

# ***Briefing in a multi-channel communications world***

***This chapter includes:***

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- ☐ Why client briefs are important
- ☐ What a good client brief looks like
- ☐ What a good brief contains
- ☐ The principles in developing a strong creative brief
- ☐ Focusing on tasks first rather than on disciplines
- ☐ A process for sorting out tasks in order to make channel choices
- ☐ Example of a task brief
- ☐ Turning tasks into good creative briefs
- ☐ Understanding the difference between stimulus and response
- ☐ How to get a great proposition for a brief
- ☐ Preparing creative briefs in a multi-channelled world
- ☐ A briefing process; the vital element in a multi-channel briefing
- ☐ Special requirements of various channels

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***What this chapter is about***

**T**he world of communications has evolved further and faster during the last three years than at any time in the past fifty. As we adapt to these changes, briefing must also adapt and recognise these new realities.

The aim of this chapter is to set out the tips, guidelines and processes for more effective creative briefing.

The process of briefing for multi-channel communications is not easy, because creating innovative solutions to complex problems is never easy. However, this chapter should provide the reader with ways of thinking about the process and some helpful guidelines and tips which can help along the way.



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Having gained a degree in Business Studies at a time when it was one of the least fashionable options to study, Mick has spent the last 25 years working in a variety of agencies on clients' communications problems in the packaged goods, business-to-business and service sectors. For most of that time he has operated as an Account Planner.

His major brand experience covers a gamut of well-known blue chip brands such as American Express, BT, Direct Line Insurance, Ministry of Defence, Lyons Tetley, Daily Express and Weetabix, to name but some.

From 1980- to 1989 Mick worked at the D'Arcy Advertising Agency where he learned about branding and advertising. Between 1989 and 1994 he worked at through-the-line and specialist business-to-business agencies.

During 1994, Mick worked as a Brand Development Planner at the Radio Advertising Bureau, as one of the small team responsible for the development of the first national multi-million pound above-the-line advertising campaign for the whole of commercial radio which was launched in January 1995.

In 1995, Mick joined Ogilvy & Mather Direct as the Deputy Head of Planning. In 1996, he was appointed the agency's Planning Director, a title and a job which he retains. In 1997, Mick was one of the London team responsible for the repositioning of Ogilvy & Mather Direct to OgilvyOne.

He has always had – and retains – a passion for training, learning and development for individuals in the agency and, more generally, in the communications industry.

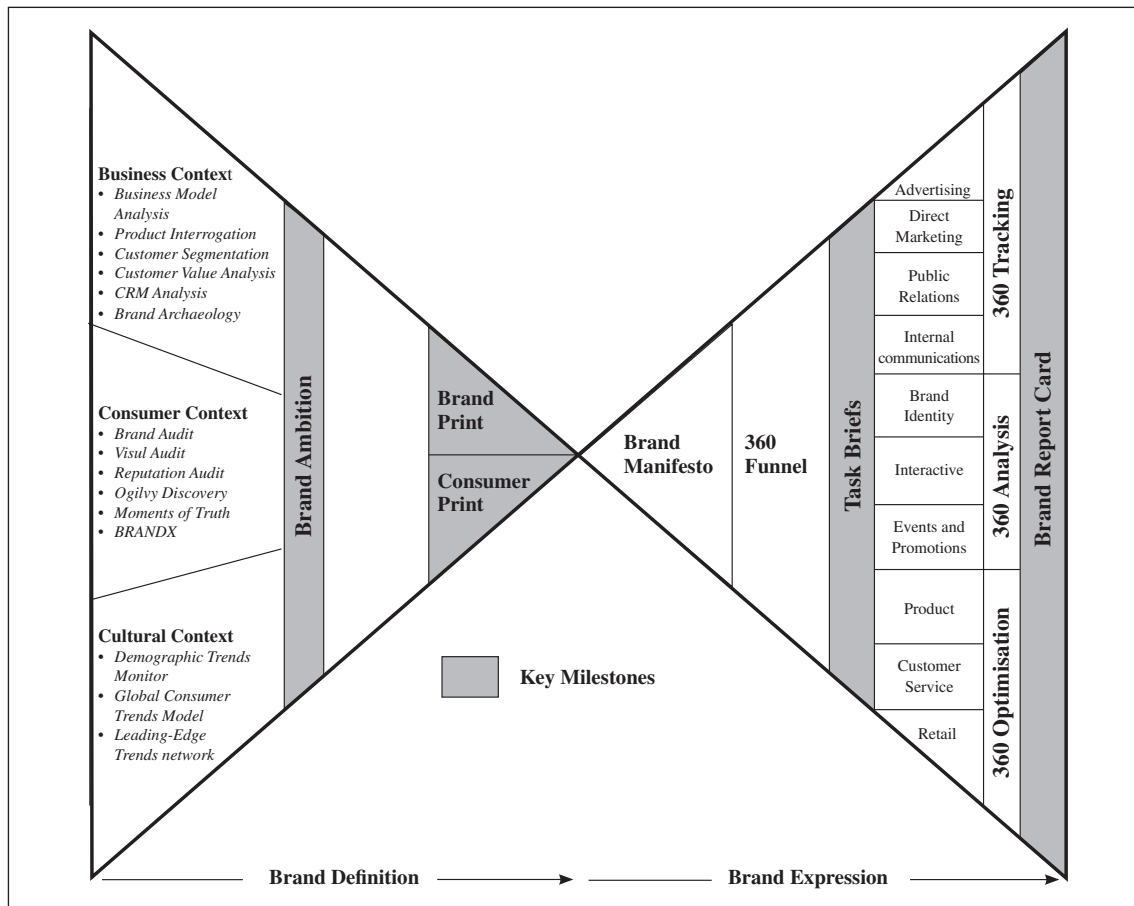
## Chapter 10.2

# Briefing in a multi-channel communications world

## Introduction to briefing

**I**n a world where everyone is being asked to work better, faster and cheaper it is ironic that the number of communications channels that clients and agencies can use to convey their messages has increased exponentially. This puts even more pressure on getting briefs and briefing right first time around.

Figure 10.2.1 An example of understanding a brief and the channels that can be used: 'The Butterfly'



Source: Ogilvy Group © 2005

It has always been acknowledged that for communications agencies the brief is the most important piece of information to define what the job is, what needs to be done and how we can judge whether we have been a success or not.

## ***It all begins with the client brief***

At the outset, it is necessary to have a written brief from the client. It is from this document that everything else flows. In the end this is the only point of reference that effectively forms a contract between a client and a communications agency. Good client briefs get better business results.



**"Forget just for a minute that you are briefing an agency. Instead, pretend you are standing on a bank of a river about to build a bridge."**

***Chris Herd, IPA Value of Advertising Committee***

There are three key reasons why writing a good client brief will get better business results. It will lead to better and more effective and more measurable work. It will save time and money. It will make remuneration fairer.

