



## **Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less**

*Joseph McCormack*

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# Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less

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**Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less** Joseph McCormack  
**Get heard by being clear and concise**

The only way to survive in business today is to be a lean communicator. Busy executives expect you to respect and manage their time more effectively than ever. You need to do the groundwork to make your message tight and to the point. The average professional receives 304 emails per week and checks their smartphones 36 times an hour and 38 hours a week. This inattention has spread to every part of life. The average attention span has shrunk from 12 seconds in 2000 to eight in 2012.

So, throw them a lifeline and be brief.

Author Joe McCormack tackles the challenges of inattention, interruptions, and impatience that every professional faces. His proven B.R.I.E.F. approach, which stands for Background, Relevance, Information, Ending, and Follow up, helps simplify and clarify complex communication. *BRIEF* will help you summarize lengthy information, tell a short story, harness the power of infographics and videos, and turn monologue presentations into controlled conversations.

Details the B.R.I.E.F. approach to distilling your message into a brief presentation

Written by the founder and CEO of Sheffield Marketing Partners, which specializes in message and narrative development, who is also a recognized expert in Narrative Mapping, a technique that helps clients achieve a clearer and more concise message

Long story short: *BRIEF* will help you gain the muscle you need to eliminate wasteful words and stand out from the rest. Be better. Be brief.

## Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less Details

Date : Published January 23rd 2014 by Wiley (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781118705285

Author : Joseph McCormack

Format : ebook 256 pages

Genre : Business, Nonfiction, Language, Writing, Communication, Self Help, Personal Development

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# From Reader Review Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less for online ebook

## Helder says

I really liked this book. The term "lean communication" suits it very well. Avoiding waste, getting to the point and making your communication effective, while centering your message on the receiver are key points that I registered after reading the book. If you want to become a more effective speaker and a more pleasant communicator this book is for you.

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## Timofey Peters says

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## Justin says

The author clearly knows what he's talking about and has some strong kernels of advice peppered through the book but frequently fails to follow his own advice.

For instance, one of the major points he highlights is the ubiquity of interruptions in modern society and the added importance of brevity as a result. He then goes on to fill the book with 'Brief Bits' that have small break-out boxes of stand alone text that are a constant interruption from the primary narrative. Chapter 11 even has a 'Brief Bit' about interruptions and 'cutting out the fluff' despite being a fluffy interruption itself. (The break out boxes are very reminiscent of a textbook which makes me think the editors at Wiley, a major textbook publisher, might have had a bit too much of an influence on things)

Another example of not following his own advice sees a similar break-out box on Active Listening where the subtitle of the box is word-for-word the same as its first sentence despite being placed back to back. (found in chapter 8)

Punchline: If you have a chance to see the author speak or meet him in person then definitely go, but maybe give the book a pass.

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## Maria says

McCormack has spent his career helping people to think first before talking. Common sense isn't that common, and it can save time, confusion and money.

Why I started this book: Professional Reading list and a short book. Win, win.

Why I finished it: Great audio and a great reminder. The final judge of any self-help/communication book is if you are motivated to follow their advice. So far, so good.

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## Abo Ahmad says

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## **M. Jane Colette says**

Could have been shorter. An article rather than a book. Worth skimming through; content is all on the surface; no deep drilling required.

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## **Fred Zimny says**

Tackle the unconscious obstacles to brevity. Brief: Make a Bigger Impact by Saying Less Joseph McCormack

Simplify ideas by using BRIEF mind maps to outline information.

Backgrounds  
Reasons Relevance  
Information  
Ending  
Follow-up questions

Make your ideas pop with the power of pictures.

Exchange corporate-speak for an engaging story.

Employ active listening to turn monologues into controlled and balanced conversations.

TALC Talk, active listening and converse

Brevity signifies respect – show people you care by thinking about their time.

