

Transcript | How to Write the Perfect Policy Brief

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Daisy Ireton: Alright, hello and welcome everybody to this masterclass event on how to write the perfect policy brief. My name is Daisy and I'm the Senior Partnerships Manager here at Apolitical.

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Ilana Munckton: And I'm Alana Monkton, Vice President of Growth here at Apolitical, and I'll be co-mod.

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Daisy Ireton: So today, as I'm sure you all know, is about writing policy briefs that actually get noticed and retained by leaders. You're gonna hear from a couple of experienced public servants on how to write the most effective way possible, based on the brief's larger context and audience.

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Daisy Ireton: Now, for those of you who might be joining an Apolitical event for the first time, welcome. Really glad to have you here today. Apolitical is the world's largest online network for government. We are used by more than half a million public servants and policymakers from across 170 different countries.

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Daisy Ireton: And Apolitical is a strategic partner to governments. We help them to prepare their workforces for the future, and we do this by upskilling through short online courses, peer communities, and as well as, building innovative learning tools designed for and with governments.

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Daisy Ireton: So it would be great to hear from you today. Do let us know by posting in the chat where in the world you're dialing in from and what organization you work for.

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Daisy Ireton: Now, before we get into it, there are a couple of bits of housekeeping that I'll quickly run us through. So firstly, I will mention that this event is being recorded. That's for the purposes of on-demand viewing on the Apolitical website, so please don't record it yourselves.

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Daisy Ireton: And we're also going to be using the recording to generate event insights, and we will use AI-powered software to do this.

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Daisy Ireton: As the session's running on Zoom webinar, we won't collect your video or your audio data, but personal data, if you share in that in the chat, may be captured, so please be aware of that.

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Daisy Ireton: Contact details for any privacy concerns can be found on the apolitical homepage footer. Now we do have closed captions available today, in your own language, and these can be toggled on and off as you wish.

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Daisy Ireton: in your screen settings. My colleague will post some instructions for how to do that in the chat in just a moment.

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Daisy Ireton: And secondly, before we get going, I would love to introduce you to the global policymaking community on Apolitical.

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Daisy Ireton: It's a fantastic space to ask questions that you might not get the time to do, at work or even at events like these, such as how do systems thinking impact policy design and which stage of the policy preparation, do you find most difficult? So if you've ever found yourself asking these questions, you're definitely not alone.

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Daisy Ireton: And this community is a great place to connect with your peers in the public sector and get loads of great answers. Again, my colleague is going to post a link to the community in the chat.

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Daisy Ireton: And I can see that we've got a great global audience today, as always. A couple of folks dialing in from London, which is where I'm sitting. We've got Canada, Romania, Philippines, Scotland, where I know Ilana is also joining us from today. Jamaica. It's great to see everybody here with us.

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Ilana Munckton: Before we introduce our speakers, we're going to run just a few quick polls to get a sense of where you're all coming to today's discussion from. So I will launch into the first poll and I would love to hear from you about which part of writing a policy brief you find most challenging. So there's some answers that you can see up on the screen. Is it writing the executive summary, incorporating data and evidence?

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Ilana Munckton: tone and style, perhaps it's writing the problem statement or something else. And if it is something else, do feel free to weigh in in the Zoom chat and we'd love to hear your thoughts. And I'll give you just a moment to weigh in, to read through those options and vote.

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Ilana Munckton: I can see quite a few, votes coming in already, which is fantastic. We see, seem to have one clear winner so far, which is very, very interesting. I'll give you just a few moments before, before I reveal, what you are all thinking, around, the biggest challenge for writing a policy brief.

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Ilana Munckton: Okay.

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Ilana Munckton: So it looks like an overwhelming majority of you find getting that tone and style right in a policy brief the most challenging part of 36% of you voting for tone and style. Super interesting. Okay, great. We have one more poll, and the second one is time for a wish.

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Ilana Munckton: And the question is, imagine you could improve one thing about using AI in your policy briefs.

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Ilana Munckton: And what would you pick? Again, take a moment to read through. We'd love to know, is it perhaps knowing where the information comes from, sensitive information being handled securely, outputs being accurate enough to rely on, perhaps not losing your own judgment or skills, or clear guidelines on ethical AI use.

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Ilana Munckton: So a lot to think about there, and of course, if there's something else, feel free, to share in the chat.

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Ilana Munckton: I can see lots of folks weighing in as well, which is great. So again, take a moment.

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Ilana Munckton: And I can see once again a clear, a clear winner, which is really interesting. Okay.

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Ilana Munckton: So, hundreds of you have voted already, so I am, confident in sharing, that, you, are telling us that outputs being accurate enough to rely on, is something that you wish you could improve, about using AI in your policy briefs. Really, really interesting.

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Ilana Munckton: Okay, so thank you so much for taking part in those polls. Now, without further ado, introducing our speakers.

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Ilana Munckton: We are very fortunate to have two brilliant guests with us today, Tiffany Landau and Peter Binfield-Smith, who are joining us

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Ilana Munckton: Tiffany is team lead of the Strategic Workforce Initiatives Unit at the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. She has more than a decade of experience across the Ontario Public Service driving high impact legislative reform, regulatory modernization and digital governance. And she brings a human centered approach to complex

policy challenges, translating evidence and partner insights into clear, actionable direction for government decision makers.

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Ilana Munckton: Cannot wait to hear from you, Tiffany. Peter, welcome. Peter is a priority project lead at the UK's Department for Transport. He has experience across diverse policy fields, including major infrastructure, nature, and water, and is currently specializing in fast-paced delivery of departmental priorities.

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Ilana Munckton: Peter has led work in capability building across the civil service and is passionate about encouraging colleagues to develop skills, share knowledge, and drive positive change. Welcome, Peter. Great to see you today. You can read the full bios by visiting the resources tab, which are at the bottom of your Zoom screen. And if you head to the speaker section, you will see all of the bios there. So welcome. It's lovely to have you both here.

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Ilana Munckton: So let's start with an icebreaker to kick things off. You'll each have about 30 seconds to share your response. And we'd love to hear the answers as well of everyone else who's here today in the chat. So do get thinking. And the question I'd love to hear from you all is a bit of a tricky one. Imagine that you have a time machine and the opportunity to travel back into the past to deliver a one-page policy brief.

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Ilana Munckton: to a powerful decision maker. So I'd love to know when and where would you go back to and what would your brief contain? Feel free to think on that for a moment. And while you do, again, I invite our audience to share examples in the chat. And my colleague has also just posted a note of what that icebreaker question is. Okay, perfect. Tiffany, I'm going to come to you first.

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Ilana Munckton: Where and when and what would be your policy brief?

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Tiffany Landau: Yeah. I had to think hard on this one because there's a lot of moments in history. I think it'd be interesting to go back to. But, I am in Ontario, Canada. So I was thinking about some, you know, kind of monumental moments in Canadian history. And we have something called the Indian Act, unfortunately, that, caused a lot of disenfranchisement for indigenous

communities, in in Canada. And so I think I would go back to 1876 to the prime minister at the time, maybe, you know, slightly before the Indian Act is being introduced, and I would

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Tiffany Landau: hand over a brief kind of explaining that, you know, you might, think that this is what is needed to assimilate, indigenous peoples into Canada, but it won't work as intended, and it's actually going to entrench them as kind of legal wards and and take away their, autonomy and and self governance abilities. And, you know, this is going to outlive you in terms of impacts over the next 100, 150 years and really create

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Tiffany Landau: a lot of, problems for government and distrust in the relationship between Indigenous communities and.

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Tiffany Landau: the Canadian government. So that would be my one-page brief, try to pack it all in there. But yeah, thanks for asking.

