

COURSE CATALOG

*The journey to achieve certification
in BRIEF communication*

the[brief]lab[®]
A Sheffield Company

AN ELITE
COMMUNICATION
STANDARD

THE VALUE OF CONCISE COMMUNICATION

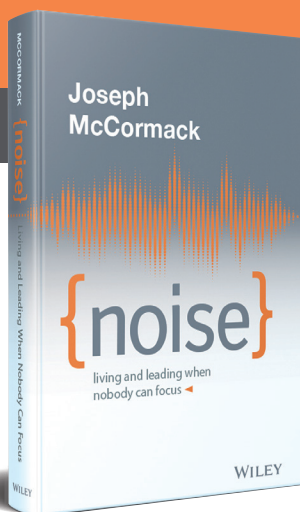
There is no question that our working environment is filled with a flood of information, most of it is noise. Concise communication is what drives clarity and lowers the volume.

Professional leaders recognize the value of developing clear and concise communication as a core strength. My commitment to the military inspired me to write the books *BRIEF: Make a bigger impact by saying less* and *NOISE: Living and leading when nobody can focus* and to create a distinct business called The BRIEF Lab to help scores of professionals master this critical skill.

We have developed a unique methodology and curriculum to help people become certified BRIEF communicators. The BRIEF techniques, tools and distinctive courses help build a culture of brevity and a non-negotiable standard.

Clear thinking leads to concise communication; brevity drives out noise and ensures more decisive action and consistent results.


Founder and Managing Director,
The BRIEF Lab



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[brief]: make a bigger impact by saying less

(2014) sets a non-negotiable standard: get your point across or risk losing your audience and damaging your reputation.

{noise}: living and leading when nobody can focus

(2020) addresses how attention is becoming our most precious resource. The book provides practical strategies to protect our minds from the barrage and improve our focus on what matters most.

About Joe



JOE McCORMACK is on a mission to help organizations master lean communication. In an age of shrinking attention spans, non-stop interruptions and a flood of information, messages business leaders send out are getting lost in a sea of words.

Joe is an experienced marketing executive, successful entrepreneur and author who is recognized for his work in narrative message and corporate alignment. He speaks at industry and client forms on the topics of brevity, storytelling, noise management, change and leadership.

Joe publishes a weekly podcast (with short episodes!) that helps course participants sustain their BRIEF skills over time. The podcast provides practical guidance for listeners to become more intentional communicators.

Why Commit to BRIEF Communication?

When you embrace concise communication and develop a culture of brevity, your organization will:

- ▶ **REDUCE TIME** spent in meetings, briefings and your “inbox”
- ▶ **MAKE FASTER DECISIONS** with clearer, more consistent information
- ▶ **DEVELOP STRONGER CONSENSUS** that unifies effort
- ▶ **ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING** of mission and message
- ▶ **IMPROVE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY** and effectiveness
- ▶ **LOWER NOISE** that depletes and drains attention

About The BRIEF Lab

The BRIEF Lab was founded by Joe McCormack in 2013 to help professionals, Fortune 500 companies and elite military units communicate clearly and concisely so their strategic initiatives get done.


Organizations like Harley-Davidson, Boeing, Mastercard, Microsoft and US Special Operations Command count on us to help their leaders and team members pursue mastery of BRIEF communication and develop a culture of brevity.





