

Team Briefings

Team briefings are a key communications tool for managers when imparting new or controversial information to staff. Team Meetings are used to impart information and review operations on a regular basis but Team Briefings often apply to larger staff groups.

HSE staff look to their managers to help them make sense of information that is communicated across the organisation, particularly:

- What is happening
- Why is it happening
- Implications for the team/department/service

This information is best delivered by the manager at a face to face briefing so staff have an opportunity to ask questions and share opinions. The following tips and techniques will be useful for managers:

Tips and techniques for line managers running briefings
Get Comfortable With The Content It's essential that line managers allow sufficient time to prepare for the team briefing, get familiar with the material, anticipate questions and provide additional information relevant to your staff if necessary
Preparing the briefing Before running the session make sure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The venue is suitable• Check there is enough space• Ensure the audio visual equipment is working (if using)• Ensure there are refreshments if staff have travelled or it is a long session• Organise skeleton cover for phones/offices and ensure that staff who cannot attend receive the information• Write the agenda and ensure everyone has a copy• Nominate someone to record feedback or issues
Managing the briefing Once the meeting is underway managers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearly explain the purpose of the session• Go through the agenda• Explain any ground rules• Let people have their say whilst making sure people do not ramble on aimlessly• Ensure the briefing stays on track

Encourage open discussion

Open discussion is key to team building, managers should:

- Encourage active listening
- Encourage the team to feedback
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to feedback
- Don't allow the briefing to be dominated by individuals
- Use flip charts to record big ideas or key issues
- Involve quieter team members by inviting their opinion
- Acknowledge all contributions
- Encourage different points of view – no such thing as a bad idea

Handling questions and feedback

To ensure that the briefing process is two way, managers should:

- Listen to questions and acknowledge understanding
- Make replies concise and relevant
- If you cannot answer commit to finding out the information
- Don't get defensive with hostile participants. Defuse the situation by responding in a calm manner, maintaining eye contact and responding in a direct and positive way
- Encourage team members to find answers to the questions by throwing open some questions to the floor

Additional Tips

To stop people drifting or even disrupting the briefing, managers need to:

- List any topics not up for discussion at the particular briefing
- Volunteer to meet with people who have concerns that can't be addressed in the briefing
- Use the time constraints of the briefing to keep people from rambling and open the floor to others

Do:

- Relax and enjoy the briefing
- Encourage positive, proactive language
- Ask open ended questions
- Ask for feedback
- Be clear, honest and confident
- Prepare

Don't:

- Comment after every input
- Respond more positively to some participants over others
- Be negative in your body language
- Be patronising or apologetic
- Let the briefing wander off the subject