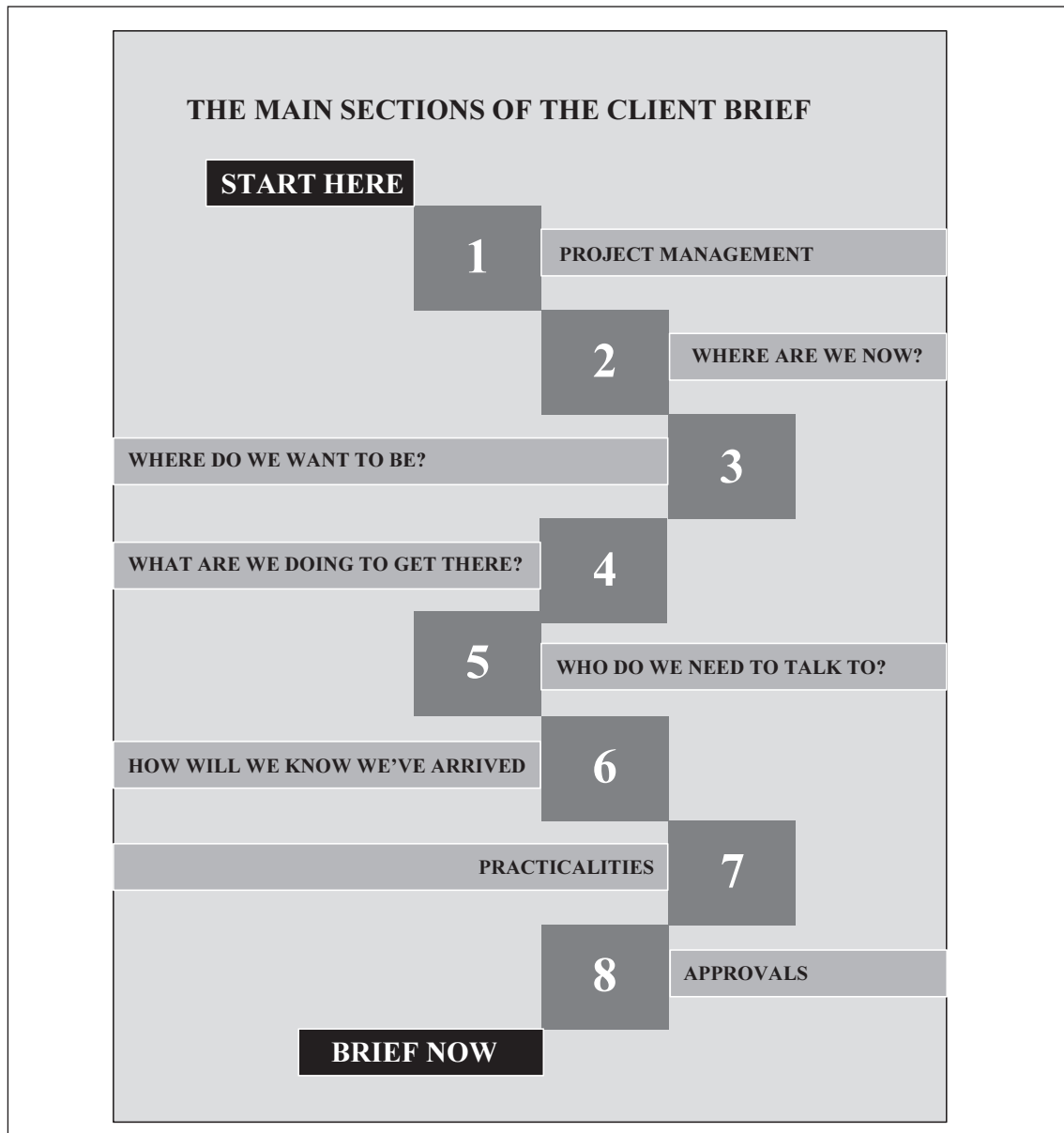
The principles behind creating a good client brief are now well established. Agencies and clients all agree that there are three things that make a good client brief. The first is that it is written down. The second is that you get a better clarity of thinking by writing the brief down. And the third is that you get clearly defined objectives.

So what are the most important things in this process?

- The written brief can be analysed and discussed.
- Often there will be more than one agency involved, so it is a clear starting point for everyone.
- It gets 'buy-in', cutting down on wasting time and resources.
- When multiple agencies are involved there are often a number of skill sets that need to come together.
- It is not about the length of the brief. It is the clarity and focus within it. It helps to concentrate on key thinking, and will contain the key information that everyone needs to settle upon to meet the objectives. It starts by making sure the objectives are crystal clear.
- It helps to explain what the desired improvement is that the client wants to achieve.
- It sets out the success criteria at the very beginning of the project.

With this information an agency will know where the client sees the business at the moment, and where they really want it to be. We will know what success looks like. We will also know how it will be measured. Where a number of agencies are involved, it is much more likely they will work together better to achieve the desired result.

**Figure 10.2.2 The key section headings of a 'best practice' client brief**



Source: Institute of Practitioners in Advertising

Although the amount of information may vary within each of these sections, it is vital that all this information is known at the outset of a project. This ensures that a disciplined briefing process is adhered to. In many instances Clients and Agencies work together in formulating this written brief.

## What a good Brief contains

- Project management. This covers the basic administrative elements.
- Where are we now? What issues is the brand facing as a start point for the brief?
- Where do we want to be? This is about setting out the goals that need to be achieved for this particular project.



A proper written brief makes the process more efficient. That is good for clients and good for agencies.

- What are we doing to get there? This element of the brief is highlighting the key aspects of the marketing strategy and the campaign strategy that are important for the client and very important for the agency to understand.
- Who do we need to talk to? An understanding and insights about the target groups who are important to this brief.
- How will we know we have arrived? This is about putting in place the measures which will decide whether the communications have been successful or failed.
- Practicalities. All sorts of considerations have to be adhered to in briefs. For example, budgets, timings, and any mandates that are important to the client.
- Finally, approvals. It is key for the agency to understand who has the authority to approve any work that is done.

### Case Study: Mothercare – developing a single channel solution



*Developing a single channel solution in a multi-channel environment  
Mothercare Toddler Campaign*

*'I reserve the right' mismatch book*

#### **Objectives**

*Mothercare's aim is to be the number one brand for parents everywhere. Their bold goal is to fulfil the needs and aspirations of parents worldwide. The challenge with this toddler campaign was:*

1. *To increase sales by driving parents of toddlers to visit their nearest Mothercare store and purchase from the new improved toddler range*
2. *To encourage reappraisal of the brand*

#### **Strategy**

*The task was to help reframe Mothercare from 'baby expert' to 'parenting partner'. Ironically, given the nature of its business, the brand relationship between old Mothercare and its customers was very much a 'parent and child' relationship: the need was to establish something more akin to a*

partnership, creating not only relevance but empathy among parents of children aged from birth to five years.

The first step had already been taken. Mothercare had invested in revamping some stores and massively improving their range for toddlers. This campaign needed to showcase their great new clothing range and drive customers into the new look stores for a reappraisal.

But if this change of direction couldn't be communicated in the mailing, there would be no store visit, no new relationship and no extra sales.

A mailing was created consisting of a 'mix and match' booklet (echoing the style of a toddler's story book), which empathises with the plight of parents and builds on the idea of toddlers' tendencies to dress themselves in their own particular fashion. For example, one variation states, "I reserve the right to wear a beret ... a pyjama top ... and a tutu."

The mailing was incentivised with some 'Bank of Mothercare' vouchers.

Mothercare money has immediate saliency with parents; it speaks the language of money but in a relevant and engaging way and with humour.

### **Database**

The mailing database was collated from a number of sources:

- Mothercare's own data collected from Keep In Touch cards in-store and storecard holders as well as from their direct sales operation's purchasers and catalogue requesters
- Third-party list rental of parents with at least one child in the target age range

The mailing file cell splits were designed to track responses by a number of measures – data source, age of child and local store type.

Responses were matched back to the database at individual level; URNs printed on the coupons were data captured and matched back to the core database.