The Journey to BRIEF Communication Certification

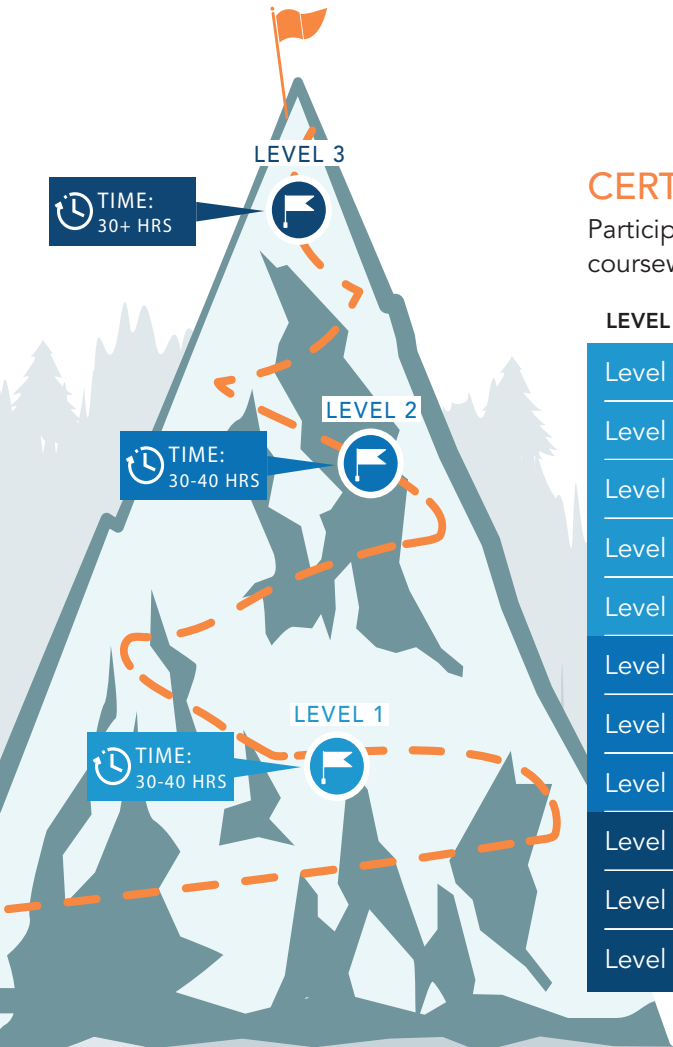
Brevity is a language that’s in high demand. Speaking clearly and in concise terms can be mastered just like English, Chinese, Arabic or French. And when it is, you and your ideas will make a greater impact.

At The BRIEF Lab, we have designed a curriculum for professionals to master the essential skill of lean communication. It is based on three levels of certification:

**LEVEL 1**
FUNDAMENTALS
Achieve working knowledge of basic BRIEF principles and core methodology applied in common professional circumstances.

**LEVEL 2**
PROFICIENCY
Gain conscious command of being brief in specific, daily situations (emails, pitches, meetings, etc.) that demand disciplined delivery of a clear message.

**LEVEL 3**
FLUENCY
Achieve mastery in communicating complex and lengthy information in strategic initiatives where brevity is critical.



CERTIFICATION

Participants must meet specific requirements and complete assigned coursework to achieve each level of certification.

LEVEL	ACTIVITY
Level 1	Read “{noise} living and leading when nobody can focus”
Level 1	Read “[brief] make a bigger impact by saying less”
Level 1	BRIEF 101 (Intro to BRIEF Communication, 1-2 days)
Level 1	BRIEF Writing Fundamentals (2 days)
Level 1	BRIEF 102 (Intermediate Writing, 1-2 days)
Level 2	BRIEF 201 (Advanced Communication, 1-2 days)
Level 2	BRIEF 202 (Advanced Writing, 1 day)
Level 2	BRIEF 203 (Meeting Facilitation, 2 days)
Level 3	BRIEF 301 (BRIEF Leaders Course, 1-2 days)
Level 3	BRIEF Message Alignment Program (2-4 weeks)
Level 3	BRIEF 303 (Advanced Meeting Facilitation, 1-2 days)

Skills and Expectations

Course participants can expect to master a range of specific skills that can be applied on the job immediately.



