WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Make a Case People Can Examine

A message grounded in credibility, human stakes, and reasoning.

25 minutes | Ethos / Pathos / Logos · Aristotle's rhetorical triangle

Use it in three moves

1. Start with the actual choice and the listener's context.
2. Check credibility, human consequences, and reasoning independently.
3. Write a short case that exposes its assumptions and invites an answer.

What decision or understanding is this for?

Name the listener, the actual choice, and what is still open.

Ethos · Why should this account be trusted?

Show relevant experience, sources, limits, and interests. A job title is not a substitute for evidence.

Pathos · What does this mean for people?

Use a truthful, proportionate account. Obtain consent for identifiable stories and avoid pressure or fear as a shortcut.

Make a Case People Can Examine

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Logos · What supports the proposal?

Connect evidence to the claim. Include uncertainty, counterevidence, and an alternative.

Bring the three together

Write a short message in the order the listener needs. There is no required ethos-pathos-logos script.

Leave room for a real response

What disagreement would matter? Who decides, and how will you use the response?

A question for me

Would this message still feel fair if the listener chose a different answer?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

What decision or understanding is this for?

The operations team is deciding whether to trial a new handoff form for two weeks.

Ethos · Why should this account be trusted?

I reviewed ten recent handoffs with two coordinators. That is a small sample, and I designed the proposed form, so I want others to test the assumptions.

Pathos · What does this mean for people?

A missing requirement can mean a customer repeats a difficult explanation and the receiving team has to improvise.

Logos · What supports the proposal?

Three of ten reviewed handoffs lacked a required detail. A form may help, but unclear ownership may be another cause. We could instead change the handoff conversation.

Bring the three together

Could we test the shorter form for two weeks? Three of ten reviewed handoffs missed a required detail, creating repeat questions for customers. I helped design it and may be overlooking a simpler fix. What would you change before a trial?

Leave room for a real response

The coordinators can recommend a different approach. The service owner decides the trial scope on Friday after their input.

The thinking behind it

Communication shapes what people feel permitted to question. Make the reasons and the decision boundary visible so agreement is meaningful.

Aristotle's Rhetoric distinguishes persuasion through the speaker's character, the audience's emotions, and the argument. These are commonly discussed as ethos, pathos, and logos. This original message builder adds explicit uncertainty and recipient agency; it does not prescribe a fixed sequence or guarantee persuasion.

Aristotle · Rhetoric, Book I

Read The Lie We've Normalized: "Leadership Is Influencing Behavior" by Nic Payne