### **Results**

Initial feedback from the media effectiveness model indicates an ROI of 3:1. However, this campaign was also part of a broader multi-media initiative focusing on families with toddlers, an age group that had not been specifically targeted before (and one reason why the brand had become dangerously over associated with baby care, not childcare). In other words, this was a new strand of activity: the response rate is a benchmark for future campaigns.

Analysis of responses gives useful learnings for future data planning activity: Mothercare's own data had an uplift of 58 per cent over the average response rate for the campaign, which proves powerful arguments for the profitability of investing in collecting their own data and building a relationship with their own customers over time.

### **In summary**

The results are impressive enough when expressed as raw numbers. But that hides part of the story. The creative team tapped into a home truth about toddlers that parents would, and did, immediately empathise with – the ever changing mind of a toddler – turning what can be a nightmare for parents into a pleasure. And all in the shape of a playful little book that they could share with their children. In other words, as well as being the ideal platform to showcase the new clothing range, the communication had an inherent value. When a mailing itself is something that people want to keep, its value goes beyond mere response rates and ROI and impacts on brand impression and ultimately loyalty. This mailing has helped Mothercare in their quest to become the number one brand for parents everywhere.

So, to summarise:

- There is now published material to help advertisers brief agencies available through organisations such as the IPA (see box below).
- Advertisers brief agencies to obtain creative solutions to communications problems. A better understanding of what agencies are looking for could improve the quality of the briefs.
- Client briefs should provide enough information for the agency to be informed, guided and challenged.
- A good brief defines what the communications campaign is expected to deliver.
- An agency needs to know what the advertiser is trying to achieve, not just for the campaign, but strategically for the brand and the business.
- The client brief is to ensure, from the outset, that there is a shared understanding of the business problem that needs to be solved with communications.
- The client brief should not be unrealistic.
- Although a client may issue a single brief, in working through it, it is likely that it will end up being divided into a variety of subsequent briefs.
- Dialogue around the brief between the client and agency, at this point will vastly improve the ongoing process.



- *Driving Top-line Growth: Imprint: World Advertising Research Centre.* Published in association with the IPA
- *How to Plan Advertising: Alan Cooper.*
- *The Client Brief: a best practice guide to briefing communication agencies.* Published in association with the IPA, ISBA, MCCA and PRCA

## ***From client brief to agency creative brief***

The client brief will have set out a challenge with a diagnosis of the underlying business problem or the opportunity that we are all trying to address. This informs the desired behavioural response; what we want people to do as a result of any communication or brand experience. It's the agency's job in its brief to articulate how this can be achieved and detail what is necessary to instigate a change in behaviour. Having specified what is necessary, the agency must then define the strategy to accomplish it. This is where insights into the target audience's shared mindset or attitude or emotional needs are important to understand and write down. Finally, we need to identify the main idea to communicate, the reason to believe it and the mood or tone we wish to create. When defining the primary message it is vital to be single minded. What can we say that not only resonates with the consumer, but will trigger a reaction leading to a behavioural change?



### ***Principles in developing a strong creative brief***



- Understand your audiences
- Involve the creative team before you brief them
- Be single minded
- Be brief
- Start with an interesting strategic idea
- Use the language of the living room not the Boardroom
- Don't confuse the task briefing and the verbal briefing
- Bring the brief to life in a way that informs and inspires
- Don't confuse the means with the end. (The brief is the starting point not a checklist)
- Treat every brief as an opportunity to do great work

Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

Following these principles will get everyone to begin thinking along the right lines to satisfy the client brief. This ensures that the strategic understanding of the client brief is passed on successfully and in an understandable way to those who have to execute the task.



If the creative team has not fully embraced the brief, it will most likely be publicly acknowledged and privately ignored.



Sharply honed briefs do not come out of thin air. They require innovation, insight and knowledge. They also require a steadfast focus on client needs.

This also ensures that excellent creativity comes from a rigorous process and not creative anarchy. Think of a manufacturing analogy. The manufacture of a Ford Mondeo, for example, requires rigorous quality control systems. There are lots being produced at the same time, all to the same standard. The same applies to the production of excellent creative work.

### ***Be open minded and courageous***

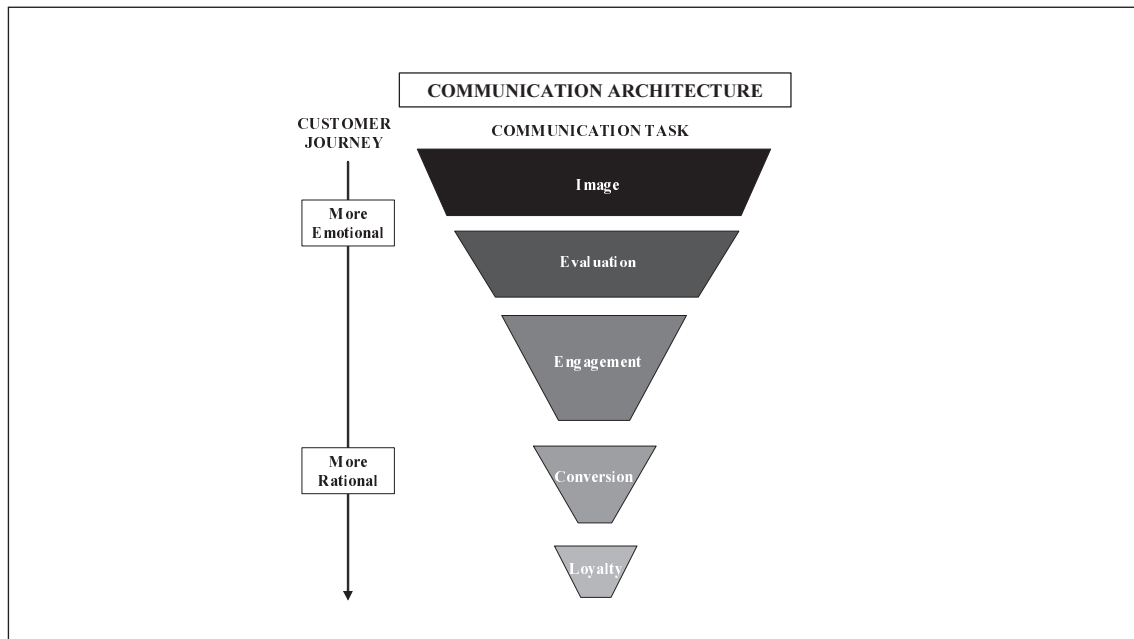
At this point we need to be open minded to the possibility that creativity can take us to places we never knew existed. We must embrace and encourage this rather than fear it, because it is the source of competitive advantage for our clients.

Ultimately, the role of the brief is to give everyone the courage to take a step into the unknown.

### ***Focusing on tasks first rather than on disciplines***

Before the number of channel choices exploded, the idea was that one could move directly from a client brief into writing a channel brief (mail pack, email etc.) In order to ensure the channel briefs are much more appropriate and effective, at the outset it is better to think about identifying the tasks that are required to be tackled and then judge how the channels can help to deliver them.

**Figure 10.2.3 The 360-degree 'funnel'**



Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

The main difference between this approach and others is that we begin by focusing on tasks rather than on disciplines. What this means is that before we go on to write separate briefs for direct mail, print, TV or interactive, we start first by thinking about how we can use different elements of the communications architecture best to achieve the brand objectives.