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Ilana Munckton: What a powerful answer, Tiffany. Thank you so much. I can see a couple of folks weighing in in the chat as well. I'm going to come to you, Peter, next. Your one-page policy brief, when and where would you deliver it?

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Peter Binfield-Smith: Yeah, that's an incredible answer from Tiffany. I think I'm gonna go in a, just to be totally different, I'll go in a totally different direction, not least with a slight stretch of what we might call history, but I will travel back to the Trojan War.

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Peter Binfield-Smith: And I will give a one-page policy brief for options to what to do with the big horse on the beach.

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Peter Binfield-Smith: And, and like all good policy briefs, I should really, or recommendations, there should always be a, a do-nothing option, and that'll probably be my recommendation. Do we really need a big horse?

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Peter Binfield-Smith: And I think that could, that'll probably solve a lot of issues.

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Daisy Ireton: That's a great answer, Peter. Thank you both for thinking about that. And again, also for the questions and responses that we have in the chat.

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Daisy Ireton: So now we're going to get into things.

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Daisy Ireton: Tiffany and Peter have both prepared masterclass presentations drawing on the experience that you heard about, in their bios earlier. Before I hand it to Tiffany, though, we do always leave a lot of time at the end for you to, ask questions.

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Daisy Ireton: So I would prompt you to start thinking about those as you're listening to the presentations, and you can park them in the Q&A tab as we go, and then we'll get to those after the presentations. So Tiffany, I will hand it over to you first to present.

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Tiffany Landau: Thank you.

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Tiffany Landau: Just bring up the slides here. There we go.

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Tiffany Landau: I don't mind pulling them up.

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Daisy Ireton: Victoria, I'm just checking you're still able to share the slides there for Tiffany before she gets going. Perfect.

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Tiffany Landau: Awesome. Thank you.

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Tiffany Landau: So today I'm going to cover, maybe some more macro content around briefing for results. So crafting policy briefs that really drive action. In terms of the agenda.

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Tiffany Landau: First, we'll talk about thinking like a decision maker, so how to know your audience. We'll talk about risk and government priorities, and then we'll talk about understanding the political cycle.

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Tiffany Landau: Then we'll talk about building a strong policy narrative, and that'll focus more on having a clear ask and recommendation, systems thinking, and how you can connect that to your policy brief, as well as theory of change and outcomes, and how you can connect that to your policy brief as well.

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Tiffany Landau: Then we'll cover design for a decision maker. So just briefly talk about some design and visualization tips. And then we'll speak about using AI to strengthen your brief. So some just tips and tricks, for how I in particular find AI to be quite useful for, strengthening your policy advice as well as your narrative.

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Tiffany Landau: So we'll start with Think Like a Decision Maker.

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Tiffany Landau: And first, we'll touch on, you know, what is a policy brief. So what are we focused on today?

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Tiffany Landau: Policy briefs are used to shape opinions and influence decision makers. So with complex issues, we know that real change happens quite slowly, but a policy brief can help inform government and other decision makers to shift their thinking and take action.

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Tiffany Landau: So ultimately, when we're speaking about a policy brief here, you know, we're not so much talking about a long kind of policy report that's summarizing findings.

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Tiffany Landau: We're really talking about the types of briefs where you are trying to influence or ultimately move a decision forward. And those briefs can take many forms, right? So it can be a briefing note, a briefing deck.

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Tiffany Landau: In Canada, we're kind of moving a bit more toward things called placemats, I'll touch on a little bit later. I think a lot of my advice in this presentation is a little bit more slide deck or presentation focused.

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Tiffany Landau: But it, you know, hopefully is transferable across a few different types of policy briefs to kind of influence decision makers.

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Tiffany Landau: So, the first bit, knowing your audience. So, great policy briefs address both political and bureaucratic decision-making needs.

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Tiffany Landau: So really, you know, there's, of course, that bureaucratic lens, which is what are those operational impacts? What is the implementation risk of this policy recommendation? And what are things like the cost, the feasibility, the resources required? But great briefs also address the political lens. And this is where I want to focus a bit of the upfront of this presentation.

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Tiffany Landau: So really clearly communicating why is action needed now, right? Why should decision makers care and why should they move forward with this now?

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Tiffany Landau: Connecting your policy brief back to government priorities, commitments, and mandate, as well as understanding the political cycle and kind of where your policy brief fits within that political cycle.

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Tiffany Landau: So getting into why, you know, why act now? So a decision maker might ask, seeing your brief.

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Tiffany Landau: You know, why should we act now? Why should we care about moving forward with this recommendation, given there are so many complex and competing priorities?

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Tiffany Landau: And so what's very helpful here is to tie that why act now explicitly to risk and kind of use a risk taxonomy. And so often what I'll use in my briefs is these sort of set of five, types of risks. So

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Tiffany Landau: Economic, articulating the cost to growth, jobs, investment, you know, competitiveness, or downstream spending pressures that might result from acting or failing to act. Safety, so visible harm that might result, public safety impacts, infrastructure or system failures.

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Tiffany Landau: Legal, so litigation exposure, human rights issues, or if there may be jurisdictional conflict.

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Tiffany Landau: Social and environmental, so harm to individuals, communities, ecosystems, equity impacts. And then finally, reputational and public trust. So government, you know, being seen as slow, absent, on the wrong side of an issue. The erosion of confidence in institutions and their ability to deliver.

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Tiffany Landau: And this, I think, importantly, should also include showing the status quo as a decision itself that comes with risks. Because I think a lot of the time decision makers think, well, let's just leave it as is. Right? I think it's really important in your brief to articulate that the status quo can often be just as risky as acting and to show how that might play out.

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Tiffany Landau: And so on the next slide, to kind of give you a, concrete example of how I've applied this, back in twenty sixteen in Ontario, we were considering the need for a strategy to combat human trafficking and trying to kind of brief up on this to decision makers.

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Tiffany Landau: And so we use some of this risk taxonomy to articulate the urgent need for this type of strategy. I will say that depending on the policy issue, some risks will be more compelling than others, so you might want to lean into some. I think for human trafficking, we really leaned into the economic, the safety, and the reputational risks.

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Tiffany Landau: So economic for human trafficking, you know, downstream costs across justice, health, child welfare, social assistance, the fact that human trafficking survivors often require years of trauma, addiction, mental health support, that can be very compelling for government in terms of why act now, why, you know, take a coordinated approach to this issue.

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Tiffany Landau: Safety, so articulating that Ontario was a major hub of Canada's police reported cases, and that many victims were girls and young women being disproportionately impacted.

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Tiffany Landau: And then I think on this one, reputational and public trust as well. So at the time, we had a legislative committee report that had come out. We had a media investigation. There was a bill introduced by the opposition.

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Tiffany Landau: And we saw that other provinces in Canada were acting on the issue. And so that was a very compelling kind of story to tell to decision makers about why we needed to act now, really, focusing in and highlighting those three risks.

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Tiffany Landau: And along the lines of what I said earlier, we also articulated the risks of failing to act, right? So, if we fail to act on human trafficking, case volumes would continue to trend upward, public and stakeholder expectations would continue to increase.

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Tiffany Landau: And our government's response would increasingly be measured against the actions taken by other jurisdictions. So, tried to weave that all together to really tell a compelling narrative about why we needed to act now on the issue of human trafficking.

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Tiffany Landau: So on the next slide, you might have decision makers also ask, you know, how does this policy recommendation fit with what we said we would do? Right? So how does this fit with our mandate? And a policy brief is a lot more likely to move forward if decision makers can see how acting on that policy brief helps them deliver on what they've already promised.

