

THE ISSUE: THE COLLABORATIVE WORKPLACE DOESN'T WORK

Professionals don't know how to work well together. Whether it's in an open-floor setup, hybrid or fully remote, there's too much information (TMI) and too much collaboration (TMC). Collaboration frequently breeds more noise than clarity.

The symptoms are plentiful and painful:

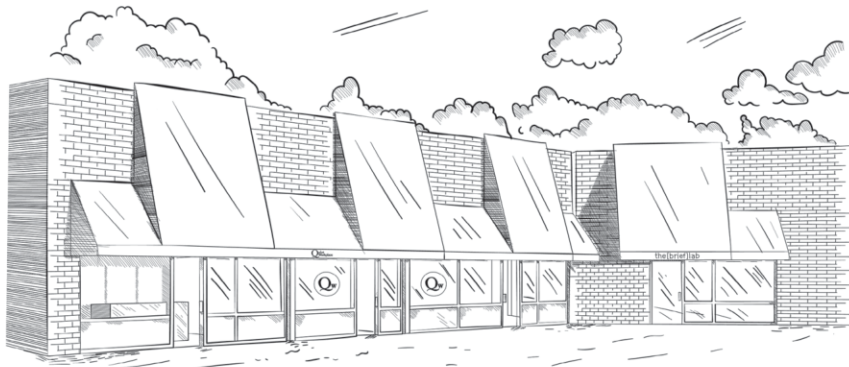
- ▶ Culture of meetings creates delays and distress
- ▶ Texting and emails make work reactionary
- ▶ Short conversations become long-winded ones
- ▶ Plans and updates are filled with details, no direction
- ▶ Presentations have no power and no point



Organizations are defined by producing and consuming incessant information. Words are worthless, yet plentiful.

As the fatigue and frustration grow, there's no sensible solution to stop the madness.





OUR STORY: A CALL, AN ANSWER, AND THE CALLS KEPT COMING

In 2006, Joe McCormack started the Sheffield Company, a boutique agency specializing in narrative messaging and visual storytelling. As the business grew, he got an unexpected call from US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) to teach elite operators how to develop and deliver clear and concise messaging.

His response was decisive:

- ▶ Develop a course on concise communication (2012)
- ▶ Open a subsidiary business “The BRIEF Lab” to teach brevity (2013)
- ▶ Write *BRIEF: Make a bigger impact by saying less* (2014)
- ▶ Start a podcast (“Just Saying”) to sustain the learning (2016)

The reaction from elite military units and his existing corporate clients was telling: *we really need this, give us more*. As the years went on, The BRIEF Lab became his singular focus and word spread to government agencies, Fortune 500 organizations, military branches and professionals far and wide.



THE MISSION: CREATE AN ELITE COMMUNICATION STANDARD

Frustration can be simply defined as an unfulfilled expectation. Professionals go to work expecting their boss, clients and co-workers to be brief. And when they're not, they get aggravated and discouraged.

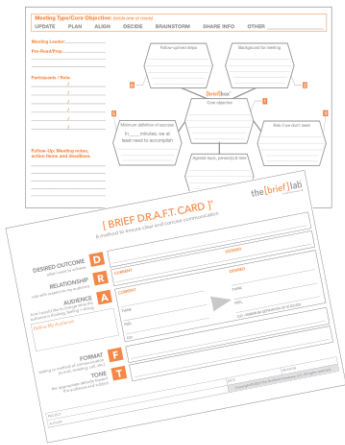
- ▶ What's the standard of communication excellence?
- ▶ What are the moments when professionals need to be clear and concise?
- ▶ What's the difference between exceptional and average?
- ▶ Who needs to write and speak with power and impact?

The BRIEF Lab has created a professional standard to benchmark progress toward becoming a brief communicator. It's not about perfection but deliberate preparation and delivery that improves over time.



BRIEF METHOD: KEEP IT SIMPLE, PRACTICAL, AND REPEATABLE

Communicating well isn't an academic theory, but a daily practice. To get better, professionals don't need to learn abstract ideas but to apply principles and practices that are easy and useful. They need a versatile toolkit for a variety of circumstances.



- ▶ **BRIEF MAP:** a visual outline to organize information
- ▶ **DRAFT CARD:** a worksheet to define audience needs
- ▶ **BRIEF MEETING PREP CARD:** a tool to design a meeting agenda
- ▶ **TOWER PLAN:** a 5-step approach to writing and speaking

- ▶ **HEADLINING:** a way to deliver the bottom-line up front (BLUF)
- ▶ **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** how to organize essential information
- ▶ **TRIMMING:** how to cut and layer levels of detail (L1-L2-L3)
- ▶ **ELUSIVE 600:** how to grasp the way our brain gets distracted



BRIEF MANDATE: CHANGE THE CONVERSATION AND THE CULTURE

BRIEF Courses: delivered in person and online to teach teams how to communicate clearly, concisely and consistently with impact. Our curriculum starts a critical conversation that gets them thinking and acting differently. Here's a snapshot:

- ▶ **BRIEF 101** [Introduction]
- ▶ **BRIEF 102** [Writing]
- ▶ **BRIEF 103** [Meetings]
- ▶ **QUIET WORKS FOR BRIEF TEAMS** [Preparation/Application]
- ▶ **BELT** [BRIEF Experiential Learning Technique]

Our clients often choose to embrace more comprehensive *change management programs* to influence how select leaders and practitioners can help larger teams, departments, business units, battalions, commands and entire organizations embrace lean communication principles and practices—and make them stick.

BRIEF Culture Change Programs: designed to deliberately change the daily behaviors of how people work together and alone. Over time, we change the communication culture by following a deliberate 7-step change management process:

- 1 MANDATE:** Senior leader(s) decide(s) to endorse change
- 2 IDENTIFY:** Change agents are hand picked to learn & lead
- 3 TRAIN:** BRIEF courses are provided to develop skills
- 4 APPLY:** BRIEF and Quiet Works daily practices are followed
- 5 LEAD:** Change agents lead by example & share with others
- 6 MEASURE:** Teams are assessed as they apply & make progress
- 7 SHARE:** Wins are promoted to showcase culture change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Joe McCormack is an author, entrepreneur and marketing executive on a mission to help professionals work better together and alone. He has written three books that help them become more intentional communicators:

BRIEF: Make a bigger impact by saying less (Wiley, 2014),

NOISE: Living and leading when

nobody can focus (Wiley, 2019), and *QUIET Works: Making silence the secret ingredient of the workday* (Matt Holt, 2024).



Joe McCormack

In 2006, he founded the Sheffield Company as a professional services company to help organizations achieve clarity at work. Its two primary business units are *The BRIEF Lab*, which teaches clear and concise communication, and *The Quiet Workplace*, which fosters the principles and practices of deep, deliberate work.

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A Sheffield Company ◀

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