

# Classic Format of a Briefing Note

**Robert B. Parkinson**

*Nothing is particularly  
hard if you divide it  
into small jobs.*

- Henry Ford

## **CLASSIC FORMAT OF A BRIEFING NOTE**

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### **PREFACE**

A briefing note is a powerful tool of access to leaders and colleagues — to influence their decisions, their actions and their understanding of issues. In this regard, writers (and their managers) face a challenging task. They must deliver expert insight and strategic acumen with brevity, clarity and professionalism — all presented with an optimal organization, format and style.

This guide aims to help you to excel at writing clear, crisp and compelling briefing notes. The following pages provide:

- the [classic format](#) of a briefing note, along with pointers on its content;
- tips on [how to write](#) efficiently and effectively;
- advice on [how to plan](#) the foundation of a briefing note to help avoid problems before they happen; and
- an outline of the [strategic thinking](#) involved in writing a briefing note.

Your feedback on this material is welcomed. Please do not hesitate to send an [e-mail](#) with any comments, suggestions or concerns that you may have.



or **PROTECTED B**  
or **SECRET**  
or **TOP SECRET** etc.

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**FOR DECISION**

CCM #: N17-52018

RDIMS #: 8340762

Date:

or **FOR ACTION**  
or **FOR SIGNATURE**  
or **FOR INFORMATION**

1

## BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE MINISTER

**Subject:** The Subject should not exceed two lines,  
and the bottom line should be longer than the top line

### Summary

- A well-crafted briefing note does not need a Summary. The Issue and the Conclusion or Recommendation(s) should be sufficient to summarize the briefing note.
- If used, the Summary should condense the key messages of the briefing note.
- Include a deadline for a decision, signature or action, if needed.
- Keep the Summary to three or four bullets.

2

### Issue

The Issue entices the Minister to read on. It states what has happened, is happening, will happen or might happen that requires his or her attention. When appropriate, it states what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats exist.

3

### Background

The Background section:

- provides history and other information to bring the Minister up to speed on the issue;
- should not be controversial or subject to dispute;
- sets the stage for considerations; and
- may include current status.

4

### Considerations

**ANNEX A** and **ANNEX B** provide guidance on writing the briefing note as a whole. **ANNEX C** outlines the strategic thinking that underlies a sound briefing note and that may form a key element of the Considerations section.

Considerations provide the facts, arguments, opinions and analysis needed to show that the Conclusion or Recommendation is a sound response to the Issue.

5

The Considerations section may address the following as needed:

- current status and relevance to needs, desires and strategic priorities (e.g., Speech From the Throne, the Budget, your department's Report on Plans and Priorities);
- pros and cons of options, including feasibility, costs, benefits and risk;
- implications for the portfolio (other agencies that report to the Minister);
- consultations conducted and horizontal management; and
- communications implications and plans.

1. Use an Arial Black 11-point font for all headings.

2. Use a Times New Roman 12-point font for all body text.

3. Left-justify the text (ragged right margin).

4. Set the line spacing to 1.1 all through the briefing note.

5. Note how this paragraph saved space by referring to annexes, rather than going into details here.

- 6. Close with a Conclusion in a briefing notes that is FOR INFORMATION
- 7. Close with Recommendation(s) in a briefing note that is FOR DECISION, FOR ACTION or FOR SIGNATURE.
- 8. Edit the check-box lines as needed, or delete this block if it is not required.

Considerations will deal with SWOT matters as needed, i.e.:

- strengths (internal capabilities);
- weaknesses (internal vulnerabilities);
- opportunities (external circumstances that can be exploited); and
- threats (external circumstances that present a danger).

In addressing SWOT, the Considerations section will take account of PESTLE factors as needed, i.e.:

- political factors (e.g., public opinion, links to the Speech From the Throne);
- economic factors (e.g., budget considerations, financial impact on stakeholders);
- social factors (e.g., impact on education, culture, families, the elderly, employees);
- technological factors (e.g., technological capabilities and constraints);
- legal factors (e.g., requirements of law, regulations, treaties or contracts); and
- ecological factors (e.g., impact on wildlife, oceans, greenhouse gases).

- Use the [Step-by-Step Model for Briefing Notes](#).
- Ensure that the briefing note complies with its [Frame of Reference](#).
- In choosing the content, be alert to the impact of using:
  - (1) [substance vs. froth](#)
  - (2) [positive vs. negative terms](#);
  - (3) [abstractions vs. concrete details](#); and
  - (4) [facts vs. opinions vs. arguments](#).
- Use the principles of [organization](#).
- Use a clear and crisp [style](#) ([short words](#), [short sentences](#), [active verbs](#)), with a [neutral tone](#).
- Keep the briefing note to [two pages](#) (plus annexes).

