

October 4, 2016

Dear ABPM Members,

Although your executive team has funded a briefing program and, as a briefing professional, you see the value that your program provides every day, you may find that you need to continually justify and market your program internally, compete for budget dollars and lobby for executive support.

The 2016 APBM Multi-Client Study contains concrete data that will help your key stakeholders understand the value that your briefing program delivers. It is a powerful proof source and lever to advance the support and success of your program.

The challenge is to take that rich survey data and turn it into a compelling story. An internal stakeholder that is overwhelmed with too much detailed information may fail to grasp the key messages that the survey data provides about the value of your briefing program!

Mandel Communications is pleased to present the ABPM membership with a set of conversation-starters based on the Mandel content-organization methodology.

Each starter has been crafted following the proven Mandel Communications Personal Communications Framework® model. The first part of each message, labeled SCI (Situation/Complication/Implication), sets the context for your listener by clearly communicating the need and/or opportunity contained in the survey data.

The second part, labeled PAB (Position/Action/Benefit), gets right to the point by making a logical and actionable recommendation that is supported by the results it will produce.

As you review the document, you'll see that these messages are intended to open a conversation or kick off an email exchange. This works best when you tailor the message to fit both the needs of your specific audience and your personal communication style.

We are confident the ABPM survey data will provide you with a great story to tell your stakeholders.

If you find this approach useful and want to learn more about the Blueprint methodology, please contact us at 831-475-8202 or take a look at our website at www.mandel.com.

With best regards,

Mandel Communications

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 1: Briefings foster customer satisfaction

Message targeted to executive owners of briefing programs
(your up-line):

SCI: Setting up and implementing an effective customer briefing takes an enormous amount of work – from the account team, the subject matter experts, the executive sponsors and the briefing program team. Too often, our resources and support are stretched very thin.

Unfortunately, if we miss the mark on a customer visit, we run the risk of a negative impact on customer satisfaction, both in terms of the briefing itself, and also in terms of the long-term relationships with the account team and our company.

PAB: A well-supported briefing program has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction. Recent research from the ABPM Multi-Client Study supports this position.

I would like to get time on your calendar to review the results of the ABPM survey as well as our business plan and budget for 2017.

With good planning and the right resources, we can ensure that we leverage our briefing program to increase customer satisfaction, strengthen relationships, and add value to the bottom line in 2017.

Study Data:

- Between 1995 and 2016, results have demonstrated that customer briefings can foster customer satisfaction.
- Of the key decision makers who attended briefings, 95% gave ratings of 4 and 5 on a five-point scale when asked how they would rate their overall satisfaction level with the briefing.
- Briefings are the highest rated interactive source for obtaining information about solutions – i.e., preferred over conferences and forums, sales calls, webcasts, social networking, seminars, internet, and trade shows.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 2a: Briefings build and strengthen business relationships

Message targeted to sales executives and account managers:

SCI: Customers don't want to be sold; they want to feel that they are buying from a company and from people who value their business and sincerely care about their success. As a result, every company tells its customers that it wants to be a "good partner," that it wants a long-term relationship with customers.

Our challenge is to differentiate ourselves from other companies by demonstrating that we will ask good questions, carefully listen to our customer's business challenges, and respond with recommended solutions that help our customers achieve their business goals.

If we don't demonstrate that effectively, we will be seen as just another vendor. Our customers will evaluate us on product and price instead of on our long-term ability to anticipate and exceed their needs and expectations.

PAB: Recent ABPM Multi-client Study data shows that our briefing program can significantly contribute to strengthening business relationships with our customers.

We are asking for your support and the support of the sales teams as active participants in the briefing process.

By partnering to meet and exceed customer expectations at each customer briefing, our customers will walk away with not only a vision of the right solutions for their business challenges, but also a high degree of confidence in the ability of our organization to work with them to create successful outcomes.

Study Data:

- Briefings significantly strengthen business relationships.
- Briefings increase knowledge of the host company's products as well as provide a sense of the company's management strength and commitment.
- Of key decision makers who attended a briefing, 88% said it significantly strengthened their business relationship with the host company.
- 92% said they would recommend the company based on their briefing experience.
- 32% of respondents consider their primary responsibility to be strategic planning. Two of their top three expectations of a briefing are strategic: information about future products and about the host company's strategic direction.
- Another 24% identified their primary responsibility as supporting or implementing technology. Their expectation is "technology update".

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 2b: Briefings build and strengthen business relationships

Message targeted to executives who present briefings or who are asked to stop by a briefing to leverage their position power:

SCI: A significant percentage of the customers who visit our Briefing Center are executives: C-level, vice presidents, and directors. As a part of their visit, they expect to hear from our own senior leaders about our direction and strategy for the future.

When we are unable to engage executives and leaders on our team to lead these strategic discussions, the customer may assume that we do not value their time and in fact, that we may lack commitment to the long-term relationship. Ultimately, this can have a negative impact on potential revenue.

