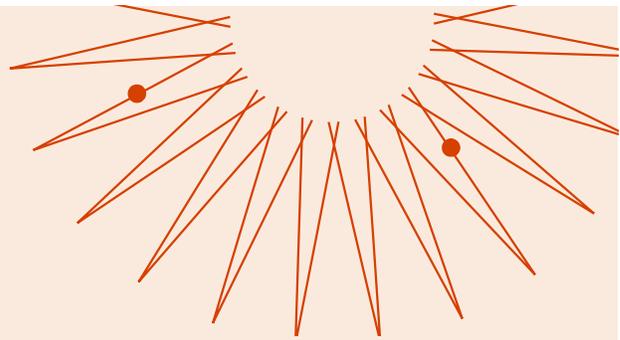# Tell Your Value Story: Writing for the Board

Practical tips for communicating legal performance and strategy with clarity and impact

Board presentations are high-stakes communications. Directors have limited time, diverse expertise, and competing priorities. Your job is to make legal performance and strategy accessible, relevant, and actionable. This guide provides practical techniques to help you craft presentations that inform decisions and demonstrate value.

Five core principles

1. **Prioritize your audience**

   Put yourself in their shoes.

   Board members care about risk, strategy, and business performance, not legal process for its own sake.

Weak	Strong
"Legal processed 847 contracts in Q1, a 12% increase YoY"	"Legal accelerated 3 major partnerships by reducing contract cycle time 40%, enabling $15M in Q1 revenue"

2. **Build around the central question**

   Every board presentation answers a specific question. Identify it before you start writing.

   Example board questions:
   - How is legal supporting our expansion into Asia-Pacific?
   - What are our top legal and regulatory risks for the year ahead?
   - How did legal perform against budget and targets this quarter?

   Draft your story first: Get the story clear in writing first by outlining your headline and supporting evidence before you start building slides.

   AI tip: Identify your central message
   This example prompt below helps you test whether the structure you've built actually answers the question you think it does.

   "I'm preparing a board presentation on [topic]. Here's my draft outline: [paste outline].

   - What is the single most important question this presentation answers?
   - What should my headline be?
   - What are the 3-4 key supporting points that matter most to board members focused on risk, strategy, and business value?"

3. **Be concise**

   Complexity suggests unclear thinking while simplicity demonstrates mastery. Use concise yet clear writing throughout your presentation or report to convey confidence and control and make sure that your slide title(s) tell the story.

   For example, "Q1 Performance" is not specific or engaging while "Legal delivered $2.3M savings in Q1" is much stronger as it provides the core information concisely and clearly.

Avoid	Use
- Undefined acronyms - Latin phases - Legal jargon without context - Repetitive points - Vague references	- Plain English - Active voice - Specific numbers - Clear headlines - Direct language

4. **Make visuals work hard**

Every visual should illuminate your point, not decorate it. Visuals can be a very helpful tool to convey your message more effectively but they must be used thoughtfully to avoid confusing or diluting the message.

Visual design best practice:
- **One idea per slide.** If you need two visuals to make your point, use two slides.
- **Reduce clutter.** Remove gridlines, excess labels, and decorative elements that don't add meaning. Aim for a clean design and balance content with white space.
- **Use company templates.** Consistency signals professionalism.
- **Avoid clichéd legal icons.** Skip the gavel and scales. Consider abstract representations or simple data visualization instead.

5. **Build in time to review**

Great board presentations are refined, not rushed. Make sure you start early, build in enough time for iteration, and seek input from a trusted colleague who understands your goal.

Suggested timeline:
- **3 weeks out:** Draft outline and narrative
- **2 weeks out:** Create first draft, get peer review
- **1 week out:** Refine based on feedback, practice delivery
- **2 days before:** Final polish and rehearsal

Example: Real-world before & after

Before: Weak slide for the Board

Legal Department Update

- Completed 847 contracts (↑12% YoY)
- Litigation: 23 active matters
- Compliance training: 89% completion rate
- Outside counsel spend: $2.1M
- New privacy regulations being monitored

The problem with this example is it shows activity without context.

How do board members know if "23 active matters" is a good or bad number for litigation?

It provides no clear takeaway and does not connect to the business strategy. How do the board members know what action to take next?

After: Strong slide for the Board

Legal Enabled $15M Revenue While Cutting Costs 18%

40%	$380K	Zero
Faster contract cycle enabled 3 major deals	Saved through strategic panel management	Privacy breaches; new AI governance in place

Looking ahead: Deploying contract AI to support 2026/27 M&A pipeline

This example is much better as it shows a clear value story, with helpful context.

It connects to business revenue as well as cost, with specific numbers.

It highlights what is working well and why that matters to board members, and it provides a forward-looking view.

Pre-presentation checklist:

Content	Design
□ Central question is clear □ Headline tells the story □ Data supports business value □ No undefined acronyms □ Plain English throughout	□ One idea per slide □ Visuals are clear and necessary □ No clutter or decorative elements □ Company template used □ Reviewed and refined

Remember: You're not writing to showcase legal expertise; you're writing to inform business decisions. If a board member can't immediately see how your message connects to business outcomes, rewrite it until they can.