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## **Dawn Lennon says**

A book about being brief almost sounds ridiculous, until you get your hands on this one. One of the tenets of the book is that in order to master brevity you need expertise. Joseph McCormack certainly does and demonstrates it in both his writing style, the book's structure, and his use of the techniques that he proposes-- headlines, visuals, and stories.

The book is so neatly arranged that the reader can navigate the messages and the advice with ease. McCormack starts by raising awareness about the suffocating noise, information clutter, and competing demands that interfere with our ability to be heard in almost any forum.

Then he provides the insights and content that cleanly capture what we need to do and how we need to do it. He doesn't minimize the effort it takes to be brief. It's work and requires mental muscle memory, a technique he illustrates and explains.

He drives home the career, success, and growth value of being brief in our communications whether it's to influence, sell, or advance. The value is made plain and the techniques to achieve it accessible.

I am a writer so this book was in my wheelhouse. I've also experienced and observed the consequences of both missing the mark and hitting it in business situations. Conditions are tough these days. Developing a reputation (brand) for being brief is an asset we all need.

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## **David Bakker says**

It was too long. Seriously nearly nothing you haven't thought of yourself. If you need to be convinced of the necessity of brevity, this book doesn't even do a good job. It uses a 'I did this and that' examples that have little impact on me as a reader and are completely forgettable.

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## **Shhhhh Ahhhhh says**

Good, 'brief', practical book on optimizing communication in the age of inattention. Definitely illuminated things for me as someone who does executive training and presentations from time to time. I've always chalked up the unfailing occurrence of execs giving dull cow eyes during a presentation to do with the fact that they didn't gaf about anything below a management level. It's now clearer to me that, given the business of their schedule, they had tuned out the presentation because the awesomeness wasn't front-loaded, because it may have been bogged down in what they believed was minutiae, because there was no story, because there were no visuals (I've historically presented with no powerpoint deck), or because it just went on for too long. I feel better equipped to tackle future interactions now.

This was a book that practiced what it preached. It was well structured. It had a beginning, middle and end. It stated the point up front, then supported it. It didn't get bogged down in big words. It told a story. It was brief. It did all of the intellectual heavy lifting for the reader, requiring less work to understand this than it took the authors to understand it.

The biggest takeaway from this book for me has been the idea that I don't really respect other people's time, and that if my interest is in being more effective, I will perform actions that indicate that.

The last section of the book is a brief action plan that offers the large points of the book in a "Truth, Implication, Plan and Practice" format with a pithy 2 sentence chunk. I will paste just the chunks here.

"Your attention, please. Manage the Elusive 600 (the excess mental capacity we all have and where inattention lives); it's your responsibility.

Why, why, why? Get to the reason quickly, and revisit it.

Map it out. Prepare what you'll say on paper before you dare speak.

Give me a headline. Say it plainly, directly, and quickly.

Take time to trim. Just because you think it, doesn't mean you have to say it.

Listen closely. Active listening is vital to staying connected with your audience.

Just say no (to presentation mode). Avoid speeches and monologues; always keep your information personal, professional, and conversational.

Use the power of threes. Organize information in groups of three to keep order, attention, and balance

Cut it in half. Whatever time you think you have, always take less.

Just say it (the wrong way). Say something simply in your own words to ensure authenticity.

Paint a picture. Share a story, analogy, or even a hypothetical example to help people visualize what you mean.

Pause, please. Stop talking to allow room for a response, comment, or question.

Don't use notes. Be willing to leave your prepared paperwork aside and just say what you mean to say.

Don't get too comfortable. Cut it short whenever you're on a roll.

Put it on a cracker. Don't cook up a verbal meal; first serve a short summary to test your audience's appetite.

Nobody cares unless you do. Remind yourself that if you're not passionate, nobody else will be.

Make sure no assembly is required. Make it easy to listen and understand by giving all the essential elements logically organized.

Tell versus sell. While people hate being sold something, they do love stories.

What's in it for me? There always needs to be a payoff. Know what it is, and deliver it.