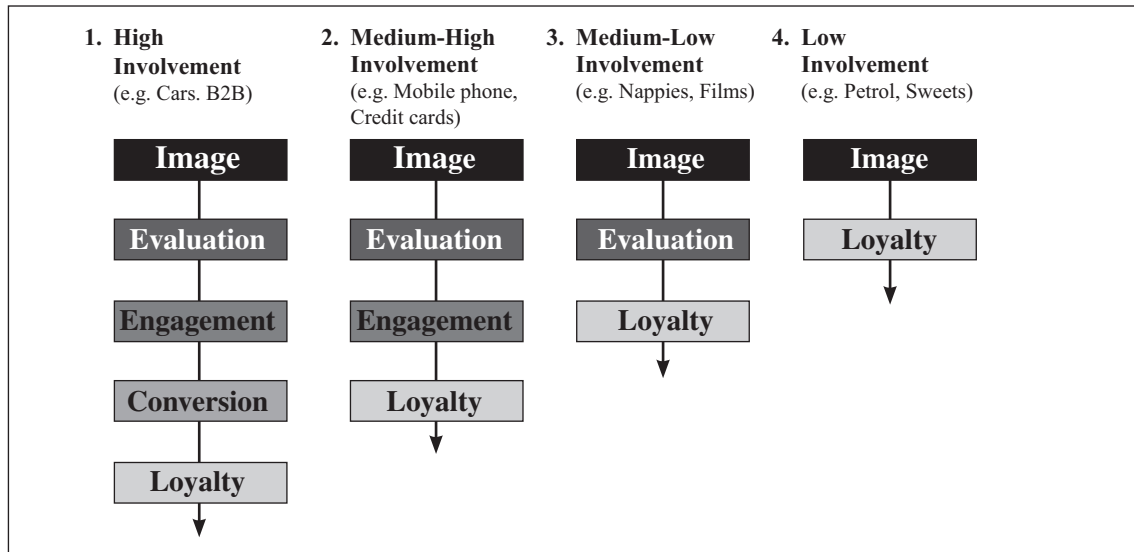
**Task – a specific piece of work required to be done (Collins English Dictionary)**

For example, gaining consideration is a task that can be delivered by using one or several channels including TV, print and online advertising.

### ***Understanding tasks***

A task approach to briefing will ensure that the brand's communications are fully focused around the customer's point of view, since we are immediately considering how the brand should interact with the consumer to achieve its objectives rather than immediately focusing on how a channel works. This approach substantially increases the likelihood that each of the channel briefs will cumulatively create the desired brand perception in the consumer's mind, and prompts the action that we want them to take.

Figure 10.2.4 The 360-degree 'Funnel' process



Source: Ogilvy Group 2005



"A creative brief is there to provide help. Most briefs read like a cry for help."

— John Hegarty, Creative Director, BBH

## A process for sorting out tasks in order to make channel choices

The first job is to map out the consumer's decision making process. This is basically to understand how many stages the consumer typically goes through in the purchase cycle. Secondly, we need to understand the consumer's frame of mind at each level. Thirdly, we need to sort out the communication tasks at each level. That is, we are trying to find out how communications can help at each level and then move the consumer closer to purchase. And, fourthly, we can then make channel choices at each level and then write appropriate briefs for each channel. A case example below explains how this whole process works:

### A consumer buying process for cars:

To show how this might actually work, let's take the example of one of the most complicated purchases most people make – cars. (If we use a more complex case, we can infer how to apply it to simpler decision processes.)

The first step is identifying the number of stages in the consumer's buying process. Since a car purchase is a high-involvement purchase, we believe that there are five stages to the consumer's decision making process.

The second step requires analysing the consumer's frame of mind at each of these stages. The initial *image* stage, when one is forming an impression of the different brands, may go on for years. Teenagers, for example, may spend an entire decade assessing the relative merits of different car brands before they're able to afford one of their own.

There then comes the *evaluation* stage, where one thinks of purchasing one without doing anything about it. This may last for months. During this time one begins to become more aware of advertising for the category, but the considerations at this time stay at a fairly elevated level.

Then one enters into a period of active shopping (the *engagement* stage) when one may request marketing materials, go to the website, visit dealerships and start narrowing down choices. The advertiser's purpose at this stage is to generate as many sales leads as possible.

In the *conversion* stage, the consumer is usually trying to choose between two brands, and fulfilment materials are often used.

The final stage is ownership, or *loyalty*, when the consumer is receptive to communications, which, if judiciously maintained, can lead back to the brand for the next purchase.

