

Jeff Bezos gave Amazon employees strict instructions for crafting the perfect memo — and they can help you pitch any idea

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Jeff Bezos.

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- Jeff Bezos shared his ideas on what makes an amazing memo and passed down the expertise to Andy Jassy.
- At Amazon, memos must be narrative in structure and six pages in length.
- A memo should be written and rewritten, and you can follow a framework involving six components.

Jeff Bezos is very particular about his memos, and so is his successor.

Bezos, the former Amazon CEO, gave us a glimpse into how he likes staff to prepare communications in one of his [annual letters](#) to shareholders. It's a strategy anyone can use to craft an effective memo.

At Amazon, being prepared for a meeting is [more important](#) than pitching the right idea. One way senior executives measure employees' readiness during a meeting is by judging the quality of their six-page memos. Andy Jassy [credited Bezos](#) for teaching him the art of leading the company in his first memo as Amazon CEO.

Bezos' technique was put to the test when Jassy sent out his first company-wide memo on July 6. In regard to Jassy's first memo, [Eric Yaverbaum](#), Fortune 500 CEO-communications consultant, [previously told Insider](#), "if I were his PR, I would have told him to write exactly what he wrote."

The tech giant's famous six-page memos are dense pieces of writing using [10-point font](#) without any fillers. Amazon's teams would spend weeks

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drafting a “narratively structured” note that never contains individual authors' names. Meetings would be held with executives like CEO Andy Jassy at The Chop, a conference room where ideas (and sometimes employees) go to get chopped down to size, [Insider previously reported](#).

Bezos said employees would silently read through memos as part of a “study hall” at the start of meetings, and senior executives would then chime in [after teams consisting of up to 50 people](#) have represented.

“Not surprisingly, the quality of these memos varies widely,” Bezos wrote in the annual letter sent to shareholders. “Some have the clarity of angels singing. They are brilliant and thoughtful and set up the meeting for high-quality discussion. Sometimes they come in at the other end of the spectrum.”

How to write an effective memo

Bezos wrote that you just can't crank out a great memo in a day. He suggested that some might require a week to get right.

“The great memos are written and rewritten, shared with colleagues who are asked to improve the work, set aside for a couple of days, and then edited again with a fresh mind,” he wrote.

Bezos added that giving yourself enough time eclipses actual writing skills when it comes to memos.

"The football coach doesn't need to be able to throw and a film director doesn't need to be able to act," he wrote. "But they both do need to recognize high standards for those things and teach realistic expectations on scope."

Jesse Freeman, former framework marketing head at Amazon and senior director at Akamai Technologies, [wrote in a Medium post](#) that your memo also needs to stand on its own, or allow anyone who might be unfamiliar with the topic to understand it without having to conduct additional research. Freeman provided [the exact framework](#) on how to structure a six-pager.

First, you have to precisely state what the memo is about and list the metrics for success that are being used for your plan in the beginning, [Freeman wrote](#). After you've introduced the proposal and listed your goals, Freeman suggested that you declare the tenets, a the "North Star" or a list of leadership principles about how you should engage with stakeholders and your teammates.

"After the tenets, things get serious fast," [he wrote](#). "The document begins with the state of the business. You need to inform the reader of the current state of the business. There needs to be a lot of detail here, which sets up the points to compare against in the next section."

Other components to the making of Amazon's six-page memo involve giving the reader a snapshot of all the data they need to understand the pros and cons of the subject, as well as a strategic plan on how you plan to execute your plan and achieve the listed goals, Freeman wrote.

"To pull it all together requires a certain amount of finesse," [he wrote](#). "It feels like writing a master's thesis, and a lot of care goes into making sure it is ready before presenting to a group of superiors."

Weng Cheong contributed to an earlier version of this post.

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