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Tiffany Landau: And so it can be very compelling in your policy brief if you can identify

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Tiffany Landau: Which government priorities your policy brief advances, either directly or indirectly. If you can use the government's or your decision maker's own language from their kind of priority and public documents.

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Tiffany Landau: And if you can consider the whole of government picture. So if your issue is helping to deliver on another department or ministry's mandate, articulate that in your brief. It can be very compelling, for decision makers as an overall picture of why we should act.

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Tiffany Landau: And so on the next slide, we just have a few examples of what you might draw on if you're trying to, kind of

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Tiffany Landau: use the government's own language from those priority documents. So you could look at the budget, you could look at the speech from the throne, you could look at mandate letters if those are public, or you could look at kind of strategic and published plans. So I have an example here from the Ministry of Labour in Ontario, and kind of pull in that language to show

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Tiffany Landau: how your policy recommendation connects back to these mandate priorities and how it advances these priorities.

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Tiffany Landau: And then the third thing that, you know, political decision makers might ask is, is this the right moment to move this forward? And, you know, what what are we moving forward vis a vis the mandate, and where we're at in the cycle? So your policy brief will land differently depending on when it arrives in the political cycle. And political capital, risk appetite, time horizons, they all shift.

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Tiffany Landau: across a government cycle. And so the way you're framing your ask in the policy brief should really match that moment.

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Tiffany Landau: Now this kind of reflects, like, Canada's electoral system, but I think

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Tiffany Landau: Early in the mandate, years one to two, that's where you have maximum political capital, right? They're looking to kind of make bold structural proposals and government wants signature initiatives that will really define their term. And so you can position your policy maybe as a bold reform during this time. Then we have mid mandate, years two to three.

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Tiffany Landau: The focus shifts from announcing more to delivering, and the appetite for proposals is more on things that build or course correct existing commitments. So you might frame your policy brief and recommendation in mid mandate as more of a, you know, delivery improvement or delivering on the existing kind of commitments from early mandate.

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Tiffany Landau: And then once you get kind of late mandate and pre-election, the risk appetite really drops leading up to the election, the time horizons compress, and so...

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Tiffany Landau: They will really favor deliverables that land fast and visibly. So you may want to kind of position your policy brief and recommendation as a quick win or at least kind of highlight what those quick wins are in addition to sort of the longer term impact so that you can sell that recommendation to decision makers.

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Tiffany Landau: So next we'll talk about building a strong policy narrative.

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Tiffany Landau: So if we go to the next slide, I think one of the critical pieces when you're building a policy narrative and writing your brief is what is that story that you're trying to tell to decision makers?

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Tiffany Landau: And one way to make sure that that really clearly comes through is to bookend your policy brief. So you want to lead with the destination, so very clearly right up front. What is the problem? Why act now, tying back to those risks, and what decision is being sought? And then you wanna close by returning to that ask. So the last thing that the decision maker sees.

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Tiffany Landau: is that decision in front of them? And the test here would be, if the decision maker reads only the first and the last, you know, paragraph or slide of your slide deck, do they know exactly what you want from them? Is that clear?

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Tiffany Landau: On the next slide, we talk a bit about taking a systems view. So we know that policy problems, you know, are increasingly complex.

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Tiffany Landau: They rarely live inside of one area's mandate exclusively. So I think decision makers are really looking to see that we understand that clearly and that we're articulating what that means. And so in your policy brief, you wanna show that you've traced the upstream causes. So what's driving this problem? Right? Sometimes we're focused on kind of actually the symptom of a problem. We wanna distill down to what is actually driving this or what are the multiple drivers.

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Tiffany Landau: And then the downstream impact. So what does acting or not acting kind of set in motion elsewhere in the in the system?

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Tiffany Landau: And so a couple of tools to help you do this and to help inform your brief, I have here are a problem tree and system mapping. So a problem tree is something that you can use to map kind of the core problem in the middle.

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Tiffany Landau: And then you will kind of map the root causes along the roots, and then you'll map the effects along the branches. And that really allows you to keep your brief anchored on causes rather than symptoms, and again, to clearly articulate some of the downstream impacts of this issue.

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Tiffany Landau: And then the second tool that you can use to inform your brief is systems and kind of causal loop mapping. So this is where you would, on the right here, sketch the actors, flows, the feedback loops around your issue. And that kind of reveals reinforcing dynamics where problems are compounding, where an intervention might trigger effects elsewhere, and that will help you articulate in your brief, again, what are some of the broader system impacts of this recommendation?

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Tiffany Landau: And how it ties to other, you know, kind of aspects of the system.

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Tiffany Landau: And then on the next slide, you know, decision makers will often ask, how will we know that this recommendation worked? And so a good policy brief really needs to tell a solid result story. We can't kind of leave measurement and outcomes to the end of the process. We need to include that in our policy brief very clearly. So, a couple of ways of doing that is to define success clearly upfront. So what changes for whom, by when?

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Tiffany Landau: Make the theory of change explicit, and we'll talk a bit about this on the next slide, but if we do X, we expect Y, which would lead to outcome Z.

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Tiffany Landau: And then outline how results can be communicated and when. So, again, this might tie back to where we're at in the political cycle and the mandate, but articulating in your brief, you know, what can the minister point to in six months as results? What can the minister point to in two years? What might the minister be able to point to at reelection?

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Tiffany Landau: Articulating those communication points can also be very powerful in kind of selling your brief and showing how results can be communicated by government.

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Tiffany Landau: And so another tool that you might use to help inform your brief kind of on the back end is to do something called a theory of change, where you sort of map out, these are the core elements of my policy, you know, proposal. These are the mechanisms of change that I'm looking to advance.

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00:24:37.760 --> 00:24:55.159

Tiffany Landau: And then ultimately, these are the early impacts that would be seen. These are the mid to long term outcomes. And ultimately, this is the return on investment. And when you map that out in sort of a theory of change kind of manner, that allows you to tell a clearer story to decision makers about what kind of impact and outcomes your policy would ultimately achieve.

114

00:24:56.570 --> 00:25:02.239

Tiffany Landau: Now we'll talk just briefly about designing for a decision maker. So if we go to the next slide.

115

00:25:03.160 --> 00:25:23.900

Tiffany Landau: I think there was some interest in the poll about, you know, writing in plain language, and that's something I'll talk about in terms of using AI as well. But I think it's really helpful to kind of, you know, draft your policy brief and then do one to two passes to really cut jargon, shorten sentences, and lead in your sentences with the so what. So just make sure that you're articulating that clearly.

116

00:25:23.900 --> 00:25:35.479

Tiffany Landau: And the test would be, you know, could the minister explain your recommendation to a journalist in one sentence? If you're not getting that from your brief, maybe go back, do a bit more revising, a bit more plain language there.

117

00:25:35.640 --> 00:25:52.669

Tiffany Landau: Grounding the abstract in people. So using personas, using real world scenarios, and using quotes from impacted or interested parties can really make your brief a lot

more person centered and a lot more compelling and kind of stick with decision makers. So that's another, trick that you can apply to your briefs.

118

00:25:52.880 --> 00:26:06.169

Tiffany Landau: Using a design eye, this is a bit more for slide decks and PowerPoints. But in Canada, sometimes we're shifting from more dense briefing notes towards more decks as well as something called a placemat, which is sort of like a one slide summary deck.

119

00:26:06.170 --> 00:26:16.480

Tiffany Landau: And some tips there is to use visual hierarchy. So white and blank space, boxes, icons, one idea per visual zone can be very compelling in terms of design.

120

00:26:16.620 --> 00:26:32.669

Tiffany Landau: And then finally, letting data tell a story. So try to use multiple data points sequenced deliberately to tell the problem, the trend, the cost of an action, and always visualize rather than, you know, kind of using tables and and long charts where you can, to really tell that story to decision makers.