PAB: Executive involvement in our briefings communicates to customers that we care about and value their business and our long-term relationship with them. Recent data from the ABPM multi-client study supports that position.

Our briefing team would like your input on the best way to engage our senior leaders in customer briefings. These strategic conversations will demonstrate our commitment to our customers' success, and will also provide us insights into their future needs.

Study Data:

- Briefings significantly strengthen business relationships.
- Briefings increase knowledge of the host company's products as well as provide a sense of the company's management strength and commitment.
- Of key decision makers who attended a briefing, 88% said it significantly strengthened their business relationship with the host company.
- 92% said they would recommend the company based on their briefing experience.
- 32% of respondents consider their primary responsibility to be strategic planning. Two of their top three expectations of a briefing are strategic: information about future products and about the host company's strategic direction.
- Another 24% identified their primary responsibility as supporting or implementing technology. Their expectation is "technology update".

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 3: Briefings advance the purchase cycle.

Message targeted to sales executives and account managers:

SCI: The longer the sales cycle, the higher the risk. Until a sale is closed, there are always opportunities for the competition to step in, or for internal issues to come up, and even the most promising opportunities can be derailed.

PAB: 2016 study data shows that 34% of purchasers say their purchase cycle was shortened by an average of 26% as a result of attending a briefing.

We invite you to bring a higher percentage of your customers into the Briefing Center, where we can partner with you to create a highly tailored and customer-focused session.

By shortening the sales cycle, you will have a faster time to revenue and be better positioned to meet and exceed your sales quotas.

Study Data:

Customers who made a purchase after a briefing indicated the following:

- 34% of customers who purchased said that their purchase cycle was compressed by an average of 26% as a result of the briefing.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 4a: Briefings contribute to business results

Message targeted to sales executives and account managers:

SCI: Many factors influence the buying decisions of our customers. Some of those influencing factors are outside of our control, such as internal politics, budget constraints and prior vendor relationships. That creates a risk that we need to mitigate.

PAB: We need to focus on the areas that are within our control and manage them significantly better than the competition. One of those areas is customer briefings. Recent research shows that briefings are a major influence on customers' purchasing decisions.

We encourage you to engage with the Briefing Center and work with us to create a positive buying experience for your customers. In addition to strengthening your relationships, successful briefings contribute to the bottom line in the following ways:

Study Data:

- 77% said they made a decision to purchase products or services discussed in their briefings, and 67% of them said the briefing influenced their decision.
- 73% of purchasers said that the amount of their purchase increased as a result of information provided in the briefing – by an average of 28%.
- 34% of purchasers said that the briefing shortened their purchase cycles by an average of 26%.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 4b: Briefings contribute to business results

Message targeted to executive owners of briefing programs:

SCI: Once a customer has agreed to come for a briefing they believe our offerings may be a fit for them.

The challenge is getting customers to open up and speak candidly with our subject matter experts and executives about their business challenges.

When we engage the customer in conversation and get them talking about their business problems we can uncover additional opportunities to sell our solutions.

PAB: Effective briefings can increase the incremental revenue on a sale by an average of 28%. Recent data from the 2016 ABPM multi-client study supports this conclusion.

Our request is that you share this finding with sales leadership, and encourage them to bring a higher percentage of their customers to the briefing center.

If they can get their customers and prospects to a briefing, the customer is more likely to buy, they buy more and they buy sooner.

Study Data:

- 77% said they made a decision to purchase products or services discussed in their briefings, and 67% of them said the briefing influenced their decision.
- 73% of purchasers said that the amount of their purchase increased as a result of information provided in the briefing – by an average of 28%.
- 34% of purchasers said that the briefing shortened their purchase cycles by an average of 26%.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 4c: Briefings contribute to business results

Message targeted to sales executives and account managers:

SCI: We have the bandwidth and capability for our sales teams to leverage the briefing program even more effectively as a part of the sales process and the generation of business results.

We know that some of our account teams may not be aware of or familiar with the process for using the briefing program as a strategic sales tool.

Without this competitive advantage, they may be unnecessarily extending their sales cycles and increasing the risk of losing to the competition.

PAB: Executive briefings can contribute significantly to reinforcing a customer's decision to purchase.

We want to share the results of the ABPM Multi -Client Study with your sales teams and work with them to leverage the briefing program to advance their customers' decision-making process.

The study tells us that 77% made a purchase after attending briefings, and we want to help all of our sales team get similar results (see below).

Study Data:

- 77% said they made a decision to purchase products or services discussed in their briefings, and 67% of them said the briefing influenced their decision.
- 73% of purchasers said that the amount of their purchase increased as a result of information provided in the briefing – by an average of 28%.
- 34% of purchasers said that the briefing shortened their purchase cycles by an average of 26%.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 4d: Briefings contribute to business results

Message targeted to sales executives and account managers:

SCI: We are in a competitive business that's constantly in flux. Customers are often concerned about a vendor's ability to compete and to deliver on their commitments.