Figure 10.2.5

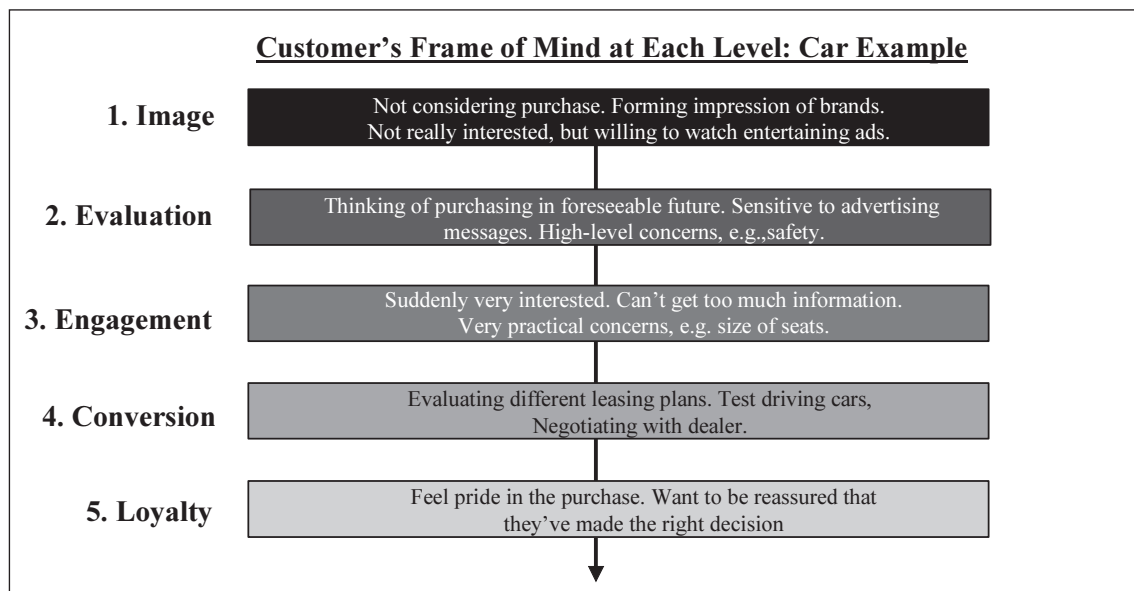


Figure 10.2.6

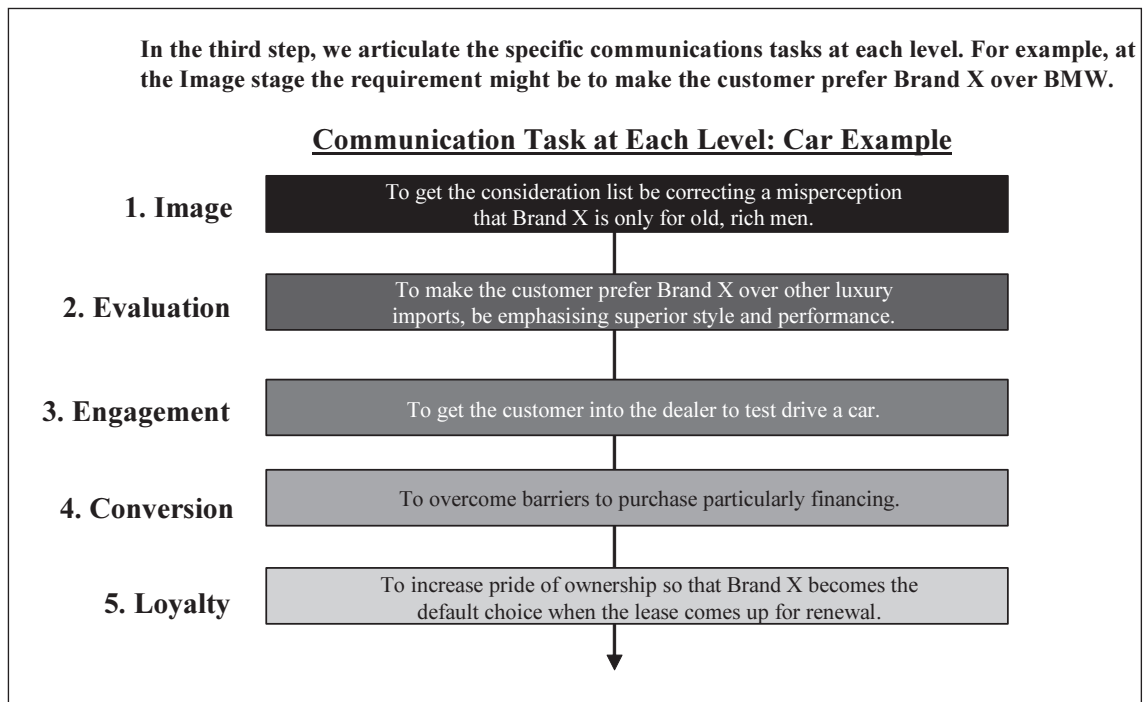
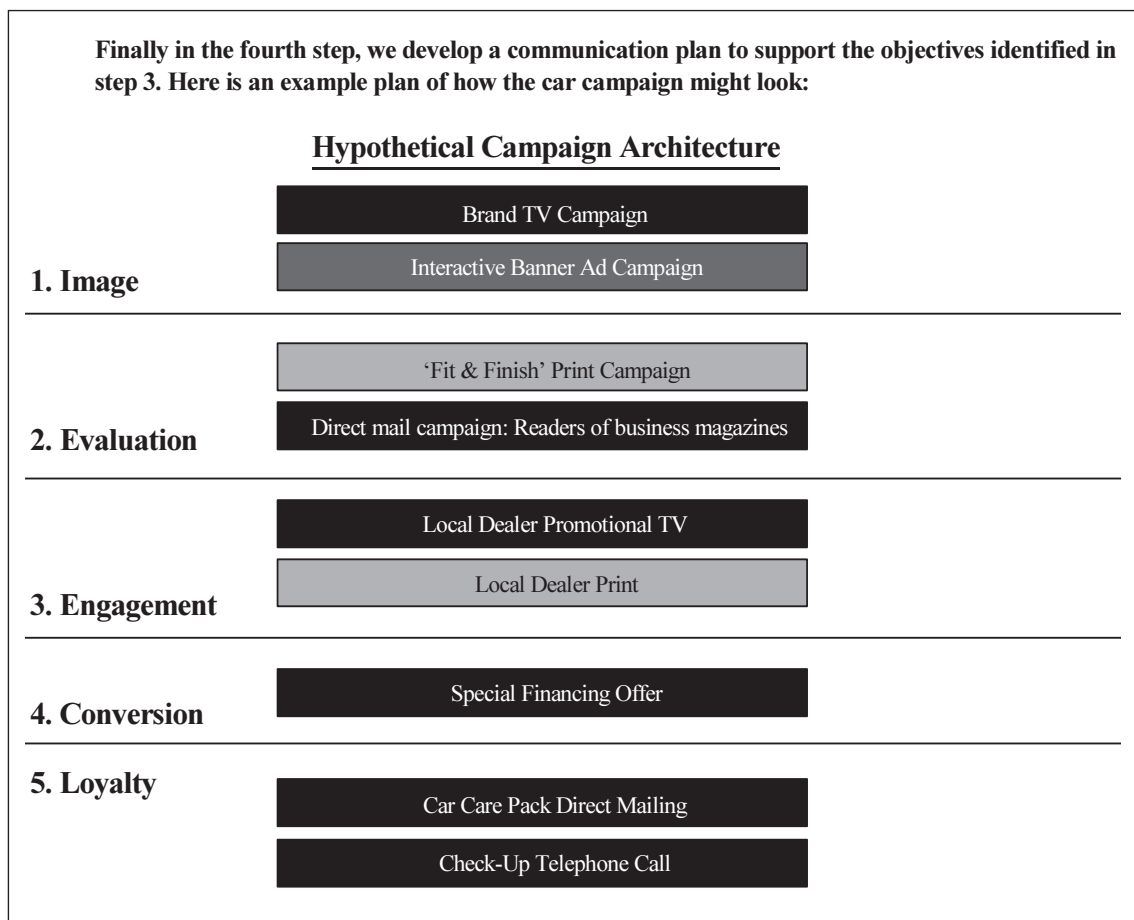


Figure 10.2.7



Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

## Why a task brief?

The task brief is essential to the success of any campaign in a multi-channel world as it is the point at which the insight, the analysis and the strategy come together in a precise statement of what needs to be achieved. What we are attempting to do here is to write down the distinct tasks that must be undertaken to strengthen the consumer relationship.

### An example of a task brief



Task brief				
Client	Brand	Assignment	Task	Media/ touchpoint
<b>Brand ambition</b> What role do we ultimately want the brand to play in the lives of consumers?		<b>Brand print</b> What is the unique emotional relationship that the consumer has with the brand?		
<b>The challenge</b>				
<b>What is the diagnosis of the business problem?</b> What is the business problem and what are the underlying issues that communications or the brand experience can address?				
<b>What is the desired behavioural response?</b> What are we ultimately trying to get people to <i>do</i> ?				
<b>What is it we want communication to do and how do we think it will work?</b>				
<b>What must communications or the brand experience do to bring this response closer and how will it do it?</b>				
<b>The strategy</b>				
<b>Who are we talking to and what fresh insight do we have that will stimulate an original solution?</b>				
<b>Who is the target defined by shared mindset, attitude, or emotional need? What insight do we have that will ensure we trigger a response?</b>				
<b>What is the main thought we need to communicate?</b>				
<b>Why should we believe this?</b>				
<b>What is the irresistible support for the main thought?</b>				
<b>What is the right mood and tone?</b>				
<b>What atmosphere or feeling should communications or the experience evoke?</b>				
<b>What, if any, mandatory requirements are there?</b> Absolute essentials only				
<b>Key dates</b> Briefing Internal review Client presentation Air/copy date		<b>Approvals</b> Creative Director Planning Director Account Director		<b>Budgets</b> Media Production

Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

So, for example, if the task is to increase awareness of an unknown brand, then TV, outdoor, web advertising, PR and product placement are all relevant channels to undertake this task. It is then possible to say which of these channels is the most important, either singly or together, and then write the individual briefs for each, taking into account the special characteristics of each of those channels.

If the task is to convert web hits or showroom visits into sales, then individual briefs can call for fulfilment materials, outbound sales calls or print advertising to help convert prospects. This discipline forces the alignment of all parties *before* any work commences rather than afterwards when all the work is being evaluated.