121

00:26:33.170 --> 00:26:50.129

Tiffany Landau: And I'll just show on the next two slides some examples of what I was referring to a placemat. So this one is from the federal government and just brings together, a data strategy just in one slide, kind of visually showing, you know, all of the, you know, what are we doing, the potential impacts there, and the outcomes. So just

122

00:26:50.130 --> 00:26:56.000

Tiffany Landau: Again, a visual, quick way to show decision makers why we should act and what the outcomes would be.

123

00:26:56.480 --> 00:27:01.279

Tiffany Landau: And then the next slide, this is more of a public facing communication with stakeholders.

124

00:27:01.280 --> 00:27:18.809

Tiffany Landau: But this is a fact sheet that we had put together in Ontario to just very quickly show, new standards of care for dogs kept outdoors, that were in a regulatory amendment that was done. And again, very visual, kind of just showing everything on one page so that folks can use that as a visual aid and communicate with their stakeholders as well.

125

00:27:20.380 --> 00:27:24.820

Tiffany Landau: And then finally, we'll just talk about some tips and tricks to use AI to strengthen your brief.

126

00:27:24.910 --> 00:27:45.459

Tiffany Landau: I know there was also interest in that in the poll and, some concerns about accuracy. I definitely share those concerns. So we always say in Ontario, it's kind of a co pilot rather than a pilot. Right? So you're working with AI, but you're ultimately the one responsible for the outputs. You're fact checking all of that. And so I will say, you know, this is advice more geared toward where your organization has.

127

00:27:45.460 --> 00:27:50.850

Tiffany Landau: an internal approved generative AI model that has that enterprise data protection.

128

00:27:50.850 --> 00:27:55.300

Tiffany Landau: You never wanna put sensitive or confidential material into public AI tools.

129

00:27:55.300 --> 00:28:11.760

Tiffany Landau: So just make sure you know your organization's responsible AI use policy before you start. But just three main ways that I use AI. One is as an editor and kind of a plain language partner. So use AI as your distillation partner after drafting and to cut jargon.

130

00:28:11.760 --> 00:28:21.160

Tiffany Landau: And just an example of a prompt would be to ask it to rewrite the section at a grade eight reading level without losing the policy nuance and to kind of explain to you, you know, what it removed and why.

131

00:28:21.710 --> 00:28:31.200

Tiffany Landau: The second would be a thought partner. I really love using generative AI this way. So you can kind of upload your policy brief draft and ask it to find the gaps, the holes.

132

00:28:31.200 --> 00:28:46.660

Tiffany Landau: the hard questions before your decision maker does. So, almost like you're having a debate. Right? Upload it into AI and say, argue against my recommendation. What

would the strongest opposing policy brief say? And then you can look at what it says and kind of think about whether those gaps are valid, legitimate, how you might address them.

133

00:28:46.900 --> 00:28:59.950

Tiffany Landau: And then finally, as a communication strategist. So use AI to help align your brief, as I talked about earlier, with government language on mandate and priorities. So a prompt you might use is, here is my brief.

134

00:28:59.950 --> 00:29:16.760

Tiffany Landau: And the government letters, you know, mandate letter, budget, drone speech, you can upload those to generative AI, your kind of internal model. And, you know, ask it to rewrite my key messages using the government's own framing and terminology to help, kind of sell your your policy brief to decision makers.

135

00:29:17.330 --> 00:29:25.449

Tiffany Landau: So that is it from me. I hope those were some helpful tips based on what I've applied in my career, and I'll turn it back over to Daisy.

136

00:29:25.890 --> 00:29:36.280

Daisy Ireton: Thank you so much, Tiffany. I really loved, the bit you mentioned right at the top there about the, the dual lens of both the political and the, the bureaucratic and having that as a kind of

137

00:29:36.280 --> 00:29:53.189

Daisy Ireton: a frame, when you're thinking about this. So, Peter, I'll hand it over to you in just a moment. But before I do, again, just another moment to really encourage everyone to get your questions submitted, in the Q&A, tab that you'll be able to find at the bottom of your screen.

138

00:29:53.190 --> 00:30:01.340

Daisy Ireton: Don't hold back. We've got two experts with us in the room and there is no such thing as a bad question. But Peter, over to you for your presentation.

139

00:30:02.750 --> 00:30:05.410

Peter Binfield-Smith: Great. Hopefully we can share some slides.

140

00:30:05.410 --> 00:30:30.399

Peter Binfield-Smith: And apologies, I'm coming to you from a phone rather than a fixed computer, but we're going to make it work. And also, there's a heat wave in the UK at the moment. We're having a great time with it. So thank you so much, Tiffany. I think that's a really good sort of look at the strategic level that we might sort of look at the whys and the hows of how we would set out our policy brief. So I'm going to now dive into sort of some really

141

00:30:30.400 --> 00:30:33.369

Peter Binfield-Smith: specific examples, around.

142

00:30:33.410 --> 00:30:44.299

Peter Binfield-Smith: around how you can, sort of principles I apply and questions I ask myself to improve my writing, and that you can apply to your policy briefs as well. So, if we go to the next slide, please.

143

00:30:46.880 --> 00:30:54.589

Peter Binfield-Smith: So I have five principles, and we'll go through each of them, and we'll go give a little example for each. So again, if we, if we drop down.

144

00:30:56.310 --> 00:31:07.130

Peter Binfield-Smith: Great, so these are my 5 principles for each. I'm going to go through why I think they're important, the implications of them, and then share a little example that you can use to inform your own practice.

145

00:31:07.420 --> 00:31:10.399

Peter Binfield-Smith: So starting with the first one, right? So...

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00:31:10.400 --> 00:31:19.579

Peter Binfield-Smith: your reader wants, the answer, not the question, right? So, in policy, there are very distinct roles. You, as the briefer.

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00:31:19.580 --> 00:31:39.330

Peter Binfield-Smith: are the person that's going to be in the detail. They're going to know everything about the policy area. The senior decision maker, the minister, the senior official are going to be the ones who make those decisions or communicate key messages in key forums. And those are two distinct roles. And therefore the knowledge that you're going to need to have in both situations is going to be very different.

148

00:31:39.430 --> 00:31:48.959

Peter Binfield-Smith: And so when you're writing your policy brief, you need to make sure that whatever your recommendation is or whatever your key message is needs to come up front and immediately.

149

00:31:48.960 --> 00:32:01.640

Peter Binfield-Smith: In our team at the moment, we've been talking about two different kinds, of communication quite a lot, so that's deductive, communication and inductive communication. I've got two examples up, on the slides, about

150

00:32:01.640 --> 00:32:11.210

Peter Binfield-Smith: something I might use in everyday life, right? If I was talking to my wife, and my wife came home, and I said to her, look, I know we love... you both love Taylor Swift.

151

00:32:11.300 --> 00:32:30.519

Peter Binfield-Smith: She's gone on tour. I've seen some tickets available. I had to ask quite quickly and you were out. And this is the reason that I've spent £400 on Taylor Swift tickets, right? That would be a reasonable way to communicate that. What I'm trying to do is take her through the story so that when I reach the final key information at the bottom, she isn't mad at me.

152

00:32:30.780 --> 00:32:45.500

Peter Binfield-Smith: We could flip that around, though. We could say, inductively, we could start with the key message, which is that I've spent £400 on Taylor Swift tickets, and then try and sort of provide, information to support that. So let's see how that looks in a policy setting. So we go down to the next slide.