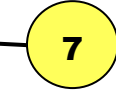
**Conclusion**



The Conclusion:

- answers the question “So what?”; and/or
- states the department’s position; and/or
- tells the Minister what happens next and when he or she will be briefed again.

**Recommendation(s)**



The Recommendation(s) must do more than state a desired outcome. This section tells the Minister precisely what you would like him or her to do to bring about the desired outcome. Include a deadline, if needed (e.g., “A decision from you by March 21, 2017 would enable the project to remain on schedule.”). Beyond this, do not introduce or restate rationale in the Recommendation(s).



Jean-Pierre Marchand

Attachments: (3)

Contacts:

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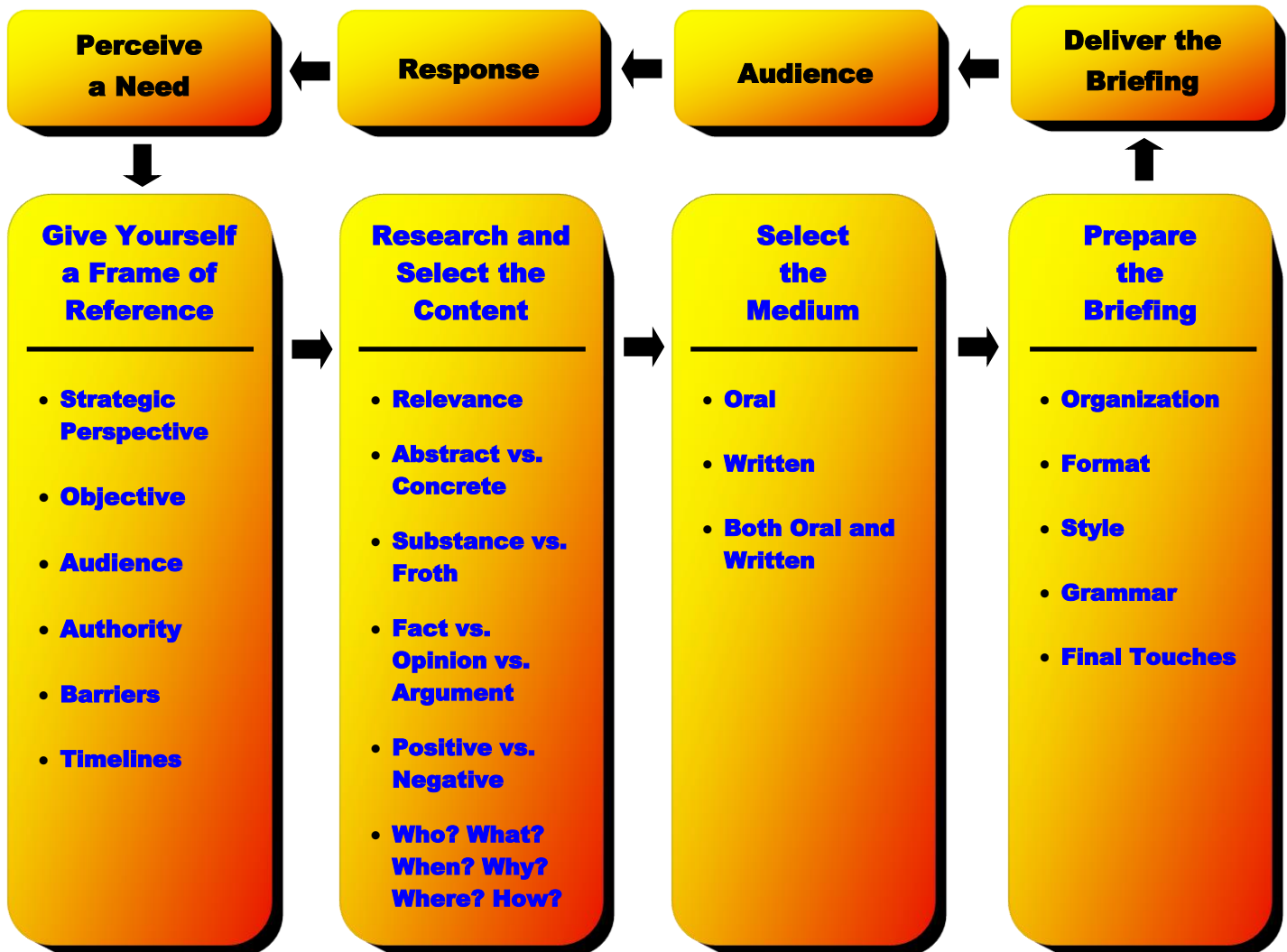
<input type="checkbox"/> I approve.	<input type="checkbox"/> Please discuss
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not approve.	with my staff.
<hr/> Catherine R. Kathiria, P.C., M.P.	

