COURSE CATALOG

The journey to achieve certification in BRIEF communication



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.

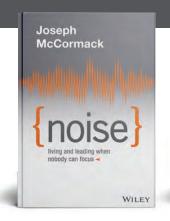
Professional leaders recognize the value of developing clear and concise communication as a core strength. My commitment to the military inspired me to write the books *BRIEF: Make a bigger impact by saying less* and *NOISE: Living and leading when nobody can focus* and to create a distinct business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

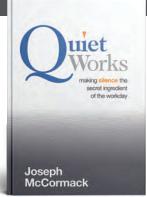
My latest book, *Quiet Works: Making Silence the Secret Ingredient* of the Workday, encourages professionals to dedicate more time alone to prepare their communication. Clear thinking leads to concise communication; brevity drives out noise and ensures more decisive action and consistent results.

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.

Quiet Works: Making Silence the Secret Ingredient of the Workday (2024) encourages professionals to dedicate more time alone to prepare their communication.

[2] COURSE Catalog © www.thebrieflab.com

About Joe



Joe McCormack is on a mission to help organizations master lean communication. In an age of shrinking attention spans, nonstop interruptions and a flood of information, messages that 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

Joe McCormack founded the BRIEF Lab 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, eBay, 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.







Journey to BRIEF Communication Mastery

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 achievement toward mastery.



FUNDAMENTALS

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



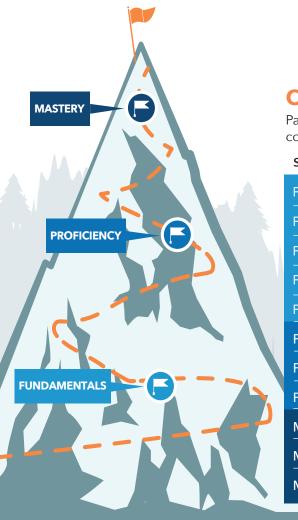
PROFICIENCY

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



MASTERY

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.

SKILL	ACTIVITY
FUNDAMENTALS	Read "NOISE: Living and Leading When Nobody Can Focus"
FUNDAMENTALS	Read "BRIEF: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less"
FUNDAMENTALS	BRIEF 101 (Intro to BRIEF Communication, 1-2 days)
FUNDAMENTALS	BRIEF Writing Fundamentals (2 days)
FUNDAMENTALS	BRIEF 102 (Intermediate Writing, 1-2 days)
PROFICIENCY	BRIEF 201 (Quiet Works for BRIEF Teams, 1-2 days)
PROFICIENCY	BRIEF 202 (Advanced Writing, 1 day)
PROFICIENCY	BRIEF 203 (Meeting Facilitation, 2 days)
MASTERY	BRIEF 301 (Quiet Workweek, 4-5 days)
MASTERY	BRIEF Message Alignment Program (2-4 weeks)
MASTERY	BRIEF 303 (BRIEF Culture Change Program, 6 months)

Skills and Expectations

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



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



PROFICIENCY

SKILLS

- Crafting an impactful elevator pitch
- Compelling executive summaries
- Meeting facilitation
- Quiet Works preparation
- Persuasive writing

EXPECTATIONS

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



MASTERY

SKILLS

- Mastery of BRIEF communication
- Concise and clear communication of the complex: strategy and vision
- Strategic narrative development
- Quiet Works team practices

EXPECTATIONS

- Deliberate concentration & collaboration
- ✓ Leading change
- Defining and delivering strategic narratives
- Motivating large teams

DESIGNED FOR CORPORATE, FEDERAL AND MILITARY AUDIENCES

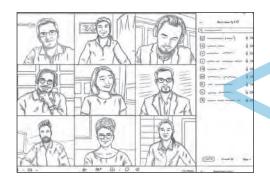
- Presidents and C-Suite Executives
- Business/Unit Leaders
- Client Service Professionals
- Customer-Facing Professionals
- Elite Sales Professionals

- 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.



the[brief]lab Welcome to BRIEF 101 Long course Long co

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, NOISE and Quiet Works, 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, an online learning resource center, contains pre-course and post-course exercises

that include surveys, podcast episodes, reading excerpts and writing assignments. In addition, the portal contains a variety of downloadable templates like BRIEF Maps, DRAFT Cards, etc.



BRIEF Courses

MODULES

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 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)

SITREP Storytelling

M O D U

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.

COURSE: BRIEF 301 (Leaders Course)

Duration: 1-2 days

Online live, in-person, hybrid **Delivery:**

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 (BRIEF Culture Change Program)

Duration: 6 months (or more) **Delivery:** Online live, hybrid

Prerequisites: BRIEF Fundamentals and Proficiency

Organizations that want to change their culture of communication must make the deliberate choice to alter the daily habits of their individuals and teams. Following a 7-step change management process, this program embraces BRIEF and QUIET WORKS practices through the power and example of internal change agents. By learning and leading by example, a few leaders can change the behavior of many team members to communicate clearly and concisely on a consistent basis.

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.



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: Quiet Works
Duration: 1-2 hours

Courses: BRIEF 101, 201, 301

The best communicators know the value of quiet time alone to get ready. In this module, participants experience the power of dedicated quiet to prepare the right messaging for the right audience.

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: Quiet Selling
Duration: 1-2 hours
Courses: BRIEF 101, 201

Great salespeople are great listeners. Not only do they follow the adage "tell me, don't sell me" but they also use quiet time to prepare deliberately.

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.

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.





