Business Brief

Business briefs are a form of communication meant to bring a decision-maker (usually a high-ranking executive) up to speed on some issue or situation that needs attention. Briefs strive to present all the relevant facts and considerations that the reader will need to make a fully informed decision, but do so concisely. The trick, therefore, is to make the business brief succinct while also making it complete.

1. Organization: Although the organization of business briefs may vary, briefs generally contain an opening, a body, and a conclusion.
   A. The opening identifies the situation or issue at hand and why it is important.
   B. The body summarizes the facts and considerations, and provides the following:
      I. All of the relevant history necessary to fully understand the situation or issue.
      II. Information on the current situation.
      III. Explanation of how and why the company got to this point.
      IV. Comments on what may be needed.
      V. Objective analysis of relevant information.
   C. The conclusion recommends a course of action and provides an analysis or explanation.

2. Characteristics: Although briefs will vary depending on the material, a typical brief is written in a style that is direct, concise, and clear, and is formatted for ease of reading (subheads, bullets, etc.). The specific audience, purpose, and topic will determine the choices that a writer makes when drafting a brief, but here are some general considerations to bear in mind:
   A. Although business briefs may include a recommended course of action, you should strive to present the key questions and facts in a neutral, factual way. Slanting facts to fit the eventual recommendation, or adopting an argumentative or emotional tone, could undermine your credibility.
   B. Although you should be formal, avoid dense prose and puffed-up language. Your goal is to inform your reader and lead him or her to a decision.
   C. Respect your audience’s time. A brief should be informative but not ponderous. It should be easily read at a brisk pace. Although it is hard to generalize, a business brief, as the name implies, is typically short—maybe a couple of pages, or longer if the issue is particularly complicated.