153

00:32:47.860 --> 00:33:01.549

Peter Binfield-Smith: So we apply that to a deductive paper, a deductive method to a deductive policy paper. We could set out the background, we could then set out some information, we could lead our senior official through, and then finally, at the end, we can say, and therefore, this is what we should do.

154

00:33:01.760 --> 00:33:21.460

Peter Binfield-Smith: Now, the big issue with doing it that way, even though that's a natural way of communicating, is that our senior official or our minister will not know from the get-go what the key information is or the key decision is. Therefore, they can't properly apply the information

that they're hearing. You're leading them rather than informing them. So we need to follow this inductive

155

00:33:21.460 --> 00:33:38.989

Peter Binfield-Smith: technique for our papers. We need to say straight at the top, what are we talking about? We need to say exactly what we're recommending, and then anything below that, any further information that we add, can inform and can shape their, their sort of thoughts around it while they know the full picture. So that's my first principle. If we go down to the second one.

156

00:33:41.170 --> 00:33:52.169

Peter Binfield-Smith: So, second thing to remember, is that your reader is always going to be having a busy day, because let's be honest, we're all government officials, so we're always having a busy day. So...

157

00:33:52.430 --> 00:34:04.449

Peter Binfield-Smith: Although it would be nice to imagine that all of our carefully crafted briefings are going to be read very carefully by our senior officials, in most cases, a lot of the documents that we pore over for many days are going to be read.

158

00:34:04.520 --> 00:34:28.129

Peter Binfield-Smith: At a glance on the way into a meeting, maybe while somebody else is talking, maybe in the back of a van as they travel places. I don't know what most of us are traveling in vans, but we'll move past it. So if that's the case, we need to focus on making our briefings as clear, as brief and as scannable as possible and make sure that even if all they're doing is glancing at your paper as they walk into a meeting, they can get those key pieces of information.

159

00:34:28.469 --> 00:34:48.270

Peter Binfield-Smith: Now, I think Tiffany actually really set out some good ideas around this with sort of making that very visual, making these visual policy communication techniques. I think that's really true. A way I like to think of it is by using dyslexia-friendly writing advice. So I'm dyslexic. There's loads of really good dyslexia writing advice out there.

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00:34:48.270 --> 00:34:53.529

Peter Binfield-Smith: And I think a lot of the, sort of principles and tips really apply for policy briefings as well.

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00:34:53.530 --> 00:35:06.230

Peter Binfield-Smith: So things like chunking up the content so it can be clearly seen. Things like making sure each paragraph and each point you make has one clear message in it. And things like highlighting key information, making sure you're doing jargon-free language.

162

00:35:06.270 --> 00:35:11.760

Peter Binfield-Smith: Another thing I've been using a lot at the moment is this inverted pyramid model, which I got from Dyslexia Sc

163

00:35:11.970 --> 00:35:22.759

Peter Binfield-Smith: So this says that when you're writing your briefing, this applies to the whole document, it applies for individual paragraphs as well. Make sure right at the start you have really your key information that they need to know.

164

00:35:22.820 --> 00:35:34.139

Peter Binfield-Smith: then support it with information. And then it says at the bottom, if there's nice to know information, they can have that. I would say in your policy brief, we don't need any of that nice to know information, let's keep it all relevant. Let's see how that looks in an example.

165

00:35:37.940 --> 00:35:49.039

Peter Binfield-Smith: So, on the left, we've got a description from a policy paper informing a minister about why it's good to plant urban trees, and plots with it is really good to plant urban trees, we should all do that.

166

00:35:49.320 --> 00:35:50.150

Peter Binfield-Smith: But...

167

00:35:50.700 --> 00:35:58.029

Peter Binfield-Smith: If we were to glance at that as we go into a meeting, or if we were to look at that when we're very tired, would we be able to pull out that key information?

168

00:35:58.030 --> 00:36:13.120

Peter Binfield-Smith: Probably not, right? It's all very compacted together, so let's apply some of those dyslexia-friendly techniques, right? We've separated out on the right there, separated out the key points into 4 different paragraphs. We've put the key information up front, we've highlighted it to make it really, really clear.

169

00:36:13.120 --> 00:36:23.460

Peter Binfield-Smith: Now we can, just glance at that, and we can take on all that key information. You'll also see that I've reduced the content there, making sure any extraneous information has been eliminated.

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00:36:23.550 --> 00:36:25.100

Peter Binfield-Smith: We'll go down to the next

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00:36:29.160 --> 00:36:48.259

Peter Binfield-Smith: So your brief is probably not the top priority. This is sad to know. However, it's probably going to be the case, right? We can live in our policy areas and live in the detail and make sure we think that they're the most important things, because otherwise, why would we keep turning up day after day to sort of trail away at this stuff?

172

00:36:48.300 --> 00:37:06.329

Peter Binfield-Smith: With our senior officials, a lot of the time, though, it's going to be one of many areas that they're looking after. So, when we come to... they come to read their policy briefs, it's kind of unlikely that they're going to remember every detail that you've told them before. So, when we're making our policy briefs, we need to make sure all the information is upfront and available to them.

173

00:37:06.330 --> 00:37:11.490

Peter Binfield-Smith: But like we had on our last slide, right, if we leave it too dense, this is going to be really, really difficult.

174

00:37:11.670 --> 00:37:26.150

Peter Binfield-Smith: So I would ask you, right, which of the two examples on the screen there is the more appropriate way. In this case, right, we're writing a Q&A for a project for maybe a senior official to represent in a meeting.

175

00:37:26.320 --> 00:37:31.000

Peter Binfield-Smith: So both are answering the same question, which is a better one, right?

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00:37:31.370 --> 00:37:38.919

Peter Binfield-Smith: Obviously, both of these, are not going to be, not going to be appropriate, right? That one on the left, short, it's very short, it's very direct

177

00:37:38.920 --> 00:38:03.319

Peter Binfield-Smith: But it gives very little flexibility for the senior official to answer questions around that. What if someone asks them the question in a slightly different way to that? They don't have that backing of the information. That's going to be really challenging for them. On the left, loads of information is provided. But again, thinking about if they're just going to glance at that before they answer the question, there's loads of numbers in there. Which one is the one that's going to be the most appropriate to answer that question?

178

00:38:03.370 --> 00:38:10.359

Peter Binfield-Smith: it could lead to a lot of challenges, right? So let's think how we can improve this. We go down to the next, slide.

179

00:38:13.300 --> 00:38:29.250

Peter Binfield-Smith: So let's turn this, around. Let's take the positives from that first example, and really highlight at the top there, we've got a clear response. So if a minister has asked this question or a senior official has asked this question, they know exactly what number they should say and how they should deliver that.

180

00:38:29.400 --> 00:38:47.289

Peter Binfield-Smith: But to give them the flexibility, we've then separated out, we've put in background, lots of accessible information, not buried in a load of text, but really, really clear exactly the information that they might need. That gives them the flexibility then to bring in extra background if they want, or give supporting information, and also

181

00:38:47.290 --> 00:38:50.849

Peter Binfield-Smith: Maybe provide a little bit of flexibility if the question is different.

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00:38:50.990 --> 00:38:55.159

Peter Binfield-Smith: And much clearer for them, much more easy to use, much better policy briefing.

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00:38:55.380 --> 00:38:57.000

Peter Binfield-Smith: And next principle.

184

00:38:59.550 --> 00:39:11.059

Peter Binfield-Smith: So our next one right? Don't leave the reader guessing. So this is a situation I've had recently in the last few months. Right? So I'm going to just jump into the jump into the example on this one.