Without the chance to tell our story in a way that demonstrates our breadth and depth of expertise and our ability to meet the customer's needs, it's much more difficult to effectively communicate our competitive advantage.

PAB: Our briefing program is a powerful tool you can use to tell our story well.

We would like to partner with you and create a strategy to bring more of our key prospects into the Briefing Center more frequently.

If we are able to meet with a higher percentage of our key prospects, we will be able to tell our story in a way that will show them that we're here for the long run and can offer them a better solution than our competitors.

The multi-client data indicates the following benefits to the sales teams:

Study Data:

- 77% said they made a decision to purchase products or services discussed in their briefings, and 67% of them said the briefing influenced their decision.
- 73% of purchasers said that the amount of their purchase increased as a result of information provided in the briefing – by an average of 28%.
- 34% of purchasers said that the briefing shortened their purchase cycles by an average of 26%.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 4e: Briefings contribute to business results

Message targeted to executive owners of briefing programs
(your up-line):

SCI: Our Company established a Briefing Program several years ago. It has been a very successful tool for our sales teams, and we are seeing great results.

Because we do not have the resources to support all of our qualified requests, we're not able to meet the current demand.

As a result, we're compromising our full potential to contribute to better sales results.

PAB: We need to expand our capabilities and resources so our briefing program can continue to significantly influence our customers' buying decisions.

We are asking for your support to make sure that we can fund the Briefing Program in a way that is consistent with current demand and expected growth.

This will enable us to expand the influence of briefings on customer purchasing decisions to a much larger group of customers, and continue to achieve the following benefits, as documented by the recent client study conducted by the ABPM:

Study Data:

- 88% of customers said their briefing contributed to strengthening their relationship with the company.
- 92% of customers attending a briefing said that they would recommend the company based on their briefing experience (49% gave a 5 rating to this question and could be considered active promoters.)
- 77% said they made a decision to purchase products or services discussed in their briefings, and 67% of them said the briefing influenced their decision.
- 73% of purchasers said that the amount of their purchase increased as a result of information provided in the briefing – by an average of 28%.
- 34% of purchasers said that the briefing shortened their purchase cycles by an average of 26%.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS AND MESSAGES

Conclusion 5: Briefings are customers' preferred method for obtaining information on solutions

Message targeted to senior management:

SCI: Management has many options for investing marketing dollars, and a briefing program is just one of those options.

Sometimes it is difficult to measure the impact of marketing programs on sales results.

Without clear data about the sales impact, it can be challenging to create an effective process for making marketing investment decisions.

PAB: I believe that briefings are one of the best ways to invest for a measurable return, and data from the ABPM multi-client study supports my position.

Let's leverage corporate budget dollars where we know they are going to have the highest impact.

A well-funded briefing program makes it possible for us to give customers the information they need to make a buying decision and in a way customers say they want to receive it.

Study Data:

- Customers have consistently indicated that briefings are their preferred method for gaining information with which to make a decision to purchase.
- Key decision makers ranked executive briefings number one compared to conferences and forums, sales calls, webcasts, social media, seminars, trade shows, and internet.
- 48% of respondents had attended briefings at multiple companies within the last year.

SURVEY SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Suggestion 1: Increase the level of customization.

Message targeted to SMEs, guest speakers, and discussion leaders:

SCI: We are very appreciative of the time you take to meet with our customers in the briefing center. Your partnership makes it possible for us to provide customers with the information they need to make their buying decisions.

We also recognize that you have many priorities and often don't have a lot of time to devote to customizing each presentation.

If our customers only hear a general presentation about our products and services without the necessary links to their particular business challenges, they may not easily be able to recognize the value our solutions will provide.

PAB: A briefing that is specifically tailored to the customer demonstrates our ability to listen, partner and provide each customer with the best solution based on their specific needs. From the customer's point of view, greater customization has been the most frequently cited suggestion for improving briefings.

We invite you to let us share a process with you to help you easily customize your content and your visuals to "paint the customer into the picture."

When your presentation is directly linked to the customers' needs, you establish a high level of personal credibility and you also help customers recognize the value of partnering with us and implementing our recommended solution.

Study Data:

- Customers cite the two most important elements of a briefing as "relevance of content" , and "the knowledge level of discussion leaders". Presentation skills of discussion leaders ranks third most important among 14 briefing elements rated by customers.
- Just 23% of customer respondents characterized the briefing as "very highly customized".

If you have any questions, or if we can help in any way, please contact us.

Mandel Communications, Inc.

820 Bay Avenue, Suite 113 | Capitola, CA 95010 USA

+1 831 475 8202 | info@mandel.com

mandel.com