Introduction

Team briefing originated in the 1960s when companies developed briefing groups which cascaded information through the organisation. The emphasis then switched to the department or work group, where “local” information of relevance to the immediate group was added to organisational messages and where information was encouraged to flow in all directions - down, up and sideways. It is important to view team briefing as part of a wider internal communication strategy which is a process of ensuring that employees are well informed and have opportunities for upward feedback.

Team briefing:

- ensures people feel well informed
- provides opportunities for upward feedback
- develops trust, cooperation and commitment
- helps people to understand change
- reduces misunderstandings
- reinforces the role of the team leader.

Definition

Team briefing is a process which involves managers and supervisors’ talking to their teams to exchange information and ideas. The basic principles are that it:

- is face-to-face
- takes place in small teams
- is led by the team leader
- happens on a regular basis
- includes both organisational and team information
- offers an opportunity to voice concerns and suggestions that are taken seriously.

Action checklist

1. **Gain the commitment of line managers**

   Team briefing depends on committed delivery and the ability of managers to listen to suggestions and concerns. Line managers should explain organisational strategies and reasons for change with conviction and tailor communication to local contexts. They should also be open to listening to concerns and taking action to ensure points raised are considered and a response provided.

2. **Consult employee representatives**

   Involve union and staff representatives from the beginning of the process. Discuss the purpose of team briefing, and encourage them to participate in the design of the system and reassure them that it is not a mechanism for undermining union influence.
3. **Coordinate briefings**

Team briefing should be coordinated by the department responsible for internal communication to ensure consistency and to collate upward feedback. The internal communication department:

- plans and structures the system
- provides the core briefing pack
- develops training programmes for line managers
- collates feedback and ensures it is considered by the senior management team.

4. **Make sure that line managers are trained**

Line managers should be trained in effective communication as poor briefing undermines the whole process. The emphasis on training should be the ability to present with conviction, to be clear, to encourage comments and suggestions, to be consistent in what is said, and to act on upward feedback.

5. **Logistics**

Employees should be given time to attend team briefings. Remember that a willingness to cancel or postpone briefings when there are exceptionally busy periods or when members of staff are absent will be seen as a lack of commitment to the process. Communicating is part of the day job, not something you only fit in when you can.

6. **Team briefing structure**

The department responsible for internal communication sets the process for team briefing. This is usually at least monthly with a simple process for capturing upward feedback provided.

7. **Content of briefings**

The Work Foundation recommends reports covering the four Ps: Progress, Policy, People and Points for action. Start the session with the core brief and then discuss how this applies to the local team before going on to other local topics.

8. **Allow opportunities for discussion**

Ensure that time is allowed for discussion during briefings. Any questions that cannot be answered on the spot must be responded to within a guaranteed period.

9. **Monitor the system**

The internal communication department checks that team briefing is being carried out across the whole organisation and that core information is understood. Ways of doing this include:

- managers’ walkabouts when team briefing is taking place
- employee attitude surveys
- feedback forms
- audits by outside bodies.

**Managers should avoid**

- confusing team briefing with other processes
- allowing briefing sessions to develop into lengthy problem-solving workshops or an alternative to other team meetings
- imposing an off-the-shelf system without tailoring it to suit your organisation's specific needs
- launching team briefing without talking to the internal communication department
- assuming that only new information is appropriate or worth disseminating; frequently it is important to update earlier information.
National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership

This checklist has relevance to the following standards:
B: providing direction, units 1, 4-7
D: Working with people, units 1-2

Additional resources

Books


**Successful workplace communication**, Phil Baguley
London: Hodder Education, 2009

**Making the connections: using internal communication to turn strategy into action**, Bill Quirke
Aldershot: Gower, 2008

**How to give effective business briefings**, Colin Clark
London: Kogan Page, 1999

This is a selection of books available for loan to members from CMI's library. More information at: [www.managers.org.uk/library](http://www.managers.org.uk/library)

Related checklists

Ensuring clear communication (200)
Steps in successful team building (088)

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