185

00:39:11.180 --> 00:39:30.639

Peter Binfield-Smith: So I was arranging some engagement for a minister, doing a tour of engagement around different stakeholders, working together with another department. At the last minute, my minister said, what if we add a different stakeholder to that? I've called them the Northern Snake Oceaners Alliance and this, that wasn't who they were, but for the sake of argument, sold them that.

186

00:39:30.860 --> 00:39:42.199

Peter Binfield-Smith: And I went to my colleagues in another department and they absolutely kicked off. They said, no way a minister will pull out of this engagement if we push forward with using this stakeholder.

187

00:39:42.300 --> 00:39:45.789

Peter Binfield-Smith: I then have to send up a note to my minister on these risks.

188

00:39:46.030 --> 00:39:57.519

Peter Binfield-Smith: And as I was approaching my first draft, I said, right, okay, I know what's happened, you've asked us to add this meeting. I didn't want to say that's a terrible idea, because I'm a government official, and they're the minister, they should be able to

189

00:39:57.520 --> 00:40:12.299

Peter Binfield-Smith: But I needed to sort of try and communicate that this would be difficult and maybe introduce issues. So I said, hey, yeah, okay, but there might be some sensitivities with other partners. Maybe we could look at alternatives. Maybe we can still do some other engagement, but probably we shouldn't do this.

190

00:40:12.630 --> 00:40:18.250

Peter Binfield-Smith: And then I had to think about it. I thought about this principle and improved my message. So on to the next slide.

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00:40:21.990 --> 00:40:24.829

Peter Binfield-Smith: So, the thing to remember is, right.

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00:40:24.830 --> 00:40:35.990

Peter Binfield-Smith: what, ministers and senior decision makers will be interested in is getting clear messages and having the information they need to make the decisions. So I changed what I was writing, right? I said, yes, you made this recommendation, but...

193

00:40:35.990 --> 00:40:48.710

Peter Binfield-Smith: Not a stakeholder. The Department for Small Animals, their minister is now unwilling to do that. Right now, they know that that information is coming from another minister. It's a senior-level pushback.

194

00:40:48.790 --> 00:41:08.580

Peter Binfield-Smith: And they know that the risk here isn't that they might be unhappy, it's that they're going to withdraw from proceedings. That really gives the minister the information they need to make that decision. If they want to push ahead, that's a risk that they can take, but they have all the information. We're not caring for their feelings or helping them out if we obfuscate and we don't communicate risks clearly in particular.

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00:41:08.610 --> 00:41:10.089

Peter Binfield-Smith: So that's much, much better.

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00:41:10.530 --> 00:41:12.079

Peter Binfield-Smith: Moving on to the final one.

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00:41:13.910 --> 00:41:17.900

Peter Binfield-Smith: So leave no doubt on next steps. So.

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00:41:18.480 --> 00:41:25.439

Peter Binfield-Smith: I think this is a really, really key one, and I think Tiffany mentioned this as well, so I think it's good we can sort of double down on it.

199

00:41:25.540 --> 00:41:39.579

Peter Binfield-Smith: So I think it's really, really important. A lot of the time when we're doing policy briefs, we're wanting, it's like a decision gate, right? We're wanting to unlock the next stage of our project or the next stage of our activity through agreeing that with a senior official.

200

00:41:39.730 --> 00:41:59.249

Peter Binfield-Smith: In my example here, so this is again something similar to that happened to me not so long ago. I was trying to get two members of staff released from a director. So I wrote up a brief with some next steps. I knew what we needed to do. There had to be some conversations with the relevant teams to get the resources released.

201

00:41:59.250 --> 00:42:06.049

Peter Binfield-Smith: We needed to identify who those people would be. We need to get that resource signed off and we need to do this as soon as possible.

202

00:42:06.050 --> 00:42:24.270

Peter Binfield-Smith: And I sort of imagine in my head, whenever I'm sort of putting a submission or putting a decision paper up, I imagine the response is going to be something like that middle response, right? Where the responder is super, super clear, they're so thankful for the work that I've done, and they're really, really clear that they are going to do everything, they understand what's going to happen, they're going to take everything forward.

203

00:42:24.460 --> 00:42:37.619

Peter Binfield-Smith: In most cases, though, much more often in my career, I've had responses like the one on the right, where they say, yep, all good, or the minister is content, or something like that, right? So, not really, really clear on who's going to take the actions forward.

204

00:42:37.770 --> 00:42:46.779

Peter Binfield-Smith: So, what does this leave us, right? I think then this is a... this is a great test to put onto your work, right? If the responder to the document just said, yes.

205

00:42:46.850 --> 00:42:59.789

Peter Binfield-Smith: Would you be able to then take that action forward? Well, looking at my next steps that I've got on the screen, probably not, right? Is it clear which ones of these are going to be done by me, which is going to be done by anyone else, which is going to be done by the director themselves?

206

00:43:00.040 --> 00:43:08.760

Peter Binfield-Smith: If I were to wait two weeks to see if they went and talked to the right people and released the right resources, where would that get me? Right, so let's go on to the next slide.

207

00:43:09.180 --> 00:43:10.790

Peter Binfield-Smith: To see how we might improve this.

208

00:43:12.210 --> 00:43:27.750

Peter Binfield-Smith: So, it's going to be much more difficult to get the right answer out of him if I keep the steps as they are. So, how are we going to restructure this? So, again, drawing on Tiffany's comments as well, right? We need to be really specific, we need to put our recommendations, we need to put our actions right at the top of

209

00:43:27.750 --> 00:43:44.619

Peter Binfield-Smith: of our policy briefs. So it's not going to be right at the end that our director finds out what we're actually asking them to do. But we're then going to bookend our brief as well, really drive home exactly what they need to do, what we need to do, so we have that agreement really, really clear.

210

00:43:44.680 --> 00:43:49.290

Peter Binfield-Smith: If then we apply that same test, the director says yes, well.

211

00:43:49.530 --> 00:44:03.140

Peter Binfield-Smith: We can assume then that they understand exactly what's been asked of them and will take forward, as it says, request that funding from the HR department. That's gonna be much easier.

212

00:44:03.980 --> 00:44:06.569

Peter Binfield-Smith: So then, if we go on to, I think, the final slide...

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00:44:07.870 --> 00:44:27.330

Peter Binfield-Smith: Right, we're talking about trying to make the perfect policy brief here. Aiming for perfection is obviously very noble. Will we ever, any of us reach it? Who knows? But I think these sort of five questions, these five principles can be applied to pretty much all the different policy work that you do. If you do these things, I think it'll move you a little bit closer to that perfect policy brief we're all aiming for.

214

00:44:27.530 --> 00:44:28.700

Peter Binfield-Smith: So thanks very much.

215

00:44:38.910 --> 00:45:02.779

Ilana Munckton: Thank you so much for that brilliant presentation, Peter. And to those of you watching, do remember to keep dropping any questions you have for our speakers in the Zoom Q&A. Again, you can find it at the bottom of your screen. Before we dive into your questions, I want to let you know that we've also sourced a really great follow-on resource to today's topic that we hope you'll find really useful. It's an article from an apolitical contributor.

216

00:45:02.780 --> 00:45:27.119

Ilana Munckton: How to Write a Persuasive Policy Brief. Earlier on, we invited you to join us in the global policymaking community to receive your link to that resource. Just make sure you're a member of the community after the event and leave a comment on my post that I've pinned at the top of the page, and then we'll send a link to the resource by email after the event. And my colleague is also just sharing a link to where you can find that thread in the community in the chat.

217

00:45:27.270 --> 00:45:28.340

Ilana Munckton: Just now.

218

00:45:28.410 --> 00:45:49.059

Ilana Munckton: But for now, let's go on to the Q&A. We have lots and lots of questions, both pre-submitted by attendees as well as in the chat and in the Q&A. So I think we're in for a treat. This is a really great question. I'm going to start here.