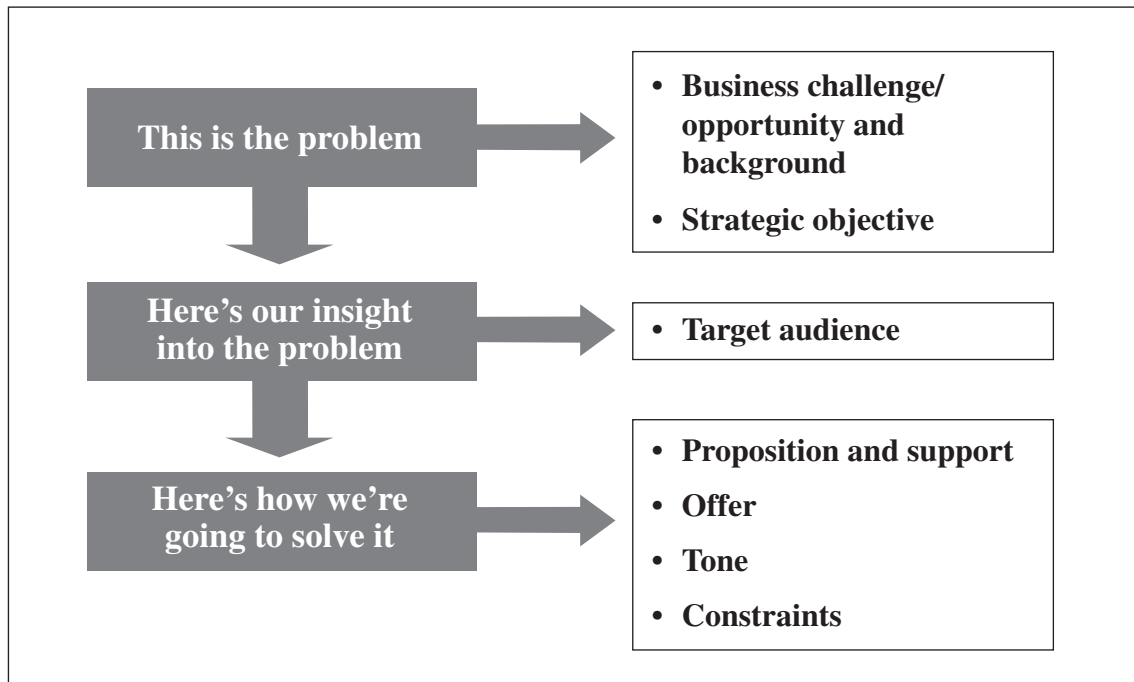
So, to summarise:

- Think about moving from a client brief into the tasks that need to be completed before thinking about the channels that will be used
- The task brief should set out the challenge, the strategy and the main thing that needs to be communicated
- Having a task brief means that when briefs are written for each channel, the overriding objective does not get lost in the process
- The task brief is not restrictive and a hindrance to the creative teams' freedom of expression
- The most experienced creative teams appreciate the focus that a tight brief provides
- A good task brief frees up creative teams to get consumers to respond in compelling and unexpected ways

## Turning tasks into good creative briefs

Having highlighted the tasks to be tackled and the channels to be used, each individual brief aims to be a concise synopsis of a plan to solve that particular problem.

Figure 10.2.8 Structuring the brief



Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

A brief should be a logical argument. It is a bit more complicated than that, but not much. So under business problem or opportunity, the aim is not to write an essay question or to rehearse the entire history of the brand. There should be just enough to set the scene.

The strategic objective of this particular piece of communication should be singular, i.e. one per brief. The question that we are trying to ask is, what exactly we are trying to achieve with this job. It is not the answer – it is the goal. It's: "we are in prison, we need to escape", not: "we are going to dig a tunnel."

The target audience should be neither a missing person's description nor a biography. It is what they think rather than what they look like. It is this insight which leads to our answer.

## Understanding the difference between stimulus and response



"Stop the world in its tracks."

- Steve Jobs: Apple; a summary of the brief to launch Apple in 1984





**Stimulus – something that stimulates or acts as an incentive**  
**Response – a reaction or reply**  
 (Collins English Dictionary)

Distinguishing between stimulus and response creates a great deal of confusion in the brief process. The response is the home of the rational and emotional objectives. That is, what we want the consumer to think or feel about a brand having been exposed to the stimulus; that is, the communication.

**Figure 10.2.9 Distinguishing between stimulus and response**

Distinguish between stimulus and response	
Response	Stimulus
You're funny	← Tell a joke →
I can afford a VW	← Surprisingly affordable →
I'll be in safe hands	← We know everything about relocating your business →

Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

There are many examples where one can see the difference between stimulus and response. The classic example, from Jeremy Bullmore, is where an individual wants to be thought of as a great comedian. He does not go on to a stage and say, "I am a great comedian" (response). People would find that very odd as the last thing they would take away is that he is a great comedian. They would want to hear some of his material to understand why. So he goes onto the stage and tells a funny joke (stimulus) and people make up their own minds whether he is a great comedian or not.

What this illustrates is that people require the evidence of a proposition in order to make up their own minds whether they are prepared to take on that point of view or belief.



Have faith that the problem will be solved.  
 Creativity should be inspired, not intimidated.

## ***How to get a great proposition for a brief***

On individual briefs, the most important heading on the brief form is the proposition. The proposition describes the essence of what you want to communicate in that channel. It has to be single minded and it should sum up the consumer benefit and not get mixed up with features.

A good way of thinking about it is to start a sentence with the words, "we want to convince the audience that..."

Proposition writing is not easy, but the following areas are good places for sources of propositions.

Where to look for propositions:

- Product characteristics
- User characteristics
- Ways of using a product
- How the product is made
- Price characteristics
- Image characteristics
- Satisfying a psychological or physiological need particularly well
- Product heritage
- Disadvantage of non-use
- Direct comparison with competitors
- Newsworthiness

Out of all of these areas the choice of the most compelling proposition is the one that will be the most persuasive reason for buying or responding given the needs of the client brief.

Sometimes, nowadays, the proposition is written, not as what do we want to say, but what do we want to convey. This is an acknowledgement that how well you say something can be even more important than what you say.

### ***Developing a multi-channel solution in a multi-channel environment***



*Case study: Cancer Research UK – developing a multi-channel solution*

#### **CANCER RESEARCH UK – BEING HERE:**

***Campaign launch – February 2005***

#### ***Objectives and strategy***

*The remit for this task covers the delivery of strategic brand planning, communications planning and creative work for all donor acquisition activity for Cancer Research UK, the UK's biggest charity.*

*Many people see cancer research as a bottomless pit. They don't think making a donation really makes any difference. As a charity, it is particularly important that CRUK provides a vision and framework which can carry across all parts of the business, with longevity to provide new and compelling reasons to support Cancer Research UK. The facts of cancer change very little over time – so new ways of engaging the audience are always needed. 'Being Here' is the vision, which came from an insight identifying a feeling that some survivors and their families have. A feeling that a life saved from a cancer death is a person who is 'still here and still alive', with their own personal stories.*

*The brief is therefore about hope.*

*Ultimately the aim is to demonstrate the real progress that the organisation has made, and that donating £2 per month to Cancer Research UK is the best way to prevent suffering and save lives.*

*Annual activity includes national direct communication fundraising appeals twice a year and continuous DRTV, punctuated with two new integrated campaigns across a broad cross-section of media.*

### **The campaign: 'I shouldn't be here'**

#### **Objective**

*'I shouldn't be here' is the first iteration of the Being Here vision. For their biggest ever integrated fundraising campaign, Cancer Research UK set the targets high. The campaign needed to attract new regular committed givers, donating at least £2 a month to realise new revenue streams of over £16 million, while increasing brand disposition by 5 per cent to 23 per cent over the duration of activity.*

#### **Audience**

*The campaign targets people who are close to cancer and understand first-hand the devastating impact cancer has on the lives of people touched by the disease.*

