

How to Prepare a Brief

As a manager and leader you will be responsible for many types of briefings to many types of audiences – your staff and peers, public audiences, project teams, and executives within your organization. Clear concise communication will serve you well. You can always use the process of “tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them”. For more detailed guidance, use the following to help you prepare a brief:

Planning Process

- Determine the purpose or objective
- Identify characteristics of the audience
- Research the facts
- Analyze the subject matter
- Organize the material
- Look for an overall structural idea that unifies
- Edit and condense to what is essential
- Rehearse

Structure the Brief

Opener – How does this topic relate to what your audience cares about?

Set the context – What are the important issues or events surrounding this information?

Main Points – What 2 or 3 points does the audience need to understand?

Summary – Draw a conclusion about the information given that emphasizes the overall idea that unifies the main points

Closer – What needs to happen next? Ask for it.

Presenting Tips

- Know the time allotted and stick to it
- Select an appropriate tone for the messages you are delivering
- Use active voice verbs
- Eliminate jargon and wordiness
- Use facts and evidence, quantify with numbers
- Check your logic
- Be your best professional self

Questions to ask Yourself

- Is your purpose succinct?
- What does your audience already know? What are their biases?
- How much of the facts or research do you need to say upfront, and how much can you include only if asked?
- What are you really trying to achieve with this brief?

- Can you use humor as an opener?
- Rephrase one or more main points as a rhetorical question – “What do you think is the most important factor...? We have found that X is the number one factor in...”
- Have a powerful ending that leaves people with a strong impression of your topic.
- What questions can you anticipate your audience will ask?
- Is it appropriate to thank your audience for listening?

- What is the room set-up like?
- Is there an opportunity to have good eye contact with key players?
- Who else in the room can you ask for support or use as a sounding board prior to the meeting?
- How is your visual appearance supporting your message?
- Are you going to use handouts or other materials?