



SCIENCES PO

Spring 2012

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ORAL BRIEFINGS GUIDELINE

- **Four major topics:**
 - I. Analyzing the Situation
 - II. Producing the Briefing
 - III. Briefing Mechanics
 - IV. Questions and Answers

I. ANALYZING THE SITUATION

- Analogous to case of writing
- Same issues apply as in writing memo
- Key is ask yourself "why am I doing this briefing?"

A. AUDIENCE

1. Why did they call for a briefing?
What do they want/need to know?
2. What do they know *already*?
 - What are audience's attitudes toward:
 - Issues
 - Briefing
 - You
 - Examples:
 - receptive or hostile?
 - uninformed or expert?
3. How busy or distracted is the audience?

B. YOUR GOALS

- Ask yourself: What result do *I want*?
- As with memos, generally two types:
 - o Inform
 - o action (recommendations, persuasion)
- What are the *key points* you want to get across?

C. TIME FRAME

- How much total time allowed? How long should prepared "presentation" be?
- What should be in the "presentation?" What should be left to Q&A?
- Expect to be "interrupted"

D. SUMMARY

The best briefings are not monologues, but conversations

II. PRODUCING THE BRIEFING

A. LIMITED CONTENTS

- Oral more difficult to follow than written
- Maximum number of issues: probably 3-4
- Ask, "do I really need to include this issue?"

B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

- Audience's attention great at beginning and end
- So, try great graphics, great story
- No matter what you do, reality remains
- Think about organization
- Introduction is very important
- Introduce subject
- Provide a road map
- State conclusions (for example, recommendations)
- Closing is also very important
- Natural Instinct: Linear Model
- Introduction
- Problem
- Options
- Pros & Cons
- Conclusions
- Alternative Model
- Information or Decision Memo
- A Dynamic, Flexible Approach
- Hub & Spokes
- 3-D Hub & Spokes

C. WHO DOES THE PRESENTATION?

- Best presenter vs. most knowledgeable
- How many presenters?
- Change can energize the briefing
- Change of presenters is distracting

D. SCRIPT VS. NOTES

- Don't use a script or make a memorized speech
- Not spontaneous -- dull
- Causes trouble, when departures arise
- Should know well enough to *own it*; conversation
- Notes are very helpful
- outline
- overlays as notes
- lots of white space

E. PRACTICE

- Practice before a group, not in the closet!
- Practice audience should interrupt, question, and critique

III. BRIEFING MECHANICS

- Check room in advance

A. PLATFORM TECHNIQUES

1. Voice

- Avoid monotone
- Avoid sing-song
- Avoid speaking too softly; but intermittent soft voice can gain attention
- Use pauses (oral white space): don't be afraid to *pause* to gain attention
- Avoid speaking too fast

2. Body

- Eye contact important
- Maintains attention
- Provides feedback
- Mood: try to be *relaxed*, without being overly casual
- Gestures: be natural

B. VISUAL AIDS

1. Types: handouts and/or displays (flip charts, overheads, black board)

2. Central Rule: should help, not hinder

- Real asset if supports presentation, but always a distraction

- Ask: Does it fit? Does it help? Is it necessary?
3. Handouts vs. displays
- Advantage of handouts: audience can take notes, take away
 - Disadvantage of handouts: distraction (fear of loss of control)
4. Simplicity
- Probably no more than 10 lines of text
 - Minimum time for audience to digest: two minutes
5. Consistency with Presentation
- Wording should match what's said (avoid "option vs. alternative," for example)

IV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A. A BRIEFING IS A CONVERSATION, NOT A MONOLOGUE

- Most briefings are frequently interrupted by questions
- View this as an opportunity, not a problem
- Questions provide useful feedback from briefee
- Moves briefing from lecture to dialogue
- Take advantage of questions
- Encourage (even solicit) questions
- Avoid unintentionally discouraging questions
- If there are no "interruptions," briefing is probably in trouble

B. LISTEN

- Make sure you understand the question
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification

C. HAVE A PLAN ABOUT Q&A

- When will you answer questions? During or after presentation?
- Disadvantage of during:
 - o potentially disruptive
- Advantage of during:
 - o good feedback
 - o issue fresh in mind
 - o conversation, real communication occurs
- Who will answer questions?
 - o Presenter
 - o Team members by expertise (division of responsibility)

- So, put team in visible place

D. PREPARE ANSWERS TO LIKELY QUESTIONS IN ADVANCE

- Prepare visual displays
- Prepare handouts

E. DON'T BLUFF, NEVER GET DEFENSIVE

- Bluffing
- Unethical
- They'll check the facts later
- Don't get defensive
- Briefing is for the briefee, not the briefer
- By definition, briefer loses all verbal duels