LEVEL 1 FUNDAMENTALS

SKILLS

- ▶ Headlining to put the main point up front
- ▶ Mapping to better prepare
- ▶ Trimming unnecessary detail
- ▶ Writing for greater clarity and impact
- ▶ Noise management

EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Clearer updates
- ✓ Shorter meetings
- ✓ Tighter emails
- ✓ Clearer thinking
- ✓ Laser-tight focus



LEVEL 2 PROFICIENCY

SKILLS

- ▶ Crafting an impactful elevator pitch
- ▶ Compelling executive summaries
- ▶ Meeting facilitation
- ▶ Challenging conversations
- ▶ Persuasive writing

EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Making winning pitches
- ✓ Embracing challenging conversations
- ✓ Leading teams more effectively



LEVEL 3 FLUENCY

SKILLS

- ▶ Mastery of BRIEF communication
- ▶ Concise and clear communication of the complex: strategy and vision
- ▶ Strategic narrative development

EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Making impactful board presentations
- ✓ Leading change
- ✓ Defining and delivering strategic narratives
- ✓ Motivating large teams

DESIGNED FOR CORPORATE, FEDERAL AND MILITARY AUDIENCES

- ▶ Presidents and C-Suite Executives
- ▶ Business/Unit Leaders
- ▶ Client Service Professionals
- ▶ Customer-Facing Professionals
- ▶ Elite Sales Professionals

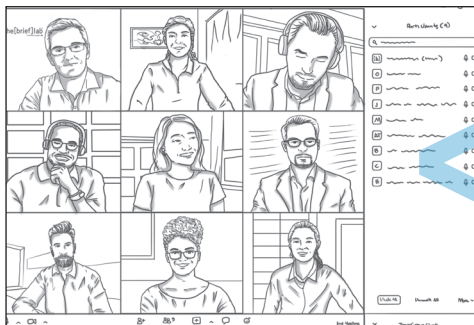
- ▶ High Potentials
- ▶ HR Managers
- ▶ Recruiters
- ▶ Senior Executive Service Leaders
- ▶ Federal Executives and Senior Leaders

- ▶ Mid-Level Federal Leaders/Managers
- ▶ Field Grade and Senior Leaders
- ▶ Senior Staff Directors
- ▶ Field Grade Staff Directors
- ▶ Rising Company Grade Leaders

Course Delivery

ONLINE LIVE, IN-PERSON OR HYBRID COURSES

We believe the best learning happens by doing. Our workshops are highly experiential, dynamic and fun. Participants engage in intensive exercises that pull them out of their comfort zones and accelerate breakthrough learning. The BRIEF lab facilitates this transformation in a comfortable and positive learning environment, uniquely provided online live. This environment can also be in person at one of our locations or a location selected by the client.



ONLINE LIVE COURSES

are live, interactive and engaging courses that are designed for disparate teams and remote workers, and delivered primarily on Zoom.

IN-PERSON COURSES

are hosted at The BRIEF Lab in Southern Pines, NC or at a client or neutral location. The coursework is identical to our online live course offerings.



HYBRID COURSES

are a unique combination of both online live and in-person participants taking the same course at the same time! This approach enables a small team in one location to connect with teammates in multiple places simultaneously, in a fun and vibrant learning environment.

BRIEF Courses and Modules

DELIVERED ONLINE LIVE, IN-PERSON OR HYBRID

We offer three basic course types, at three levels of certification. All of our courses are based on the books *BRIEF* and *NOISE*, integrating the perspectives, techniques, tips and methodologies into an engaging experiential learning delivery model:

- **BRIEF Verbal Communication:** There are three common tendencies when speaking that lead to confusing, complicated and disorganized communication. The BRIEF methodology provides a system of techniques and tools to overcome these tendencies and excel with clear and concise verbal communication.



