

SAVE
THIS
ONE

CONSULTING MOVES 001 • TOOLKIT

The brief is a hypothesis.



Five tools to test any brief before
you build.

Every brief carries three assumptions.

THE BRIEF

01 • THE PROBLEM

02 • THE CAUSE

03 • THE FIX

Each one might be right. The tools that follow help you find out.

TOOL 01 • REWRITE THE BRIEF

Turn the brief into a hypothesis.

We believe
is happening, because
If we,
we'll see

EXAMPLE

We believe team leaders avoid feedback conversations, because they lack the skills. If we run a feedback program, we'll see more regular, useful feedback within 90 days.

NOW AUDIT IT →

TOOL 02 · ASSUMPTION AUDIT

Sort it. Then plan the test.

STATEMENT	STATUS	HOW TO TEST IT
Feedback isn't happening regularly	KNOWN	Engagement survey shows it
Team leaders lack the skill	ASSUMED	Watch two conversations. Ask the strongest leaders what they do
Leaders have time for it	ASSUMED	Check a typical week's calendar
What good feedback looks like here	UNKNOWN	Ask five people for a recent example
A program will change it	ASSUMED	Test once the cause is clear

Copy the three columns. Fill them in after your first conversation.

WHAT TO ASK →

TOOL 03 • QUESTION BANK

Nine questions. One for each **assumption**.

ABOUT THE PROBLEM

"What are people doing now that worries you?"

"When did you last see it happen?"

"What does it cost if nothing changes?"

ABOUT THE CAUSE

"Who already does this well? What's different for them?"

"What gets in the way, even for people who know how?"

"What happens when someone gets it right?"

ABOUT THE FIX

"What would we see people doing in 90 days?"

"What's been tried before?"

"What's the smallest thing we could test first?"

TOOL 04 · EVIDENCE IN A WEEK

Six ways to test an assumption fast.

01 Pull the data you already have
Survey results, error rates, complaints, time taken

02 Watch the work for an hour
Where people slow down, work around or give up

03 Five 15-minute conversations
With people doing the work, in their words

04 Ask for a real example
A recent case, email, call or decision

05 Talk to the best performer
What they do that others don't yet

06 Ask a manager what they see
What happens before and after it goes well

TOOL 05 · AI PROMPTS

Copy, paste, think.

FIND THE ASSUMPTIONS

Here's a brief: [paste]. List the assumptions it makes about the problem, the cause and the fix.

PREPARE THE CONVERSATION

Turn these assumptions into five open questions for a 30-minute stakeholder conversation.

ARGUE BACK

Here's my diagnosis: [paste]. What would make it wrong? What evidence am I missing?

AI speeds up the thinking. You make the calls. Leave out names and anything confidential.



THE MOVE • PLAY IT BACK

Keep momentum while you test.

SAY THIS TO YOUR STAKEHOLDER

"Here's what we know. Here's what we're assuming. Here's what we'll check by Friday, so whatever we build works first time."

Shows you heard them

Keeps the brief alive

Sets a short deadline

THE CHEAT SHEET →



CHEAT SHEET · SCREENSHOT THIS

Test the brief in **six moves.**

01

REWRITE IT

We believe ___ because ___. If we ___, we'll see ___.

02

AUDIT IT

Known · Assumed · Unknown · How to test

03

ASK ABOUT IT

Problem · cause · fix. Three questions each.

04

FIND EVIDENCE

Data · watch · five chats · example · best performer · manager

05

USE AI

Find assumptions · prep questions · argue back

06

PLAY IT BACK

"Here's what we know, what we're assuming, and what we'll check by Friday."

Hold the problem open a little longer.



The most expensive design mistakes
often happen before design begins.



Danny Batts
Practice —Upgrade

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