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## Annex A

### A STEP-BY-STEP MODEL FOR BRIEFING NOTES

Click on the links in the chart for details on each element of the model.



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Writing a briefing note can seem like a bewildering challenge at times. But as Henry Ford said, “Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs.” The model above does just that for briefing notes. It sets out the tasks that we all deal with — consciously or not — in writing any briefing note. The model helps us to address those tasks methodically and with sound reasoning.

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The step-by-step model is just a tool, however, and not a rule. No two people will use it entirely alike. In theory, you should first write a frame of reference, then develop the content, then select the medium, and finally prepare the briefing itself. In practice, you will probably find yourself jumping back and forth from one stage to another. Even so, the model provides important insights into what to think about, when to think about it and how to think about it.

For detailed guidance, visit [How to Use the Step-by-Step Model](#).

Note the use of a table of contents. This is a lengthy annex. The table of contents helps the reader to grasp at a glance what is in it.

**Annex B**

**FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR A BRIEFING NOTE**

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- Introduction** .....2
- Strategic Perspective** .....3
  - Triggers (Drivers) .....3
  - Strategic Goal.....3
  - Corporate Perspective .....3
  - Sources .....4
  - For Further Guidance.....5
- Objective** .....5
  - What Do You Want to Achieve? .....5
  - SMART Objectives .....5
  - Being Strategic .....6
- Audience** .....7
  - Being Strategic .....7
  - Intermediaries .....7
  - The Globe and Mail Test .....7
- Authority** .....7
  - Being Strategic .....8
  - Specialist Approvals .....8
- Barriers** .....8
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- Timelines** .....9
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  - Cost Implications .....9

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## **Introduction**

A frame of reference is the foundation of your briefing note. It gives you sound guidance as you do your research and writing. It will help you to keep your work focused and will help you avoid spending time pursuing avenues that are not relevant to the task at hand.

A frame of reference has six elements:

- strategic perspective;
- objective;
- audience;
- authority;
- barriers; and
- timelines.

Shaded text boxes can be helpful as main titles in lengthy annexes. They add one more level of heading without resorting to convoluted and confusing format gimmicks.

Follow these links for examples of [level 2](#), [level 3](#) and [level 4](#).

These elements are linked to each other. Changing one can mean changing one or more of the others as well. In light of this, a frame of reference is a valuable tool for making sure that the foundation of your briefing is viable before you devote a lot of time to research and writing. You can also use it to get buy-in and guidance from your supervisor, partners or senior management at an early stage.

Sometimes it is quick and easy to write a frame of reference. In such cases, there is nothing lost by taking the little time that is required. Other times, it will be difficult and time-consuming to write a frame of reference. This can be an important sign that you need to clarify what you are setting out to do before you spend a lot of time doing it.

Sometimes, you will draw a complete blank when you try to write your frame of reference. This may be one of those times when writing is a process of discovering what your thoughts are, rather than simply putting your thoughts on paper. In such cases, go ahead and start writing. Before you finish up, however, do go back and write your frame of reference. If you still experience difficulty at this point, it is a sure sign that your briefing note is in trouble.

The balance of this annex expands on each element of a frame of reference.



## Strategic Perspective

Strategic perspective is vital to a successful briefing note. It has three components:

- triggers (drivers);
- strategic goal; and
- corporate perspective.

The second level of headings is centred and in upper-case letters, using an Arial Black 11-point font..

Follow these links to examples of headings [level 1](#), [level 3](#) and [level 4](#).

### TRIGGERS (DRIVERS)

What triggered the need for a briefing note, and what triggered the trigger? Review the triggers closely to ensure that you clearly understand what is driving the task that you are about to pursue. It is important to know not only what is required but also why it is required.

### STRATEGIC GOAL

What strategic goal will the briefing note further? This is not the same as the objective of the briefing note. The strategic goal is a bigger purpose that validates the objective. Such a goal might be found, for example, in (see also "[Sources](#)" below):

- the law;
- the Speech From the Throne;
- the Budget;
- the Minister's mandate letter; or
- your departmental or branch business plan.

### CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE

What is the corporate perspective? This is the most challenging component of strategic perspective. This is where you anticipate and think through the big picture that will be on the minds of senior managers as they review your briefing note. Here, it is helpful to do a SWOT scan, using PESTLE as a guide.

SWOT stands for:

- **S**trengths (internal capabilities);
- **W**eaknesses (internal vulnerabilities);
- **O**pportunities (external circumstances that can be exploited); and
- **T**hreats (external circumstances that present a danger).