219

00:45:49.060 --> 00:46:02.189

Ilana Munckton: This is from Hannah. Hannah asks, do you find there's compelling benefit to framing the why now as more of a what is in it for me? Framing the problem as benefits of acting versus the risk of the status quo.

220

00:46:02.920 --> 00:46:10.439

Ilana Munckton: I'm going to ask that to you, Tiffany. You talked a little bit about that risk taxonomy, so I'd love to hear your thoughts on that question.

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00:46:10.640 --> 00:46:33.520

Tiffany Landau: Yeah. I think, again, it really comes down to understanding, like, your decision makers and what is most, resonant with them. I do definitely think, talking about the benefits of acting, right, like, efficiency, the outcomes that would be achieved, kind of how you'll advance,

like, a modernization agenda can also be really compelling. And I think, ideally, you'd do a combination of both. So kind of talk about the risks, including of status quo.

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00:46:33.520 --> 00:46:39.099

Tiffany Landau: as well as, you know, the efficiencies or other things that can be achieved or the effectiveness outcomes.

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00:46:39.100 --> 00:46:50.350

Tiffany Landau: But again, it kind of depends on what's worked well with your decision makers in the past. And I think going back to that and wanting to like really hone in on what's worked. So yeah.

224

00:46:52.560 --> 00:47:14.219

Ilana Munckton: Fantastic. Yeah, I think that piece around really knowing your decision maker and what's going to enable them to act is really good advice there. You mentioned the word decision maker there actually, and there was a question in the chat that Tiffany, I think you have a really good answer for as well. And the question is, are decision makers and stakeholders the same thing when we talk about this language? Who are we referring to?

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00:47:14.550 --> 00:47:37.430

Tiffany Landau: Yeah, it's a great question. I mean, yes, I think stakeholders or anyone who has a stake in the issue. But I think where it becomes important is you really want to craft the brief to the particular audience and what their needs are. So for decision makers, they're looking to understand why is this urgent to act now? What do you want me to do? What are we proceeding with and why? What are the risks, implementation, et cetera?

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00:47:37.430 --> 00:48:00.530

Tiffany Landau: Whereas if you have a stakeholder who's gonna be responsible for implementing the policy, for example, they might be asking a whole different set of questions. So I think it's really about putting yourself first and foremost in the shoes of who you would be presenting this brief to, thinking about the questions that they would ask. Again, AI can be very helpful for this. You can sort of say, hey. What types of questions would this stakeholder be asking me? And then use that to kind of frame out your brief and and what you would include.

227

00:48:03.840 --> 00:48:28.760

Ilana Munckton: That's fantastic advice. Thank you so much. Okay, great. We have another question that's just come in. Fantastic one. Anna asks, I'm going to put this to you, Peter. How do you deal with the fact that your reader is having a busy day? You talked about kind of

knowing that your reader is busy. They might be reading in the back of a van, I believe. How do you deal with the fact that your reader is having a busy day and that your brief

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00:48:28.760 --> 00:48:30.950

Ilana Munckton: may not be at the top of their agenda.

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00:48:32.020 --> 00:48:44.399

Peter Binfield-Smith: Yeah, I think that's, I think it's important to always assume that that's probably gonna be the case, right? Not all of us are lucky enough to be in our minister or senior decision makers like key interest all the time, right?

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00:48:44.400 --> 00:48:53.009

Peter Binfield-Smith: So I think it's acknowledging that that probably is the case and then planning around that. So one of the things I didn't mention in the presentation is

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00:48:53.010 --> 00:49:03.839

Peter Binfield-Smith: Another benefit of that sort of inductive approach is that if your area is something which is not necessarily of critical interest to the senior.

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00:49:03.840 --> 00:49:18.760

Peter Binfield-Smith: And you should try and plan your work, so that if they were to only read, for example, the first half of your brief, right? Or even just the recommendations, right? Would they be able to make that decision? If it's something that they think is sort of uncontroversial, or if they're going to be very, very busy.

233

00:49:18.760 --> 00:49:33.140

Peter Binfield-Smith: How do you sort of get over that sort of confidence that your work is going to be effective without them having to actually deal with it for a very long time? So part of that is obviously putting those recommendations right up at the top and making it really, really clear sort of why you're doing that.

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00:49:33.140 --> 00:49:40.070

Peter Binfield-Smith: And another area is thinking about the way you use evidence and the way that you use annexes in particular, right? So,

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00:49:40.230 --> 00:49:55.150

Peter Binfield-Smith: a lot of, a lot of policy, submissions in the UK, for example, are limited to two pages only, and that's because all of us decision makers are really, really busy, and a lot of people will then put extra information in those annexes, which maybe will, to maybe fill that stuff out.

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00:49:55.490 --> 00:49:56.350

Peter Binfield-Smith: And...

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00:49:56.350 --> 00:50:16.929

Peter Binfield-Smith: If we are assuming that our stakeholders are going to be really, really busy, well, they're probably not going to read that information. However, is there a point in still using it? Yes, I think there is. And that's to persuade that confidence, to show the confidence that you've done the work and that you've put additional thought into this. As a quick example, we might say, I've...

238

00:50:16.930 --> 00:50:21.440

Peter Binfield-Smith: as part of this work, I've engaged with stakeholders across

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00:50:21.440 --> 00:50:40.700

Peter Binfield-Smith: across the industry area, and I've included a list of those stakeholders as Annex A. Do I expect my minister to go through them? No, not at all. But if they have that annex, they can say, wow, there's like 30 things on there, right? That shows that it demonstrates that confidence that we've gone out, that we've engaged properly, and that'll give them confidence that they can just sort of...

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00:50:40.750 --> 00:50:46.970

Peter Binfield-Smith: you know, push through without sort of going into the details, saving them time, saving us time by getting the answer we need.

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00:50:48.200 --> 00:50:58.839

Ilana Munckton: Fantastic. Lots of really good tips there. Thank you so much. I think that piece around kind of, you know, enabling them to trust in you is really powerful.

242

00:50:58.910 --> 00:51:23.889

Ilana Munckton: I have a question here from Andrew, and I'm going to actually ask each of you to respond because you have such collective wisdom that I think this would be really great to hear from you both on. Andrew says, I'm new to a government relations role, and I write briefs

and key message documents for many different actors. What are some tips, reading, and research opportunities for learning for someone who's maybe new to this type of thing? And actually, we had a couple of pre-submitted questions.

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00:51:23.890 --> 00:51:32.999

Ilana Munckton: from folks asking for something similar, reading materials, recommendations. If you were new to policy writing, where would you go? So I'd love to hear your tips for someone who's new to this.

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00:51:34.020 --> 00:51:38.899

Ilana Munckton: Tiffany, I'll, I'll come to you first, and then Peter, I'll come to you.

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00:51:39.640 --> 00:51:52.900

Tiffany Landau: For sure. Yeah. So I think, you know, I mean, apolitical has been very helpful to me. I'll put a plug in there. Like, since the beginning of my career, there's lots of great resources on apolitical. But I do think that kind of learning as you do and learning on the job is very powerful. And to be honest.

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00:51:52.900 --> 00:52:04.160

Tiffany Landau: Reading kind of really, excellent policy briefs that others have written and asking within your ministry department, etcetera, like, what's been really successful in the past and kind of reading through those has been excellent.

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00:52:04.160 --> 00:52:27.809

Tiffany Landau: I think for government relations as well and that particular perspective, if you look at kind of submissions that have been made to, you know, legislative committees or publicly by other government relations professionals, ones that have been really sort of compelling and maybe even turned that issue around, I think seeing how those are written, how they've been used to persuade could be maybe really excellent in the GR industry in particular.