Commit to clear and concise. Success means deciding to be disciplined."

DO read this book.

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## Sergei\_kalinin says

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## **Jen says**

The very worst kind of business book - one written by a guy more interested in talking about all the people he's worked with (in an obnoxious, name droppy way) than providing actual helpful content. Also, the thesis of the book: that employees need to be brief not because of a societal shift in attention spans or to be respectful of customers' time but because CEOs are way more busy and important than you is incredibly tone deaf. The Grainger anecdote was good, but everyone with a vested interest in customer-centricity has read the HBR case. Also, did you know that people look at their phones 150 times a day? For a book on cleaning up communication, I found it odd that fact was repeated at least five times (and seems inaccurate).

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## **Benjamin Schneider says**

There's really only an HBR article worth of content in this book. It seems like the book was written to serve as a raison d'etre for speaking gigs and as merchandise for the speaking gigs. The main argument of the book (that clear, concise communication is valuable but takes time and is aided by certain techniques) is certainly correct, but it does not take a book to present this argument.

I'd recommend avoiding this book but perhaps watching the author speak in a Youtube video. I only read the book because my company required every employee to read it.

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## **Sean Goh says**

A not-so-brief book better suited to a HBR or Forbes article, as it often repeats itself and throws in forgettable 'case studies' that don't do much to advance the writer's point. The frequent text box interruptions don't do the reader any favours either.

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Being brief is not just about time. What's more important is how long it feels to the audience. It is a balance between being concise, clear and compelling. Give people enough to act on, but not choke on.

Board members are very busy and have little patience. Their attention is divided between the issues of your company and the other companies they run or advise. Their knowledge is a mile wide and an inch deep.

Be prepared to have an executive summary conversation, as opposed to an hour-long presentation.

The BRIEF map:

B - Background or beginning

R - Relevance or reason

I - Information for inclusion

E - Ending or conclusion

F - Follow-up or expected questions

Speak in headlines, or risk losing your audience.

Real brevity invites, meaningful, controlled conversations. It is a disciplined conversation, where what you're



talking about matters to the person you're talking to, and your active listening tells you what matters to that person.

It's not about controlling the conversation, but controlling yourself in the conversation.

In most cases, the slides are less for the decision maker and more for the staff and subordinate commanders on the way up. Everyone wants to protect the decision maker. The slides are less valuable for the actual briefing.

You state it simply. Doesn't mean it's simple, but you do it so that the world gets it and can understand it.

Regularly check in with your audience. You can't adjust if you don't check in.

It is important to listen to gauge how much your audience already knows or doesn't know, so you can adjust accordingly. Never tell people what they already know.

When firing someone, avoid the temptation to over-explain to compensate for the bad news. Be focused on delivering the information. The boss isn't the person to give that person a lot of comfort, because they made the decision.

Flagging, or announcing how many points you are going to speak on, clearly delineating the scope of your talking, doing your audience a big favour.

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## **Panda Incognito says**

This book was thoroughly unimpressive. The short chapters are often interchangeable, reiterating material from a different angle instead of digging deeper, and info boxes that cover pre-established concepts regularly interrupt the text flow. Rather than delving into psychology or behavioral science, the book depends on long, skim-worthy stories about people the author has worked with and how they've solved their communication problems. None of it gripped me.

Someone who works in the corporate sector might find this more worthwhile. However, since I enjoyed reading the business book "Switch" in the seventh grade, my lack of involvement in the business world is no excuse for how this book failed me.

Also, this quote baffled and annoyed me: "Only an arrogant author would expect you to read the book cover-to-cover to figure out what he's trying to say. He should have the courtesy to summarize in many ways the moral of the story with images." WHAT EVEN. The average attention span is dwindling, but people read books to learn what authors have to say. That's how reading works. Other mediums are available for different purposes. I counter that only an arrogant author would claim in 2016 that the entirety of human + books history is completely outmoded and obliterated.

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