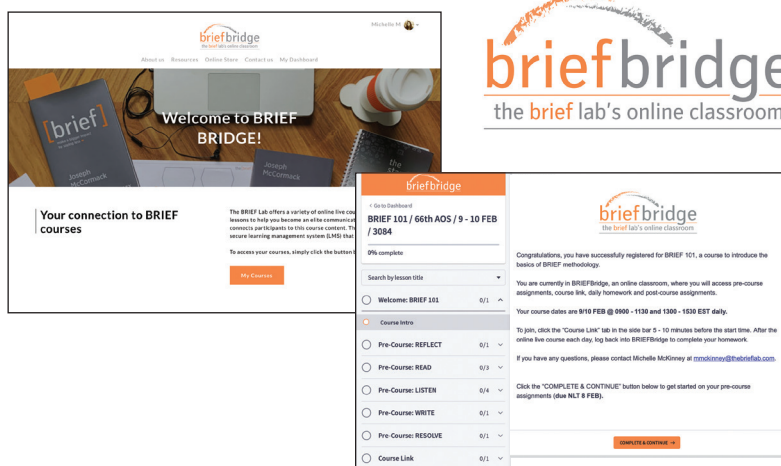
BRIEF Certification is a mark of distinction for professionals.

- **BRIEF Writing Skills:** In a world of information overload, professionals need to be brief in every aspect of written communication. In the BRIEF Writing courses, participants are provided practical techniques to think clearly and write more concisely. Instead of creating and consuming noise, your team will learn to write tighter emails, concise reports and updates that get read and make an impact.
- **BRIEF Meeting Facilitation:** Every team needs meetings to stay on track. But they are often painful, unstructured and inefficient. They waste time, slow progress and, worst of all, lead to more meetings. With simple steps, teams can make dramatic improvements to meetings (online, in-person or hybrid) and begin to change the status quo.

BRIEF Bridge

YOUR ONLINE PORTAL FOR ONLINE LIVE, IN-PERSON OR HYBRID COURSES

All course participants are provided access to **BRIEF Bridge**, our secure portal that stores all course materials. BRIEF Bridge, a learning management system (LMS), contains pre-course and post-course exercises that include surveys, podcast episodes, reading excerpts and writing assignments. In addition, the portal contains links for our online live courses or directions to in-person courses (with dates/times and dress code).



M O D U L E S

BRIEF Courses

COURSE: BRIEF 101 (Intro to BRIEF Communication)
Duration: 1-2 days
Delivery: Online live, in-person, hybrid

Introductory course that tackles the three most prominent communication tendencies that make professionals seem confusing, complicated and disorganized. Practical exercises target BRIEF Mapping, trimming and headlining as essential skills all lean communicators need to master.

- Executive Summaries (Abstracts)
- Present Listening
- Making a Recommendation
- BRIEF Meeting Agenda Design
- BRIEF Updates (Progress Reports)

COURSE: BRIEF Writing Fundamentals
Duration: Four 3-hour sessions
Delivery: Online live

A course that teaches practical techniques to think clearly and write more accurately and effectively. It's comprised of four online live sessions, and a series of individual, work-from-home writing and reading assignments.

COURSE: BRIEF 102 (Intermediate Writing)
Duration: 1 day
Delivery: Online live, in-person, hybrid
Prerequisites: BRIEF 101

Intermediate writing course that focuses on what plagues writers in an attention-starved, time-sensitive world. Participants are armed with specific ways to organize, edit and deliver high-impact written communication that's clear, concise and compelling. Key techniques include: the DRAFT method, ruthless redaction and scanning and skimming.

- Executive Summaries (Abstracts)
- BRIEF Emails
- BRIEF Updates (Progress Reports)

COURSE: BRIEF 201 (Advanced Communication)
Duration: 1-2 days
Delivery: Online live, in-person, hybrid
Prerequisites: BRIEF 101

Advanced course that elevates BRIEF skills to address time-sensitive, high-impact communication. Practical exercises include developing strategic narratives, concise conversations, pitching new ideas, active listening, briefings and short presentations.