248

00:52:27.820 --> 00:52:36.249

Tiffany Landau: But, yeah, that's sort of my main tip is just why reinvent the wheel if someone else has done it really well in the past and, learn from your colleagues and mentors.

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00:52:41.590 --> 00:52:46.580

Ilana Munckton: I love that. Thank you. Peter, anything to share on advice for a newbie?

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00:52:47.110 --> 00:53:02.449

Peter Binfield-Smith: Yeah, I think, it's definitely great to learn from, learn from the experts, learn from, what works well, but I would also flip that around as well. Find examples in your department, approach them as if you are new to that policy area, because you will be, like, in a lot of cases, right?

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00:53:02.450 --> 00:53:12.650

Peter Binfield-Smith: But to reflect on one of the principles, right, often your senior stakeholder will have so much on, they'll be practically new to your work as well, right?

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00:53:12.810 --> 00:53:25.219

Peter Binfield-Smith: Find examples, read through them, imagine that you're approaching that for the first time, or maybe you will be, and find what doesn't work, right? Find the bits in other people's work and in other people's briefings that get you confused.

253

00:53:25.220 --> 00:53:33.550

Peter Binfield-Smith: Right? And then think about, if I was going to express this, how would I do that? Bringing in those techniques, like Tiffany mentioned as well, using AI, if...

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00:53:33.550 --> 00:53:38.029

Peter Binfield-Smith: there is a block of text which is really confusing you, that's like you're getting lost in, right?

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00:53:38.030 --> 00:53:56.289

Peter Binfield-Smith: see what happens if you put that into AI, say, can you chunk this out? Can you, what is the key information? How can I express that more clearly? That'll give you those sort of little bits of, ideas that you can then apply into your further work as well. So, yeah, good practice is good, but I think, learning from what confuses you is, is a great, great way to do it as well.

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00:53:57.980 --> 00:54:22.930

Ilana Munckton: Fantastic. We probably have time for just about one more question, and I'm going to actually stick on the AI theme because we have had a couple of questions on that. We spoke about some ways that you can use AI. What are perhaps just to be aware some of the pitfalls of using AI? I know, Tiffany, you gave some really specific and really clear advice on AI as an editor, a thought

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00:54:22.930 --> 00:54:32.429

Ilana Munckton: partner, a comm strategist, where perhaps should a policy, someone who's writing a policy brief be thinking, actually, I shouldn't use AI in this way, or what are the pitfalls to be aware of?

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00:54:35.670 --> 00:54:37.370

Tiffany Landau: You can go first on that one if you want.

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00:54:37.370 --> 00:54:38.559

Ilana Munckton: Sure, thank you, thank you.

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00:54:38.560 --> 00:54:54.919

Tiffany Landau: Yeah, so I actually used to work on AI governance, so it's a great question that I'm happy to answer. I think, you know, I never really shy away from using AI necessarily. If you have like an approved kind of internal, again, model with enterprise data protection, I think it's great to experiment.

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00:54:54.920 --> 00:55:19.919

Tiffany Landau: But as many folks have highlighted, fact checking. So I think it really comes down to the prompt and the back and forth and how you design that. So some people, you know, will just say sort of give me a summary on this issue. You can improve your prompt engineering to say, ensure that you explicitly know each of the sources that is behind, you know, these specific recommendations you're putting forward or these changes. So just in the way that you prompt AI, helping it to fact check itself, I guess.

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00:55:19.920 --> 00:55:33.690

Tiffany Landau: and give you the right sources. Also being very conscious of bias, right? A lot of these models are just trained on the open internet and are prone to replicating existing biases, and so, again, in your prompt engineering, you can ask explicitly, you know.

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00:55:33.690 --> 00:55:43.579

Tiffany Landau: have you considered X biases, or can you please, draft this with this sort of bias, avoidance in mind? And so, I guess the main point there is that

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00:55:43.580 --> 00:56:01.490

Tiffany Landau: when you are using generative AI, look at it as very much a back and forth, so it's not a one and done, send a prompt, get an answer, it's like having a thought partner where you are following up, asking questions, again, asking for sources, like, you're seeing it as really an assistant and a thought partner, rather than just prompt, answer, thank you, you know, move it over.

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00:56:05.480 --> 00:56:07.219

Ilana Munckton: Wonderful. Thank you so much. Thank you.

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00:56:08.190 --> 00:56:24.059

Peter Binfield-Smith: I would add probably a couple of things onto that. So I think that's exactly right. I think anytime when you've got an evidence gap and you just want something to fill that evidence gap, firstly, I don't think that's a great approach to doing your writing, but it's really high risk when you use AI.

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00:56:24.060 --> 00:56:38.660

Peter Binfield-Smith: And the second one I would, sort of flag is, something like, if you're doing a recommendations paper, I would shy away from asking AI to help you with those recommendations. And likewise, if you're, doing a Q&A, I would shy away from

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00:56:38.660 --> 00:56:50.989

Peter Binfield-Smith: using AI just as the first pass to answer those questions. And the reason for that is, I think it's really, really important to be clear on exactly what you're trying to express yourself.

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00:56:51.210 --> 00:57:08.519

Peter Binfield-Smith: Because if you put... if you're trying to rely on AI to find that sort of purpose for you, then it's very unlikely to end up in the right place. Before you start drafting, the first thing that you need to do is be clear on what you're trying to communicate and why you're trying to do it. If you bring in AI at that stage, then you'll end up in the wrong place.

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00:57:09.510 --> 00:57:27.719

Daisy Ireton: Thank you so much, Peter, for that response. That does bring us to the end of today's session. I think you'll all agree we've had some, really great insights from both of our speakers, so, please join me in giving them a virtual round of applause.

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00:57:27.720 --> 00:57:36.180

Daisy Ireton: And of course, thank you, for you as well, the audience, for investing in your learning today and being so engaged on the topic.

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00:57:36.400 --> 00:57:48.819

Daisy Ireton: The team is gonna pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today, and that's gonna help us to continue improving our content and events like these, so we really appreciate your responses.

273

00:57:48.890 --> 00:58:07.010

Daisy Ireton: Before you do go, and while you're responding to that poll, I just wanted to make you aware of a couple more events, that you can register to. If you're not able to attend live to any of these, still go ahead and register, and that means you get the recording and the resources as well.

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00:58:07.010 --> 00:58:19.200

Daisy Ireton: So it's come up a couple of times today, AI. We have next Tuesday a session on hacks for working with Claude, which you might have, heard colleagues starting to talk about.

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00:58:19.200 --> 00:58:32.879

Daisy Ireton: In two weeks time, we have a session on how to be a great facilitator. Again, we're gonna have an expert joining us and share their top tips in just 17 minutes. And then in a couple of months, so something to put in the diary.

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00:58:32.940 --> 00:58:47.249

Daisy Ireton: If you have been, wondering, which I think a lot of you have, how AI can help you with your policy briefs, we're going to have a session dedicated to that, AI for Better Briefings as part of our AI Skills Lab series.

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00:58:47.250 --> 00:59:01.159

Daisy Ireton: So that's all we have time for today. We really hope that you found it helpful. Again, a huge thank you to both Tiffany and Peter and for everyone else who made the event possible. And for you for taking the time out of busy days.

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00:59:01.160 --> 00:59:20.090

Daisy Ireton: Do keep an eye out for an email that's going to be coming your way with the recording and some resources. And don't forget to look at Alana's post in the community. That's

it for now. We do hope that we'll see you for another apolitical event very soon. Have a great day and goodbye.

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