

The University of Manchester

Office of the Registrar and Secretary

TEAM BRIEFING

1. TEAM BRIEFING – THE WHAT AND THE WHY

The RSD is a large and complex organisation and it can become difficult to find the time for face to face communications – staff are busy, our customers are demanding, etc. It does need time and requires skill and commitment from all those involved in the process.

However, face to face communications do have a number of advantages over other methods and the RSD is committed to ensuring that all staff have the opportunity, on a regular basis, to meet with their manager or supervisor and receive relevant and timely information.

There are also many successes and achievements – by individuals, teams and Offices – which should be communicated. We are a successful and important part of the University and should take opportunities to recognise and celebrate the many achievements made by staff month-on-month and year-on-year.

Ensuring that everyone knows what is going on in the RSD is vital to the Department and to the people who work in it.

Team Briefing:

- Is a method of getting key information to people regularly and quickly, wherever they may work
- Is a two way process – not just about informing people but listening and responding to questions and concerns and providing answers.

Successful team Briefing ensures that:

- There is less misunderstanding within your team, the Office and the Department
- Staff are kept up to date on performance, results and progress
- Your team is made aware of policy changes
- Any misleading rumours are quashed.

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2. TEAM BRIEFING: THE MECHANICS

Purpose

Team Briefing has been set up to keep everyone in the RSD up to date with information that is important and relevant to them. The system will help to provide all of us, whatever our level and function, with a clear understanding of changes and developments affecting our working lives.

Characteristics

Team Briefing will be:

- **Regular.** The meetings will be held on a regular, planned, basis. The Administrative Management Team (AMT) will provide the Core Brief around which the rest of local briefing is built.
- **Team leader to the Team.** Managers and supervisors will deliver the Brief verbally to their own staff teams. Because of organisational realities some people will be briefed by their managers' manager and some in small ad hoc groups. All managers and supervisors will receive a written summary of the Brief they receive from their manager. This will help them prepare the Brief that they have to deliver.
- **Relevant.** Most of the information which Teams receive will be prepared by their immediate manager and be about issues which are of direct concern to them. Only a small percentage of the information will be 'Core' items passed down from higher up in the organisation.
- **Monitored.** Managers at all levels will keep up to date with how Team Briefing is working by asking questions and sitting in on Briefings.
- **Comprehensive.** Team Briefing will cover everyone who works in the RSD.
- **Concise.** An average Briefing should last 30 minutes, including time for questions.
- **Quick.** In most cases the information will pass from Directors, through the management chain to all staff within 72 hours (3 working days).
- **Two way.** Team Briefing is not an alternative form of consultation - it is a method for passing information. But questions and comments arising from the Briefings will be fed back up to the relevant level. Answers will be provided to those questions that could not be dealt with at the meeting.

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3. TEAM BRIEFING: THE CONTEXT

Context

The object of Team Briefing is to provide and discuss information. Briefings are not designed for consultation or negotiation.

Relevance

Most people care most about the things which affect them most. Briefings aim to be as relevant as possible to those who are listening to them.

Good news!

Don't forget the good news and achievements. Good news exists – find it and include it!

Typical subjects

These are included to get you thinking. There is no perfect agenda, only one that is appropriate to *your staff team at this Briefing*.

One very useful way of thinking about the content of your Brief is to divide it up into the 4 Ps:

People

Promotions
Appointments
Retirements
Visitors
Success stories
Changed locations – staff/functions

Points for Action

New and ongoing projects/activities
Special events
Health and Safety
Building works
Work standards
Upcoming deadlines

Progress

Figures, returns, numbers,
marketing
Success stories
Customer complaints
Quality issues
Completed projects/activities

Policy Issues

Investment plans
Human Resource policy
Overtime levels
Student recruitment and retention
Health and Safety policy

When you have decided on the rough agenda for your next Briefing, based on the information your manager gave you and any ideas you have, take a hard look at it.

If it contains less than 60-70% of information which you know will be of immediate interest to your staff, think again.

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4. TEAM BRIEFING: MAKING IT HAPPEN

You must be clear about:

1. Structure:

- Who will Brief you?
- Who will you Brief?
- Are there any individuals or small groups reporting to you who have been left out?

2. Shifts and rosters:

- How will you cope with these?
- Have you consulted those who will be involved?

3. Geography:

- Are you responsible for any geographically dispersed employees?
- How will they be Briefed?