- Interviewing
- BRIEF Value Proposition (Role Definition)
- Key Conversations
- BRIEF Consultative Selling
- BRIEF Program/Project Overview
- BRIEF Attention Management

COURSE: BRIEF 203 (BRIEF Meeting Facilitation)
Duration: 2 days
Delivery: Online live, in-person, hybrid
Prerequisites: BRIEF 101

Every team needs meetings to stay on track. Meetings are often painful, unstructured and inefficient. They waste time, slow progress and, worst of all, lead to more meetings. With simple steps, teams can make dramatic improvements to meetings and begin to change the status quo.

M O D U L E S

COURSE: BRIEF 202 (Advanced Writing)**Duration:** 1 day**Delivery:** Online live, in-person**Prerequisites:** BRIEF 201

Advanced writing course that delves deeper into the core elements of concise, compelling writing. Participants tackle practical assignments to craft succinct executive summaries and compelling pitches. They will learn to distill complex information into tight, effective communications that capture the reader's attention.

Executive Summaries (Abstracts)

BRIEF Updates (Progress Reports)

COURSE: BRIEF 301 (Leaders Course)**Duration:** 1-2 days**Delivery:** Online live, in-person, hybrid**Prerequisites:** BRIEF 201

Advanced course ensuring that practitioners possess mastery of BRIEF skills and can demonstrate unconscious command. In a series of challenging, time-sensitive exercises, participants will display deep understanding by teaching back core principles while delivering strategic messages with confidence and clarity.

Present Listening

Managing Tough Conversations

Making a Recommendation

Narrative Storytelling

BRIEF Presentations

BRIEF Updates (Progress Reports)

COURSE: BRIEF Message Alignment Program**Duration:** 2-4 weeks**Delivery:** Online live, in-person, hybrid

Through this program, organizations develop a clear, concise and impactful message. BRIEF facilitates the mapping of the story, creates visual tools and trains your team members to tell it. Program sessions and tools include: Narrative Development Workshop, interactive Narrative Guidebook and sessions to train the messengers.

COURSE: BRIEF 303 (Advanced Meeting Facilitation)**Duration:** 1-2 days**Delivery:** Online live, hybrid**Prerequisites:** BRIEF 203

Building on BRIEF Meeting Facilitation (BRIEF 203), participants will learn to prepare and facilitate a meeting for real, third-party organizations. They will utilize all BRIEF tools and methodology to drive the meeting to a specific outcome. Participants will receive verbal and written evaluation to reinforce the experience.

BRIEF Modules

Modules can be included in BRIEF courses or serve as 1-4 hour sessions—online live, in-person or hybrid.

MODULE: Executive Summaries (Abstracts)
Duration: 1-2 hours
Courses: BRIEF 101, 102, 201, 202

Leaders are begging for brevity. They get frustrated and confused when it's missing. In this module, participants learn to deliver effective executive summaries that provide 3-4 key points in a standard and logical order.

MODULE: Present Listening
Duration: 1-2 hours
Courses: BRIEF 101, 201, 301

A deep dive into effective ways to manage distractions and inner dialogue enabling thoughtful questions that lead to meaningful insights and conversations.

MODULE: Managing Tough Conversations
Duration: 1-4 hours
Courses: BRIEF 201, 301

Delivering bad news is part of any leader's job. It can be dangerous for both parties involved leading to hurt feelings, anger and resentment. This module prepares you to manage tough situations like sharing critical feedback, or delivering the disappointing outcome of a new initiative or project.

MODULE: BRIEF Emails
Duration: 1-3 hours
Courses: BRIEF 101, 102, 202

Email is likely the most used and, for many, the least effective or impactful means of professional writing. This module focuses on structures and tools to ensure readers open your email, read it and respond.

MODULE: Making a Recommendation (Pitching a New Idea)
Duration: 1-2 hours
Courses: BRIEF 101, 201, 301

Innovative ideas are the lifeblood of any organization, yet most new ideas are wrapped in layers of confusing details that make it tough to decipher a good idea from a bad one. This module shares proven practices to make the best ideas shine.