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PESTLE stands for:

- **P**olitical factors (e.g., public opinion, relevance to the Speech From the Throne);
- **E**conomic factors (e.g., budget considerations, financial impact on stakeholders);
- **S**ocial factors (e.g., impact on education, culture, families, the elderly, employees);
- **T**echnological factors (e.g., technological capabilities and constraints);
- **L**egal factors (e.g., impact of laws, regulations, treaties or contracts); and
- **E**cological factors (e.g., impact on wildlife habitat or greenhouse gases).

### **SOURCES**

Here are some internally produced documents that you might use to gain strategic perspective:

- mission, vision and values statements;
- Report on Plans and Priorities;
- Performance Measurement Framework;
- Departmental Performance Report;
- departmental business plan/human resource plan;
- program alignment architecture;
- internal audit and evaluation reports;
- departmental risk profile; and
- previous briefing notes.

External sources that you might want to review include:

- laws, regulations, treaties and contracts;
- Speech from the Throne;
- Budget;
- Clerk of the Privy Council's Web site;
- Treasury Board Secretariat Web site;
- Auditor General's reports;
- the governing party's election platform (but you can't refer to this in a briefing note, even though it can provide you with vital guidance);
- speeches by politicians (here again, though, you cannot cite them in a briefing note in most cases);
- news media reports; and
- public opinion surveys.

You may also need to go directly to sources. You might contact any of the following (possibly requiring your manager's permission beforehand):

- technical specialists (legal counsel, finance, communications, human resources, or other subject-matter experts) — both internal and external;
- counterparts in other departments, other governments or other organizations;
- your director;
- your director general's staff;

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- your assistant deputy minister's staff;
- your deputy minister's staff; and
- your minister's staff.

**FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE**

See [Annex C – Strategy and Execution](#) for more guidance on strategic perspective.

**Objective****WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?**

In setting the objective of the briefing note, state it in terms of something you want the briefing note to achieve, as opposed to simply going through a process. Here's an example of a process: "To brief the Minister on our cost-sharing program." That raises the question: What do you want to be the outcome of that briefing? Instead, you might say something like this: "To ensure that the Minister is aware in advance of opposition that may arise to our cost-sharing program."

**SMART OBJECTIVES**

Here is a test of whether you have developed a sound objective. Ask yourself if it is SMART, i.e.:

- **S**pecific;
- **M**easurable;
- **A**ttainable;
- **R**elevant; and
- **T**ime-bound.

**Specific**

- What exactly do you want the Minister to do, decide, know or understand after reading your briefing note?
- Does your objective embrace answers to these questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? How much?

**Measurable**

- How will you know whether you have achieved your objective?

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- Can you use quantitative metrics (e.g., “Did the Minister approve spending \$1.45 million on the new program?” or “Did the Minister agree to visit 15 mining communities in the next 12 months?”)?
- Can you use qualitative metrics (e.g., “Did the Minister approve the new communications strategy for the program?” or “Did the Minister accept the invitation to speak at the conference?”)?

**Attainable**

- What barriers stand between you and achieving your objective?
- Should you consider addressing each barrier in a separate initiative — say, in separate briefing notes to the Minister, the Deputy Minister, etc.?

**Relevant**

- Does your objective fall within the parameters of higher goals that have been approved previously (e.g., goals set out in the Budget, the Speech from the Throne, the Minister’s mandate letter, the department’s business plan)?

**Time Bound**

- When must the objective be achieved in order to be useful (e.g., within six hours, within seven days, within two months)?

**BEING STRATEGIC**

In setting your objective, you have an opportunity to be strategic. You don't want to overreach — but neither do you want to aim for less than what you could reasonably expect to achieve.

Your manager can be helpful at this early stage in assessing the objective.

## Audience

The audience is the star of the show. Without an audience, you cannot achieve your objective.

### BEING STRATEGIC

Choosing your audience is another opportunity to be strategic. The first audience that comes to mind may not be the audience that is best-suited to furthering your strategic goal or achieving your objective.

### INTERMEDIARIES

The ultimate audience — say, your minister — is just one of many audiences that your briefing note will encounter as it makes its way up through your bureaucracy. For a ministerial briefing note, the draft must be read, understood and endorsed by five managers and seven or more administrative assistants, executive assistants, briefings officers, policy advisors and chiefs of staff. — each of whom may delay your briefing note, edit it without consulting you, or even reject it outright if they misunderstand it.

### THE GLOBE AND MAIL TEST

Finally, there is *The Globe and Mail* test. Briefing notes, and even drafts of briefing notes, are subject to access to information legislation. Thus, another audience could be the general public, and your briefing note could end up on the front page of *The Globe and Mail* one day. This should not deter you from offering frank advice. It should, however, be an incentive to ensure that everything in the briefing note will stand up under intense public scrutiny.