4. People tied to their jobs:

- Are any of those who report to you in jobs which cannot be stopped for the Briefing meeting?
- How will you cope with this?

5. Paperwork:

- Are you planning to use written Briefs?
- Are there any problems getting these typed and copied?

6. Absentees and Relief's:

- What arrangements, if any, are needed to Brief absentees and Relief's?

7. Deputies:

- Who is your deputy?
- Are you anyone's deputy?

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5. BEING BRIEFED

Before you go to be Briefed by your manager take a few minutes to think about the following points:

Preparation

- Look through the records of the last Brief you delivered. Are there any items still outstanding?
- Are you having any problems with the mechanics of Team Briefing which you should raise with your manager and your colleagues at the meeting?

At the meeting

- *Concentrate and listen*, so that you hear the Brief and the questions asked by other people.
- Make *concise* notes.
- Ask questions to clarify the information you have been given and, once in a while, to test your managers commitment.
- Review the items on your own Local Brief with your manager.

To take away

You must come out of the meeting with:

- A clear picture of the Core Brief.
- Notes on the particular emphases for your staff team.
- Anticipated questions on the Brief and their answers.
- Any particular items on which your manager would like feedback.

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6. PREPARING THE LOCAL BRIEF

The Agenda

1. Content:

Think of how you can give sufficient information on your Brief without using a script. Headings may not be enough so be sure you have covered the key points.

2. Priorities:

Look at the brief *through your staff's eyes*. Sort the items into:

- Must know
- Should know
- Nice to know

3. Sequence:

Are there any logical links between the various items on the Brief? If so put the agenda into the order which suits this.

4. Timing:

Work out roughly how long each item should take and make a note of this on your working copy of the Brief so that you can keep an eye on the time as you go through the presentation.

Leave room and time for the Core Brief you will get from your manager.

5. First meetings:

At the first Team Briefing remember to start by explaining what is going on. If there are new members of the staff team who have not been Briefed before you should tell them what Briefing is about before they experience it at first hand.

6. The Arrangements

Administration:

Written Briefs will have to be typed and copied.

Date/Time:

Does everyone know **when** the Briefing will take place?

Location:

Does everyone know **where** the Briefing will take place?

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7. PRESENTING THE BRIEF

A typical Briefing

You should try to make your Briefings follow a reasonably consistent pattern so that everyone knows what to expect. By all means develop an approach with which you and your staff team are comfortable. A typical Briefing might look like:

1. Note is taken of any absentees.
2. The Briefer goes through the items on the Brief.
3. Questions arising out of the Brief are asked and answered.
4. The Briefer refers to any significant anticipated questions that have not been asked.
5. The Briefer summarises those questions for which answers will have to be sought and reminds the group of the date of the next Briefing.

Points about Presentation

Remember that you are not addressing the United Nations. This is your own staff team so the Briefing should be relaxed and reasonably informal. Try to be:

1. **Clear.** Avoid unfamiliar technicalities, acronyms, names and so on.
2. **Brief.** Don't ramble. Sometimes you should repeat the message to make sure it sinks in, but do it concisely.
3. **Interesting.** Be *interested*. Use examples that the group will recognise.
4. **In control.** Arrange the group so that you are its focus. Don't rush the start. Watch the reaction you are getting as you go along so that you can put things right as they happen.
5. **Positive.** Watch out for the habit of excessive apologising. It makes you appear nervous. Do not try to distance yourself from the Brief. Arm yourself with the reasons which lie behind the information you are giving out.
6. **Confident if things go wrong.** Stick to information; relax.

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8. FOLLOW-UP

As soon as you have completed a Briefing there are some simple, but vital steps which you must take to follow it up. These include:

1. Records

Put the notes you used at the Briefing into your Briefing Pack or wherever you have decided to keep them.

2. Questions

Make a note of the questions which came up at the meeting and put this with your Briefing notes. Ensure that you record:

- The questions which you could not answer.
- Any questions about items not on the Brief.

3. Feedback

Let your manager know:

- How the meeting went.
- Issues of particular interest to the group.
- Any questions that you could not answer.

This feedback will normally be informal and verbal. If there are any unanswered questions which your manager cannot answer immediately, be sure to make a note in your diary to chase up the answers in case they get forgotten.

4. Absentees:

Make whatever arrangements are appropriate for briefing absentees.

Remember!

If you do this simple follow up within an hour or two of the Briefing it will take you perhaps ten minutes.

If you leave it for a week the chances are you won't be able to do it at all.

Don't put it off!