

# The Board Debrief

A Step-by-Step Guide  
for Leaders



# 5 Simple Steps

The debrief is time to hit the pause button. It is a review of how the team performed, an opportunity to identify learning and agree what will make your performance even better next time.

There are many different ways to conduct a debrief. The key is to keep it simple, ensuring the focus stays on the content, not the process.

This guide sets out five core steps to experiment with.

# Scope

*Start by defining what you are debriefing. Keep the scope tight and make sure all participants are clear.*

*It will help keep the discussion focused and avoid tangents.*

*At a minimum, decide:*

- *The event, incident, or specific period to be debriefed*
- *What is open for discussion*
- *What isn't relevant for the purpose of the debrief*
- *Who or what perspectives should be involved*

# Prepare

*To be efficient and make the most of your collective time together, preparation is key. Use the time leading up to your meeting to reflect individually in advance.*

Choose three questions (or more) and ask your Board to individually reflect on their experiences and learning in preparation. Here are a set of questions to choose from, and to add to.

- *What went well in your view, when you look back?*
- *What was easier or less of a challenge than you thought? Why?*
- *What got in the way?*
- *What would you do differently next time?*
- *Where was there complacency or missed opportunities?*
- *If you were to identify just one thing to improve next time, what would it be?*
- *When were you most and least effective as a leadership team?*
- *What are the most significant things that you personally learned?*
- *What advice would you give yourself/your peers if you were to wind the clock back?*

# Design

*Before diving into a debrief, there is value in defining the principles you want to use to guide your discussion. Open with these at the very beginning to make sure everyone is agreeable.*

*Some good ones to start or consider are:*

- *Everyone's input has the same value*
- *No blame and no egos*
- *Be open-minded & solution focused*
- *Aspire to consensus where possible*
- ***What else..?***

*Keep them visible during the discussion on a whiteboard or flip chart.*

# Delve

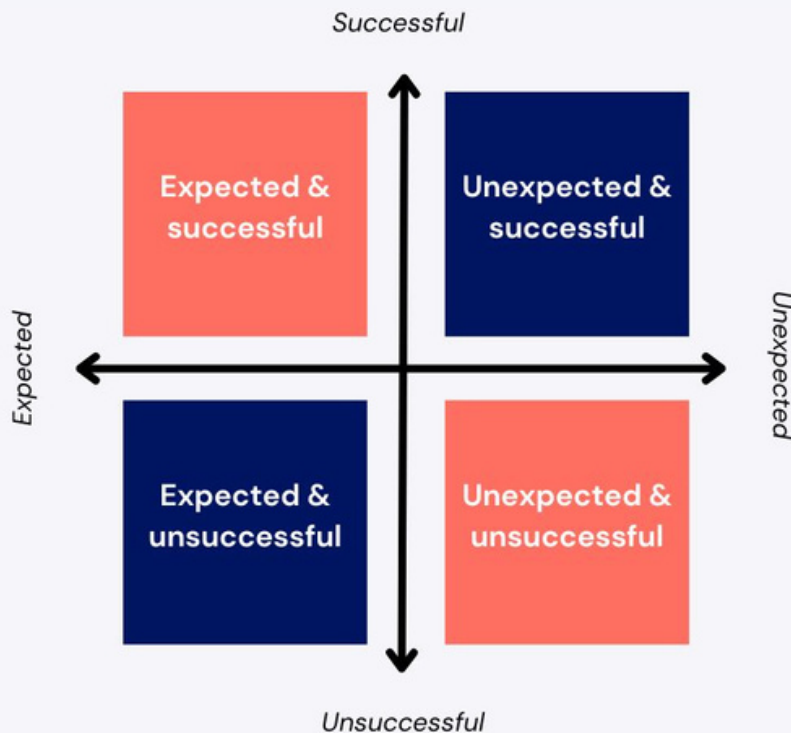
*A good debrief hinges on drawing out the most useful insights and learning, and identifying how you'll apply that to a future scenario.*

*Below you'll find a set of questions that you can add to and change as you feel appropriate for your business.*

- *What were we aiming for? What were our intentions?*
- *What actually happened?*
- *What can we learn from that? Why?*
- *What will we do next time?*
- *Will our guiding principles be the same?*
- *What needs to happen before then to make it possible?*
- *What is the relative priority of those actions and who will own them?*

You might also choose to use the model below to reveal what worked, what didn't and why.

## Success & Expectations Model



**Caution!** Whichever approach you use, you might find yourselves getting sidetracked and drawn into detail about one topic. Don't ignore it. When this happens it's a sign that there's value analysing this area further, outside the meeting.

# Wrap

Before you close the debrief, consider these questions together:

- What is clearer now as a result of the debrief?
- What will be in place as a result of this debrief a year from now?
- What reflections or outputs could it be valuable to share or communicate with others across the business? What will be your message?
- When you debrief next time, what will you do the same or differently as today?

# Questions?

Or need a customised approach? Get in touch at  
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