A GUIDELINE ON "BRIEFS"

A "brief" is a summary to communicate perspective on a subject in terms of origin, history, status and expectation in order to assist in reaching a judgment or decision, or in developing confidence in and support for the judgment or decisions of others. It is brief because it highlights only key factors.

Preparing a brief is demanding and requires the development of skills in perspective, clarity and brevity. Perspective is a view in time, environment, events, alternatives, etc.

There are situations where people not directly involved in an action need to be informed, confident and supportive. Because they are not directly involved, it is necessary to give them relevant perspective and a clear description of the current situation relative to that perspective, as well as to current and future expectations. <u>It is important not to assume that they know.</u>

A brief must be concise. A good guideline is that it should typically be less than 500 words on one page. Point format adds to clarity and brevity. Tables or graphs give easily absorbed perspective.

Preparation of a brief requires discernment of the needs of the persons for whom it is prepared. Generally those persons have little time and need to get a quick grasp of the situation and issues.

The Quality Principles apply here:

- know what is needed by asking the reader
- check with the reader to determine if you've met the need
- if the need was not properly met, determine the cause
- remove the cause of failure to satisfy the need.

Excellence in "brief" communications will only arise as the quality principles are applied to this. If you are required to present a brief on any aspect of your work, this process should be used. It will take effort on your part but will significantly increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the enterprise because communication and support will improve, the quality of decisions will improve and the overall time required will be reduced.

H.D.B.
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