## Authority

Authority is the flip side of the audience. Your audience has to be matched with the signing authority for the briefing note.

## **BEING STRATEGIC**

Here, you again have an opportunity to be strategic. If you or your upper managers do not have the authority to address the audience that is needed to achieve your objective, you will need to rethink your endeavour to identify an alternative objective and an audience that you do have the authority to address.

## **SPECIALIST APPROVALS**

Another dimension of authority is approvals by specialists — such as legal counsel, communications, finance, human resources and subject-matter experts. If you need OKs from people such as these, it will take time, and you will need to account for this when you write your timelines.

## **Barriers**

Barriers are external factors that stand between you and achieving your objective with your chosen audience. Barriers could include:

- the audience's existing position on the issue (and if you don't know what it is, it is worth your while to work through back channels to find out);
- competing views conveyed by other stakeholders;
- the audience's lack of understanding of a complex issue;
- time pressures that could prevent the audience from reading or even seeing your briefing note; and
- PESTLE and SWOT factors.

## **BEING STRATEGIC**

You have another opportunity to be strategic here. Do the barriers present too much of a challenge to overcome in a single briefing note? You may have to consider your options and develop a plan for overcoming those barriers — possibly:

- developing a series of briefing notes, each designed to overcome one or more of the barriers; and/or
- seeking an opportunity to deliver an oral briefing on a complex issue.

## **Timelines**

Finally, we come to timelines, which have three components:

- deadline — i.e., when the briefing note must be received by its ultimate audience in order for it to achieve its objective;
- schedule — e.g., when your research and consultations will be done, when your drafting and revising will be done, when the briefing note will be translated (if needed), when approvals will be received from specialists and the formal line of authority; and
- personal time budget — i.e., the number of hours of your own time that the project will require.

### **BEING STRATEGIC**

Once again, you have an opportunity to be strategic here. Does your deadline permit you enough time to gather all the information that you want or need for the briefing note? If not, you must make a choice:

- You could plow ahead and hope for the best without the missing information.
- You could change other elements of your frame of reference as needed to match the available information.
- You could ask for an extension on the briefing note's deadline, if it has been requested by others.

If you need to ask for an extension, do so as soon as possible. Waiting until the last minute makes you look incompetent and complicates life for everyone else.

### **COST IMPLICATIONS**

As noted above, a ministerial briefing note must be cleared by 12 or more managers, administrative assistants, executive assistants, briefings officers, policy advisors and chiefs of staff. If you are tempted to cut corners in your personal time budget for research and writing, give some thought to what the consequences will be if any of those individuals:

- misunderstand your briefing note;
- send it back to you for revision;
- revise it themselves without checking with you; or
- reject it entirely before it reaches its intended audience

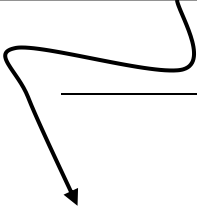
Note the main headings used here.  
This annex has been structured as a briefing note within a briefing note.

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**Annex C**

**STRATEGY AND EXECUTION**

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**ISSUE** .....2

**BACKGROUND: GETTING A HANDLE ON STRATEGY** .....2

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    External Environment .....4

    Internal Environment .....4

        • Organization.....5

        • Resources .....5

        • Management Preferences .....5

        • Strategy.....5

**CONSIDERATIONS: WORKING WITH STRATEGY** .....6

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        • Value Proposition.....6

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        • External Environment Scan.....8

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**UNCLASSIFIED****Issue**

Briefing notes often have implications for strategy and its execution. In drafting such a briefing note, it is vital to understand how what you are dealing with fits into a strategic context, and vice versa. A failure to do so could lead upper management to reject your note or send it back for revision.

**Background: Getting a Handle on Strategy**

The section on Considerations delivers the facts, arguments and opinions needed to show that the Conclusions and/or Recommendations are a sound response to the Issue. This section might cover:

- relevance to management's priorities;
- consultations conducted;
- strategy and execution;
- risk management;
- current status;
- options analyses;
- horizontal management; and
- communications implications and plans.

What follows reviews strategy as it may relate to a Considerations section or the thrust of the briefing note as a whole.

Note that the concept of “strategy” can apply at any level of an organization. What you see as a strategy for your work may be merely a tactical matter to your boss — and so on up the line of command. Bear this in mind in addressing different audiences, particularly audiences at upper levels.

**THE DIAMOND-E FRAMEWORK**

Many tools exist to help you assess strategy and its execution. One such tool — the Diamond-E Framework<sup>1</sup> — is explored here and may be helpful in writing briefing notes that have strategic implications.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Strategic Analysis and Action (6th Edition), by Mary M. Crossan, Joseph N. Fry, J. Peter Killing, Michael J. Rouse. Toronto: Prentice Hall/Pearson, 2005.