#### **The challenge**

*All communications must demonstrate how Cancer Research UK delivers hope for a better future, while at the same time driving the need and creating the urgency to give.*

#### **The solution**

*Entitled 'I shouldn't be here', the idea revolved around the fact that thanks to Cancer Research UK, there are hundreds of thousands of people still alive today – people who wouldn't have survived without the amazing advances made over the last 10 years.*

#### **The execution**

*This is a campaign about how Cancer Research UK has touched people's lives – it is not about the lab science. The TV shows moments in people's lives, some everyday, some special, as they take a moment to reflect on how cancer has affected their lives.*

*A national press campaign, cross-tracks and tube card panels have supported the TV. A series of six real-life stories have been used to add a layer of context and demonstrate the breadth of advances Cancer Research UK have made. The stories show the 'clever science' in a personal and human way.*

*Other media includes regional 30-second radio, a national direct mailing and online advertising. The idea launched with a 150-foot high teaser poster projected onto Battersea Power Station in London. This was followed with a 30-second brand response TV spot and a 60-second DRTV*

*spot. Online activity launched. Long copy press ads then appeared in the Sunday supplements along with tube cards and cross-track posters on the London Underground. Simultaneously, stickers appeared in graffiti hot spots and the campaign line 'I shouldn't be here' was texted to mobile phones. Survivors wore 'I shouldn't be here' T-shirts and memorial benches dedicated to survivors were put in parks.*

*The beauty of this idea is that it is flexed to fit a broad cross-section of media so that the campaign is fully integrated rather than being 'matching luggage'.*

### **Measurement and results**

*Results show that response rates for the TV are 25 per cent better than Cancer Research's 2004 campaign, which raised over £13 million.*

*Areas where radio was being played out saw a 23 per cent uplift in the number of direct debits.*

*Tube cards alone generated over 1100 responses via text message in the first week (the most text messages ever received for any campaign element).*

*The interactive reached its target after two weeks of a four-week campaign.*

*So far there has been a 192 per cent increase in direct debit sign ups versus the same campaign period in 2004.*

*The 'I shouldn't be here' advertising campaign has outperformed all previous Cancer Research UK's campaigns in advertising tracking research.*

*Assessing the results, the overriding outcome is clear – awareness of Cancer Research UK increased significantly as a result of the campaign and the dual messages of hope, balanced by the need for further donations, came across loud and clear to the public.*

Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

### **How to use support in the brief**

The temptation here is to use this section of the brief to put in everything that you could not possibly squeeze in elsewhere! This section of the brief is sometimes also used to put in additional information used, in many instances, as a substitute for writing a good and clear creative brief. Don't do it!

Support should not be a catalogue of features. It should simply be the reasons why the proposition is believable. One should be using facts, not assertions. This is the section that should use truths not hyperbole.



Everything in the brief must be angled towards helping to directly support the proposition

Essentially, support should be anything and everything that supports the proposition and affects the consumer in terms of the objectives set out in the brief. So, for particular channels, offers and incentives may be pretty critical in this respect. In other channels, tone of voice and brand image may be key to supporting a proposition. Product information may also have a key role.

However, if strategy is the art of sacrifice, then this discipline should definitely be applied to the amount of support used in the written brief.



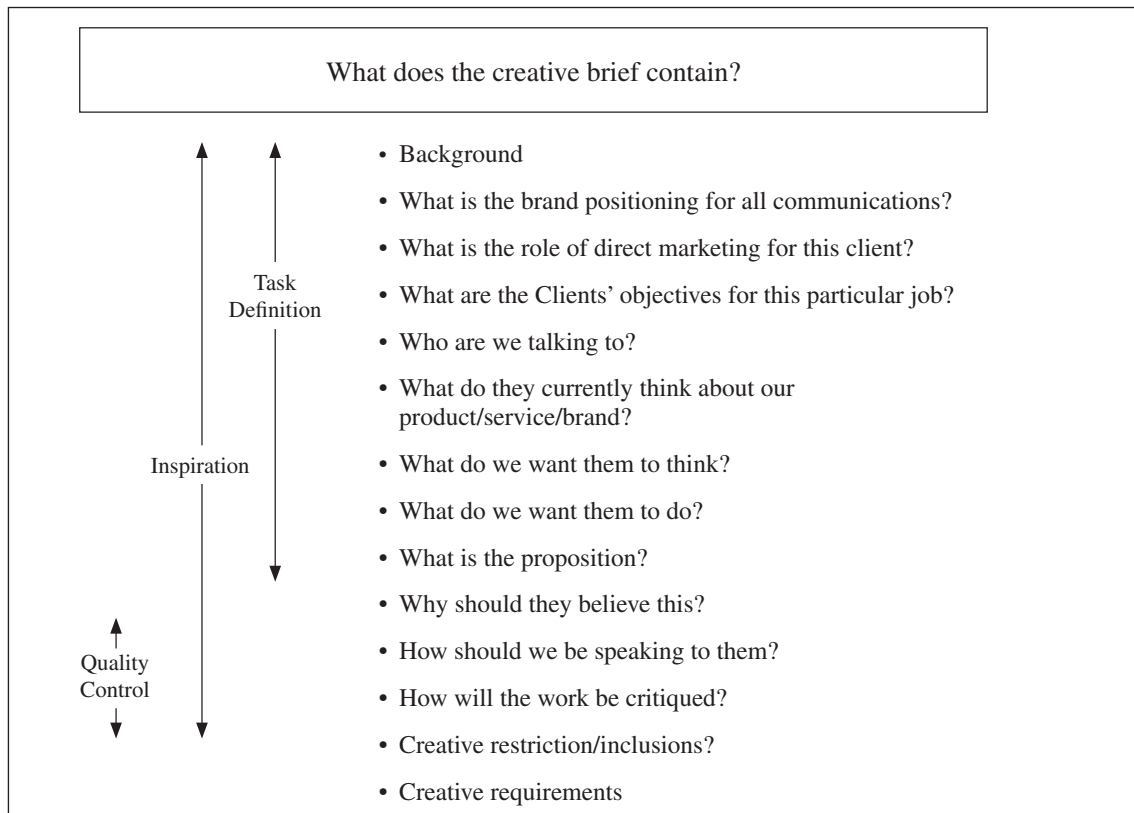
A creative brief is called a brief for a reason. If it were about the kitchen sink, then it would be called an expansive.

### ***Preparing any creative brief***

Because the creative brief is such an important document, it has invited a lot of comment over the years. Although it is often used as a contract to be agreed with clients, primarily it is an agency document for creatives. It should not just present the problem, but should go some way to providing the starting point for developing a creative solution in that particular channel. There are essentially three functions for the creative brief. Firstly, it sets out the job to be done. It defines the job and tells the creative team everything they need and want to know. It sets the direction. Secondly, the brief is designed to inspire the creatives. When developing creative work, the creative team will start by looking for nuggets of information, a spark around which to build their idea.

Finally, the creative brief also acts as a means of quality control. It is something which creative ideas can be measured against. The brief allows this to happen.

**Figure 10.2.10 What does the creative brief contain?**



Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

Although every agency and discipline has its own format for briefs, primarily the questions which are outlined in the checklist above are the key ones that you will see on most briefs, and contain the fundamentals of what needs to be put in writing in order to create a powerful communications solution. All channels will need most of these questions answered, whatever the task. However, each channel has its own specific strengths and requirements and, to that end, the style of the creative brief always needs to be supplemented in a multi-channelled world.

### ***Briefing creatives in any discipline***

The creative briefing meeting is vital. Like the creative brief, it is about task definition and quality control, but also much more highly on the agenda is creating inspiration.

