Factsheet
Leading Successful Meetings

How to deliver key messages

Managers are often handed talking points and asked to convey key messages to employees. For this communication to be effective some preparation is critical. Here are guidelines to follow:

- Familiarise yourself with each message so you can restate it, unaided, in your own words.
- Ideally, you should have only three to five key messages to deliver.
- Bring messages to life by discussing why the information is important to you and sharing anecdotes from your personal experience.
- Avoid repeating jargon or vague, ambiguous language. Find a way to state the message simply.
- Focus on aspects of the message that address staff concerns and interests based on your knowledge of what's on their minds.

Leading a team briefing

When leading a team briefing your role is to encourage dialogue, build consensus and gain commitment. Here's how:

1. Encourage dialogue by:

Approach	Example
Asking open-ended questions – can't be answered yes or no – to gather facts and stimulate discussion.	"What do you think is behind their concerns?"
Showing empathy by acknowledging you can appreciate others' viewpoints.	"Given the circumstances, I can see how you would feel that way."
Disagreeing constructively. State why you look at the situation differently and offer an alternative suggestion.	"My experience with that has been different. I find it's best to …"
Agreeing concisely. Avoid restating points already made.	"I agree with Juan's position for the reasons he mentioned.
Encouraging quiet people to join the discussion by calling them by name.	"Sue, what do you think we should do?"
Posing a question to the group and, if there is no response after a brief pause, calling on someone who you believe should contribute to the discussion.	"Tony, any thoughts on this?"

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2. Build consensus by:

Approach	Example
Summarising what you hear the group saying.	"It sounds like the team believes we need to …"
Testing a conclusion with the person most likely to disagree with it.	"Ed, does that square with your thinking?"
Encouraging dissenting parties to resolve differing views.	"Fiona, I hear you saying it's a capacity issue. But, Tom, you seem to be suggesting it's a training issue. Say a little more about that."
Pushing for closure once you perceive a general sense of agreement.	"It seems everyone believes we need to outsource the process. Does anyone disagree with that?"

3. Gain commitment by:

Approach	Example
Summarising the agreed-upon course of action.	"So, we agree that we …"
Defining next steps.	"How can we make this happen?"
Using close-ended questions to confirm accountabilities.	"Joan, can you call him today?"
Determining follow-up actions.	"Let's meet again next Monday to check our progress."

What to discuss at the next team briefing

If you feel unsure about what to cover in your next team briefing, here are some questions staff are nearly always interested in hearing about:

- What are your top priorities?

- What's the rationale for a recent change and how will it impact on us?

- What of significance to us is happening in other parts of the company?

- What new roles are being added or filled?

- What's being done to promote career and professional development?

- What have you heard others say about our core strengths and weaknesses?

Reference: Department of Health and Human Services, Population Health Services, July 2014.