

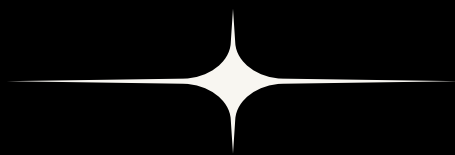


If Your Board Deck Was a Newspaper, **It Wouldn't Sell a Single Copy.**

The CEO's playbook for turning dry updates into front-page stories your board can't ignore.

The CEO as Front Page Editor: A Guide to Creating a Compelling, Engaging Board Deck

A great board deck is not a data dump—it's the front page of your company's story. As CEO, you're not just a leader; in the boardroom, you're also the editor-in-chief, deciding what makes the front page, what gets buried in the back, and what's worth cutting entirely. Done well, your board deck grabs attention, guides focus, and sparks the kind of discussion that moves the company forward.



N.1 Think Like a Newspaper Editor, Not a Historian

Board decks often read like archives—comprehensive but overwhelming. Instead, think about what’s newsworthy right now.

- Lead with what matters most, not chronological updates.
- Prioritize strategic shifts, emerging risks, and big opportunities.
- Use the first three slides to make the board lean in.



N.2 Craft a Compelling Headline for Every Section

Editors know that a headline sells the story before a single paragraph is read. Apply the same rule to your board deck.

- Replace “Marketing Update” with “Marketing: Q3 Pipeline Shortfall Requires Reallocation.”
- Make each section’s title a takeaway, not a label.
- If a headline doesn’t earn attention, rewrite it until it does.

N.3 Design for Skim-First, Deep-Dive Second

Board members skim first, then decide where to dig in. Your deck should serve both reading styles.

- Open each section with an “editor’s summary” of 2–3 sentences.
- Use bold callouts and visuals to anchor attention.
- Keep supporting detail in appendices—don’t clog the main story.

N.4 Front-Load What You Want Discussed

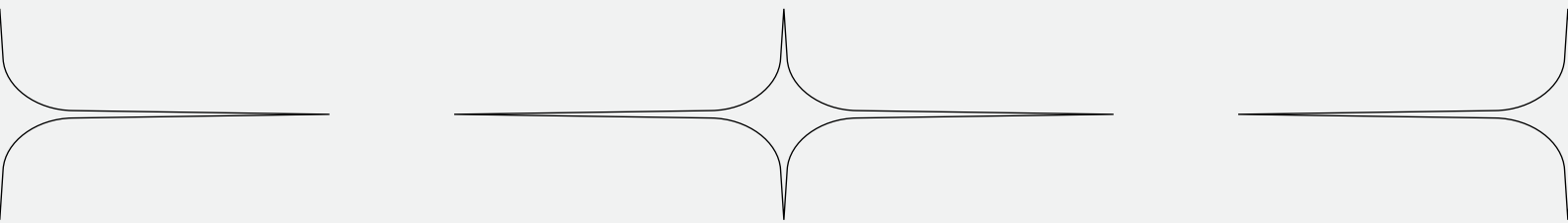
If you bury a topic in slide 37, don’t expect discussion on it.

- Put your most important decision or challenge early, before the room’s energy dips.
- Frame it as a question or choice to be made, not just an FYI.
- Signal the stakes: what happens if we decide now vs. later.

N.5 Use Data Like a Photojournalist Uses Images

A good news photo tells a story instantly. Your data should do the same.

- Present metrics in trend lines, not static snapshots.
- Highlight anomalies or turning points visually.
- Pair numbers with a short narrative: what they mean, why they matter, and what you propose.



N.6 Edit Ruthlessly

Editors kill stories that don't fit the narrative. You should too.

- Cut any slide that doesn't drive a decision, provoke discussion, or deliver a critical update.
- Merge or summarize repetitive content.
- Ask yourself: "If this were on tomorrow's front page, would anyone care?"

N.7 Create a Closing That Hooks the Next Issue

Great editors leave readers wanting the next edition.

- End with a short “coming next” slide—initiatives or decisions on the horizon.
- Tie it back to your opening story so the meeting feels cohesive.
- Give directors a reason to stay mentally engaged between meetings.

N.8 Remember: You Control the Narrative

If you don't frame the story, the board will. A clear, well-structured deck ensures that your priorities get the most airtime and that you're steering the conversation, not reacting to it.

The CEO as Front Page Editor: Final Thought

A board deck is your front page—it sets the tone for how directors perceive your leadership, the company's momentum, and the decisions that matter most. Think like an editor: grab attention early, tell a compelling story, and keep the focus on what will truly move the business forward.