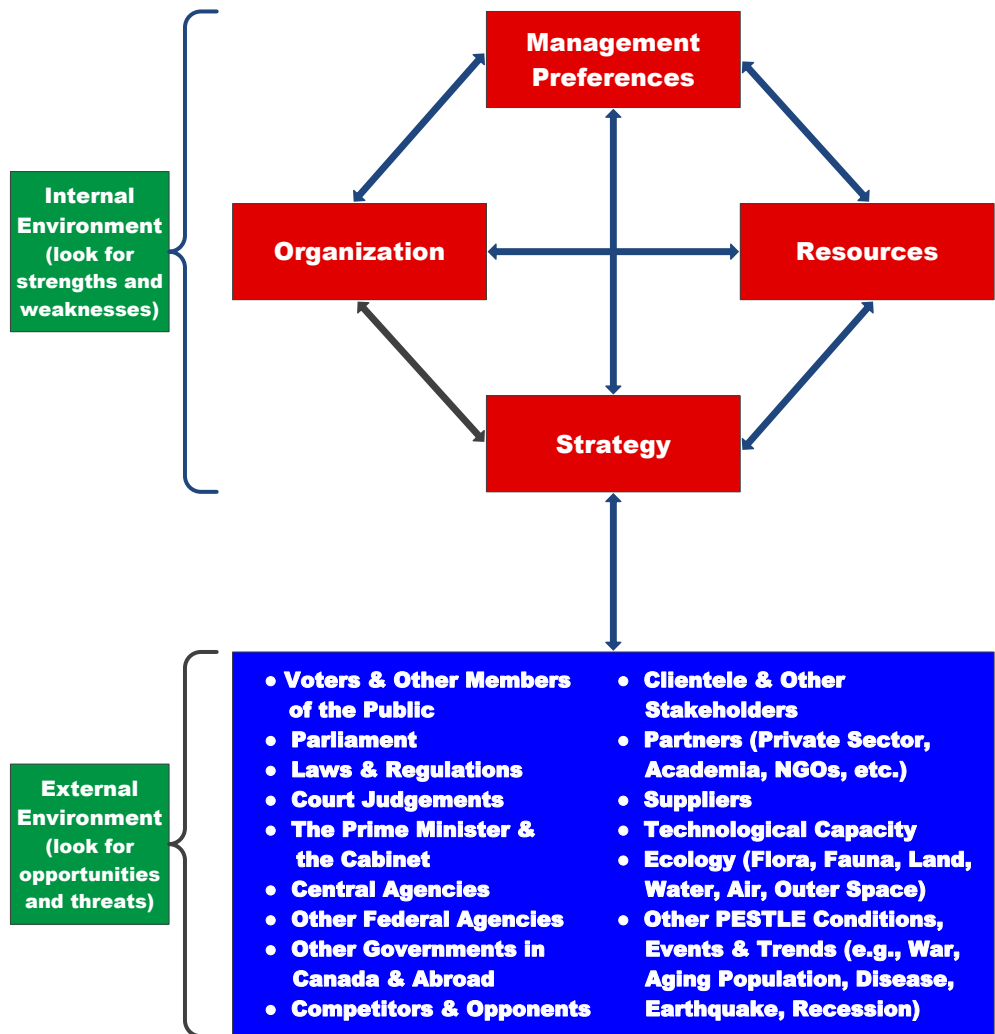
The diagram below shows the elements of the framework (adapted for a Government of Canada context). In brief, the elements are:

- external environment;
- strategy;
- management preferences;
- organization; and
- resources.

Which of those elements will be the key focus of your briefing note?

**The Diamond-E Framework**

**Do a SWOT\* scan of factors that may influence your strategy and action plan. PESTLE\*\* can help you to identify relevant factors.**



\* Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

\*\* Political, economic, social, technological, legal and ecological factors.

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**EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

“External environment” means all that is external to your establishment, which is usually defined by the audience of your briefing note. The table below gives examples.

**The External Environment is Defined by the Audience**

Audience of Your Briefing Note	Establishment	External Environment
Your Manager	Your Unit	Other units, divisions, directorates and branches of your organization, plus the outside world.
Your Director	Your Division	Other divisions, directorates and branches in your organization, plus the outside world.
Your Director General	Your Directorate	Other directorates and branches in your organization, plus the outside world.
Your Assistant Deputy Minister	Your Branch	Other branches in your organization, plus the outside world.
Your Cabinet Minister	Your Government or Your Government Department	<p>The world outside your department or government, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• laws and regulations</li> <li>• court judgements</li> <li>• Parliament</li> <li>• the Prime Minister</li> <li>• the Cabinet</li> <li>• central agencies</li> <li>• other jurisdictions at home and abroad</li> <li>• voters</li> <li>• other members of the public</li> <li>• stakeholders</li> <li>• competitors</li> <li>• partners</li> <li>• suppliers</li> <li>• academia</li> <li>• non-government organizations</li> <li>• industry</li> <li>• opinion leaders (e.g., news media)</li> <li>• the economy</li> <li>• the ecology</li> <li>• infrastructure</li> </ul>

**INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

The other elements of the framework are internal to your establishment: organization, resources, management preferences, and strategy.

