO THEY PLAY, AND WHO ELSE IS THERE

Who decides

Name and role

Who else is in the room

And what they care about

1 Outcome expected: your answer

"I'm asking you to approve / agree / support ..."

2 Situation: what's changed and why it matters now

One or two sentences

3 Three reasons they should say yes

"We looked at __ options. This one is best because..." Put the reason that matters most to them first.

Reason	Why it beats the alternatives (one fact or number)
1.	
2.	
3.	

4 The decision you need today

"Can I have your approval to ... ?"

If not a yes today: *what would they need to see, and by when?*

Evidence beneath, only if asked

Proof it's at least as good as today on everything else (quality, delivery, risk), and better where it counts. Analysis, options, plan: in the appendix, ready.

The question you hope they won't ask

And your answer

If your time is cut on the day: 5 minutes: your answer plus three reasons · 2 minutes: your answer plus the decision you need · 30 seconds: the answer alone. **Start at the top. Finish at the top.**

Based on Barbara Minto, *The Pyramid Principle* · Simon Barnes Coaching

simonbarnescoaching.com

My example: paper packaging

Illustration only: a made-up example

Box 1 · The answer

Move to eight suppliers, with a one-off £2.4m

Box 2 · The situation

£120m a year with 38 suppliers. Packaging faults stop our lines and reach our customers.

Box 3 · Three reasons

Savings

£9.6m a year (about 8%)

Quality

Fewer line stoppages, and complaints expected to halve

Innovation

Suppliers committed to 10% lighter packs within two years, then ongoing design and efficiency gains

Box 4 · The decision

Can I have your approval today?

Coaching your partner

What to notice

The words

what you hear

The music

how it sounds

The dance

what you see

Ask first, then share

1 **Ask**
Pick three questions from your **blue** or **green** card



2 **Share**
"What worked really well was…"
"I think it would be even better if…"

3 **Finish**
"What one thing will you do differently next time?"

Your turn

10 minutes

Your first minute: say hello

Name, role, company and country

Then: boxes 1 to 4

If you have time: the other boxes

Today was one step of six

The Board proposal toolkit: six steps to a yes

1. Map your approval route
2. Know who matters, and where they stand
3. Condition the key people, so there are no surprises on the day
4. **Write the paper and prepare your pitch**
   Today
5. Check your supporting information and test it
6. Get the decision and follow it through

The full toolkit is free: 18 tools and the worked example, all the way through.

One thing you'll do differently

Write it on the back of your sheet.

Start at the top. Finish at the top.

Free materials, the Board proposal toolkit
and a free introductory call
simonbarnescoaching.com/board-pitch-toolkit

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CXO Level Storytelling and Communication Workshop · Your one-page pitch. Fill it in from the top. Say it from the top.

WORKED EXAMPLE · illustration only, made-up company and numbers

Free toolkit

YOUR BRIEF TO YOUR PARTNER: WHO THEY PLAY, AND WHO ELSE IS THERE

Who decides

Name and role

COO, who chairs the investment committee

Who else is in the room

And what they care about

CFO: payback · Head of Manufacturing: no disruption

1 Outcome expected: your answer

"I'm asking you to approve / agree ..."

"I'm asking you to approve a move from 38 paper packaging suppliers to eight,

two in each of our four regions, with a one-off investment of £2.4m."

2 Situation: what's changed and why it matters now

One or two sentences

We spend £120m a year with 38 suppliers, bought site by site. Packaging faults stopped our

lines 40 times last year, and complaints about damaged packs rose by a quarter.

3 Three reasons they should say yes

"We looked at __ options. This one is best because..." (We looked at four.) *Put the reason that matters most to them first.*

Reason	Why it beats the alternatives (one fact or number)
1. Savings: £9.6m a year (about 8%)	Best of the four; one global supplier lost its saving to shipping costs
2. Quality: fewer line stoppages, and complaints expected to halve	Staying as we are keeps 38 different standards
3. Innovation: suppliers committed to 10% lighter packs within two years, then ongoing design and efficiency improvements	Committed in the tender; only this option gives them the volume

4 The decision you need today

"Can I have your approval to ... ?"

"Can I have your approval today to go ahead, starting in Europe in the first quarter?"

If not a yes today: *what would they need to see, and by when?*

Start in Europe, and come back with the results in six months

Supporting information beneath, only if asked

Proof it's at least as good as today on everything else (quality, delivery, risk), and better where it counts. Analysis, options, plan: in the appendix, ready.

Today vs proposed: price, quality, delivery,

innovation · options scoring · cash flow · plan

The question you hope they won't ask

And your answer

"What if the switch disrupts production?"

Site by site, with 6 weeks' overlap stock.

If your time is cut on the day: 5 minutes: your answer plus three reasons · 2 minutes: your answer plus the decision you need · 30 seconds: the answer alone. **Start at the top. Finish at the top.**