MODULE: BRIEF Meeting Agenda Design
Duration: 1-2 hours
Courses: BRIEF 101, 201

When meeting organizers don't grasp their responsibility to design an effective plan for a focused exchange, meetings don't arrive at the intended destination. This module provides a proven method and tool to design meetings to be clear, concise and successful.

MODULE: Narrative Storytelling
Duration: 1-2 hours
Courses: BRIEF 201, 301

Stories have an innate power to capture and hold people's attention. Successful leaders leverage the power of narrative to convey complex information in a way that's memorable and makes sense. This module immerses participants in Narrative Mapping, a powerful tool to set up and share stories.

MODULE: BRIEF Presentations**Duration:** 1-2 hours**Courses:** BRIEF 201, 301

Too often there's little power and no point in a PowerPoint deck. Designing and delivering effective presentations is achieved by using the BRIEF methodology and learning to embed compelling visuals and captivating stories—all clearly and concisely.

MODULE: BRIEF Updates (Progress Reports)**Duration:** 1-4 hours**Courses:** BRIEF 101, 102, 201, 202, 301

Progress reports are vital to all organizations. This module provides a predictable way to deliver clear and concise updates to inform and empower the team and its leaders.

MODULE: Interviewing**Duration:** 1-3 hours**Courses:** BRIEF 201, 301

Some of the most important moments for brevity are during interviews. Regardless of which side of the table you're on, nerves run high and people tend to talk too much. It's better to prepare and practice before ruining yet another interview.

MODULE: BRIEF Value Proposition (Role Definition)**Duration:** 1-2 hours**Courses:** BRIEF 101, 201

It should be an easy question to answer, but it often makes people confused, crazy, inconsistent and unclear. In this module, we will build a personal and professional elevator speech to help alleviate the issue once and for all.

MODULE: Key Conversations**Duration:** 1-2 hours**Courses:** BRIEF 201, 301

The best leaders know how to manage a conversation and lead it to a productive end. Unfortunately, bad habits abound and people talk at each other, not with each other. This module provides a series of short exercises and simple insights to focus and improve conversation outcome.

MODULE: BRIEF Consultative Selling**Duration:** 1-2 hours**Courses:** BRIEF 101, 201

The focus of this module is to prioritize "telling versus selling". Participants will hone the skill to communicate complex ideas, proposals and summaries that inform the target audience versus persuading or pressuring them.

MODULE: BRIEF Program/Project Overview**Duration:** 1-4 hours**Courses:** Courses: BRIEF 101, 201, 301

As a program or project lead, you will need to clearly explain the program's overall intent and direction to keep the team and its leaders focused. This module provides tools and a system to keep things moving in the right direction.

MODULE: BRIEF Attention Management**Duration:** 1-4 hours**Courses:** Courses: BRIEF 101, 201, 301

A clear communicator needs to be clear in thought. This module explores sources of noise and introduces powerful tools to manage and mitigate their impact. Lowering the volume enables better focus and adds quiet, clarity and productivity to your professional day.

THE JOURNEY TO MASTER BRIEF COMMUNICATION

is filled with meaningful milestones. As participants progress through our curriculum, they will experience increasing benefits:



WHAT'S GOOD?

In the beginning, you start to experience **NOTICEABLE EFFICIENCIES**. This translates into shorter meetings, tighter emails and shorter conversations. The saved energy alone is a solid start.



WHAT'S BETTER?

As you progress through our advanced courses, your communication becomes significantly **MORE EFFECTIVE**. Precise words lead to action, important decisions are made quickly and moments that were wasteful are now filled with essential information.



WHAT'S BEST?

Your commitment to mastering BRIEF communication and developing and delivering a narrative message **INSPIRES AND ALIGNS YOUR ORGANIZATION TO ACTION**. You confidently craft clear and compelling messaging that rallies people to execute strategic objectives and get important work done.

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