Note that there is interplay among all of these elements. However, only strategy provides a link to the external environment for planning purposes.

The following describes what each element of the internal environment represents.

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### **Organization**

“Organization” means the structure of the establishment, including:

- the way resources are deployed among units of the establishment;
- the systems and processes that are in place; and
- the organizational culture(s) that prevail.

### **Resources**

“Resources” comprise:

- the human, financial and material resources available;
- intangibles, such as goodwill, that are available; and
- the status of those resources.

Here is an example of a third-level heading. It is left-justified, has upper and lower-case letters, and uses an Arial Black 11-point font.

Follow these links to examples of headings [level 1](#), [level 2](#) and [level 4](#).

### **Management Preferences**

“Management preferences” define your establishment’s programs, products or services, how they are to be delivered, how resources will be deployed, and how your establishment should operate — as expressed in:

- your establishment’s governing authorities, such as:
  - articles of incorporation or governing charter;
  - bylaws;
  - contracts, memoranda of understanding, letters of agreement and other such documents;
- statements of mission, mandate, vision and values;
- statements of goals, objectives and priorities;
- directives such as policies, standing orders, procedures, budget allocations or delegations of signing authority;
- decisions reached in meetings and recorded in minutes; and
- direct orders from a manager to one or more subordinates.

### **Strategy**

“Strategy” is a plan to bring about positive change in response to a SWOT scan. Strategy links:

- the internal environment with the external environment; and
- the elements of the internal environment with each other.

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Strategy defines how your establishment will align itself to:

- foster and exploit opportunities in the external environment and strengths in the internal environment; and
- eliminate, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, adapt to and/or recover from threats in the external environment and weaknesses in the internal environment.

### **Considerations: Working With Strategy**

#### **ANCHORS**

To succeed, a strategy must be anchored in:

- a strong value proposition; and
- sound goals and objectives.

Before doing a SWOT scan, it can be useful to ensure that those anchors are in place and are valid.

#### **Value Proposition**

The establishment's value proposition is the foundation that validates its goals and objectives. If there is doubt about the value proposition, everything that follows from it will be fraught with difficulty. Here are key questions to ask:

- What value does your establishment offer the external environment?
- Is that value clear to all?
- Is it still relevant?
- Is it unique?
- Do others offer products, services or programs that detract from, compete with or complement yours?
- Is there a need to revamp the value proposition before pursuing the goals and objectives that support it?

#### **Goals and Objectives**

Within the context of the value proposition:

- What are your establishment's short-, medium- and long-term goals and objectives?
- Are the goals mutually compatible?

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- Are all the goals validated by a sound value proposition?
- Are all the objectives validated by a higher goal?
- Are the objectives mutually compatible?
- Are the objectives SMART — i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound?
- Do your findings on validation, SWOT, SMART and mutual compatibility tell you that anything must be done with the goals and objectives?
  - Do you need to set priorities?
  - Do you need to change the goals or the objectives?
  - Do you need to change the way goals and objectives are pursued?

### **ENVIRONMENT SCAN**

#### **SWOT**

A key step in understanding strategic issues is to do a SWOT scan of the internal and external environments.

You will find strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment, and opportunities and threats in the external environment.

A SWOT scan can inform decisions on:

- your establishment's value proposition;
- your establishment's goals and objectives;
- your establishment's strategies and execution plans; or
- all of the above.

#### **PESTLE**

As you do a SWOT scan, PESTLE can help you to identify factors in the internal and external environments that will influence strategy and its action plan. For example:

- political factors might include public opinion or government policy;
- economic factors might include budget considerations or financial impact on stakeholders;
- social factors might include impact on education, culture, families, the elderly or employees;
- technological factors might include technological capacities, constraints or potential;

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- legal factors might include statutory, regulatory, treaty or contractual requirements; and
- ecological factors might include impact on wildlife habitat or greenhouse gases.

### **External Environment Scan**

A scan of the external environment will explore opportunities and threats that exist anywhere outside of your establishment — using PESTLE as a guide.

### **Internal Environment Scan**

The internal environment scan will assess strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis management preferences, organization, resources and strategy — again, using PESTLE as a guide.

