Good intelligence results from an effective working relationship between intelligence users and intelligence gatherers, be they an internal department or an external agency. Each partner in the relationship must contribute the knowledge and skill that they derive from their respective backgrounds in order to get the most from the intelligence budget. Although it may be tempting to users to let the intelligence gatherers work to the brief and implement the project without interaction (or interfering), this can result in the outcome being less satisfactory. This is truest when working with outside intelligence agencies who are not party to the working culture within the commissioning company and do not have automatic or ready access to internally available intelligence.

Clients require skills in working with outside agencies so that they can make an effective contribution to the intelligence-gathering process. The steps by which clients can make an effective contribution to projects are:

- A full face-to-face briefing of the intelligence-gathering team prior to the commencement of the assignment
- Approval of any discussion guides that will be used during the primary intelligence-gathering activity
- Regular progress reports during the survey
- Regular reviews of the intelligence yield
- Final presentation of findings
- An independent assessment of the quality of the results
Project Briefing or ‘Kick-Off’ Meeting

At the commencement of all assignments the intelligence users should meet the entire intelligence-gathering team and brief them. In an ideal world these meetings should be in person but if this is not possible there should at least be telephone conference calls with enough time allowed to cover all the questions that could be asked. The briefing should be designed to ensure that the staff responsible for collecting intelligence are equipped with all the background information they need to carry out the project efficiently and within the time deadlines set for completion. On short assignments it is sometimes tempting to dispense with briefings. This is usually an error, largely because too much of the time available to collect intelligence is then wasted learning background information and seeking intelligence that is already available within the client department.

The topics that a typical project team briefing should cover are:

- Company background and products or services to be covered
- Reasons for requiring the intelligence
- Decisions that the intelligence is intended to support
- Key characteristics of the competitive environment
- Intelligence that is already held and known to be accurate
- Contacts
- Client actions
- Timetable

The company background and products or services to be covered

If the client is using an intelligence agency for the first time or an internal staff member that has not had previous contact with the commissioning division, the briefing should cover the company, its structure and its product ranges or services. This should include the provision of any brochures and technical literature that describe the products that are to be covered in the project.

The reasons for requiring the intelligence

The reasons for commissioning the intelligence-gathering programme should be covered in depth. This will provide the analysts with a clear idea of why they are being employed and will increase their sensitivity to intelligence that may not be in the original brief but that may prove to be available and relevant to the problem that the company is facing.