## **SETTING STRATEGY**

Strategy links the internal environment with the external environment. It is a tool for changing components of those environments.

### **Options**

This discussion of options will assume that goals and objectives have been set vis-à-vis the establishment's value proposition. Given this:

- What do you want to influence, what can you influence and what must you influence in the external environment?
- What do you want to change, what can you change and what must you change in the internal environment in order to:
  - bring about change in the external environment; and
  - achieve other desired ends with respect to the internal environment?
- How urgent are those wants and needs?
- What options could be pursued to bring about change internally and externally?
- Do you have the management preferences, resources, organization and strategy needed to pursue each option?

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- Do those affected (internally and externally) have the management preferences, resources, organization and strategy required to respond to each option the way you need them to? If not, what can you do about it?

**Stakeholder Engagement**

Have stakeholders been consulted, or merely informed?

Do they support or oppose any of the options?

Can they be engaged to advise on or contribute to any of the options?

**Risk**

What are the Risks?

What risks do the options present — specifically:

- What positive outcomes could be achieved?
- What negative outcomes could result?
- What is the likelihood of each outcome?
- How great would be the impact if each outcome occurred?

Here is an example of a fourth-level heading. It is left-justified, has upper and lower-case letters, and uses a Times New Roman 12-point underlined font (but not bolded).  
  
Follow these links to examples of headings [level 1](#), [level 2](#) and [level 3](#).

Response to Risk

What steps can be taken to:

- enhance positive outcomes and increase their likelihood; and
- prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, recover from and/or adapt to negative outcomes?

What investments would be needed to take those steps? Do the potential returns on investment justify the investments?

**EXECUTION**

To succeed, a strategy must have a sound execution plan. Here are issues to consider.

**Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?**

In order to pursue your chosen options:

- What must be done?
- Who must do it?
- When must it be done?
- Where must it be done?



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- Why must it be done?
- How must it be done?
- How much of it must be done?

What will all this cost, and who will pay the cost?

### **Communications**

How and when will this be communicated to those who will be responsible for execution within your establishment?

How and when will this be communicated to those affected or who are expected to act in the external environment?

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

How will you monitor and evaluate progress and effectiveness — i.e., how will you know whether you have succeeded?

Are there indicators that will warn you when a change of course may be needed?

## **Conclusion**

### **WHAT THIS ANNEX HAS DONE**

This annex has outlined:

- tools for understanding the nature and context of strategy;
- elements of the internal environment and the external environment; and
- factors to bear in mind in working to bring about change in those environments.

### **WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOUR BRIEFING NOTE**

For your briefing note to succeed, it is important to situate yourself and your audience. Where are you and your audience in the processes set out above, i.e.:

- assessing the value proposition;
- setting goals and objectives;
- conducting a SWOT scan of the internal and external environments;

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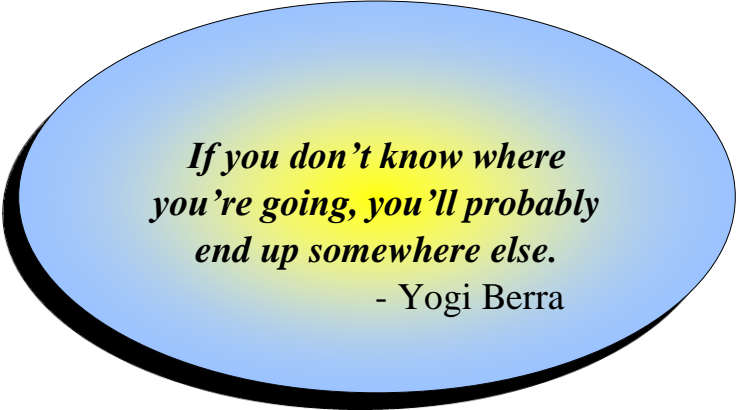
- analyzing the findings from the SWOT scan and deciding what to change in the internal and external environments;
- developing a strategy, i.e., a plan for pursuing those changes;
- executing that strategy;
- measuring progress of implementing the strategy and assessing whether a change in course is needed; and
- measuring the strategy's success in achieving its objectives.

In doing so, ask:

- Is your establishment or the external environment in the midst of one or more of those processes?
- If not, should it be?
- Are you a player who is taking action on one or more of those processes?
- Are any of those processes unfolding under the direction of other players? Is your audience one of those players?

Once you have situated yourself and your audience in those processes, ask:

- Which of these processes will be the key focus of your briefing note?
- What impact will the key focus will have on the other items?
- What impact will the other items will have on the key focus.?



*If you don't know where  
you're going, you'll probably  
end up somewhere else.*

- Yogi Berra