The creative briefing is the point at which one group of problem solvers hands on the fruits of their labours to the next group.



Strategy development is a process that most people can understand. The creative process is one that very few understand. But some understanding of it is important; to know how to contribute to it, to know how to interact with creative teams and to know how to feedback comments.

There are all sorts of ways to hold a successful creative briefing and these are just some thoughts. Having spent a lot of time thinking about and writing the brief, it is important that the creative briefing session is a good one. The byword for this process is that briefs and briefing are aimed to communicate and should be written and delivered in that fashion.

These are the sorts of things that matter when it comes to this part of the process:

- Make sure that you distribute the brief beforehand, so that the creatives have a chance to read it
- Make sure most, if not all, the key team is there
- If you wrote the brief, then give the briefing
- Know your business
- Have fun and be excited
- Talk your ideas through
- Keep it concise
- Be honest and realistic about what the channel can achieve
- Treat the briefing as an event
- Tell the story; try not to read it out
- At the end make sure everyone has understood the task to be undertaken



**"Raise your sights! Blaze new trails!! Compete with the immortals!!!**

**- David Ogilvy**

At this stage it is important to remember a fundamental difference between the role of the creative brief and the role of the creative briefing. The creative brief is designed to tell the creatives what they need to know in order to fulfil the job. In that sense it is designed to be distilled and inspirational.

The creative briefing itself is almost the opposite. It needs to tell the creatives all they need to know. In that sense, the briefing should be factual, comprehensive and detailed. Because the creatives have a distilled and inspirational brief, they will always refer to that document, as it describes the job that has to be achieved. In reality, creative briefing is often a process carried out over a period of time in contrast to the brief which is basically a reference document for everyone on the team.

There are many wonderful and, occasionally, apocryphal stories about where briefings take place. One such story is that, at the end of a creative briefing for Crown Paints, the planner kicked the door on his way out and chipped a piece of paint off. He turned around to the creative team and said, "That wouldn't happen with Crown Paints." Another story is that, allegedly, the briefing for the launch of Speedo swimwear took place in a public swimming pool.

What these stories illustrate is that the essence of a good briefing is the ability to bring the brief to life in as fulsome and relevant a way as is possible at that point in time.



Good briefing is crucial to developing good communications. Good briefing always has an element of theatre to it in order to bring the communications problem to life.

## ***Process: the vital element in multi-channel briefing***

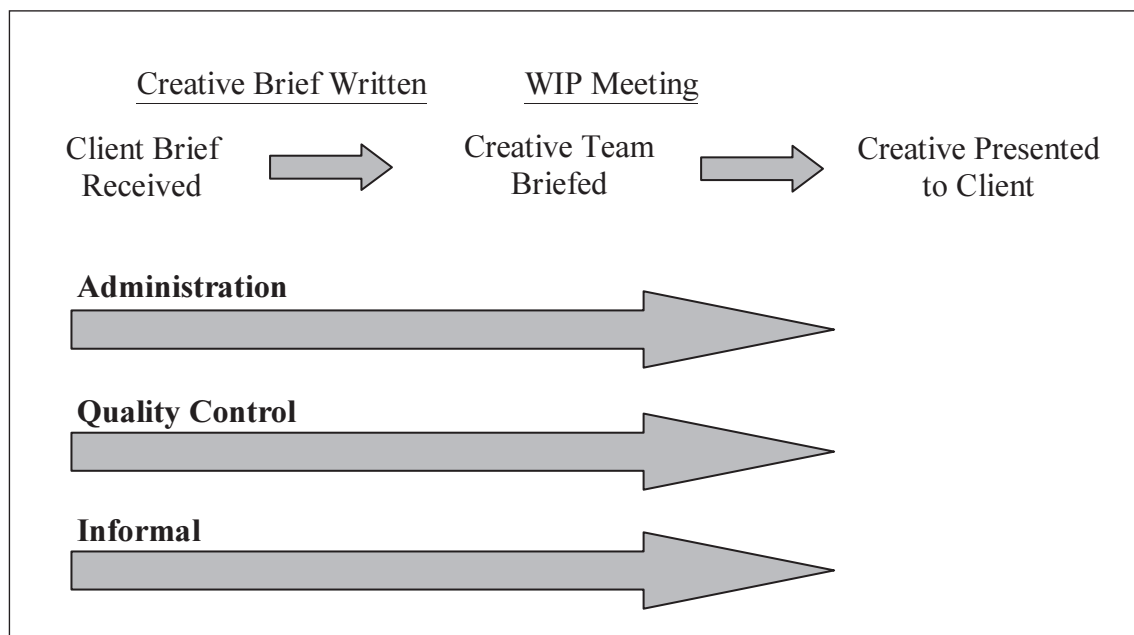
Somewhat surprisingly, most creative people, when asked the question of what is the most important part of the briefing process through to getting the work out, will tell you it is the process.



Plans are nothing. Planning is everything.

So what is the process? In essence, it breaks down into three areas. An administrative process that allows all the briefs in the agency to be managed, also controlling timing and budgets; a quality control process, which is self explanatory; and then an informal process, which is not documented, but is ignored at one's peril. This last stage can involve anything from corridor chats to chats over coffee, to general encouragement and praise.



**Figure 10.2.11 The process broken down**

Source: Ogilvy Group 2005

Creative development involves a huge investment of time and money. It therefore has to be managed, and the administration process is there to do this. So, starting with the administrative process, it allows budget and therefore, the time allowed on each job to be set. It allows a time slot to be booked with a preferred creative team. The administrative process also ensures many other things happen but, in particular, that the creative brief is signed off, that the proposed ideas are costed and that the concepts are approved prior to client presentation.

The quality control process, as the name suggests, is about managing quality. In some agencies this ensures that there is a pre-brief meeting and that the creative brief is signed off. It also ensures that there is appropriate sign-off during the creative development process via work in process meetings, production audits and concept sign-offs to name but some of the processes.

Finally, there is the informal process. This is difficult to commit to paper, but often makes the difference between outstanding and average creative work. It relies on everyone thinking about the brief and the work all of the time, not just passing it onto the next group internally and then washing their hands of it. But the informal process also requires a balance. Creative teams do like to see the brief originators from time to time to discuss ideas, but they certainly don't want them camped out in their office.

## ***Briefing for different channels and different formats***

When briefing across a variety of channels and a variety of formats, two thoughts must be uppermost in this process. The first is to aim to co-ordinate the communications across these channels, so that wherever the consumer comes across the brand, the communication will be even more effective. This is not to say that 'matching luggage' is always a priority. The real aim is not to confuse the consumer by sending out mixed messages. So, wherever the consumer is in the buying and evaluating process, they are being touched by the brand in a relevant, appropriate and non-confusing fashion.



The second is that most successful brands have a central idea at their heart. The reason for this is that, in the end, the idea becomes a form of shorthand for customers and consumers to recognise the brand and understand what it is promising them.



Propositions by channel will vary because of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

'Take out' is the vital consideration when using multi channels.

In determining the appropriate brief for each channel, the following need to be considered:

- Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each communication channel
- Understanding how the channels interact with each other
- Understanding how consumers interact with each channel
- An understanding of appropriate messages to use by channel
- An understanding of which channels and formats work best at the different points of the consumer's buying process
- An understanding of the appropriate measurement and analytics for each channel

Every channel has additional requirements that need to be met. For example, when briefing for direct mail, it is always important to include offers and incentives. Special attention has to be applied to the use of personalisation.

When briefing for DRTV, it is important to consider the length of the commercial, which will often be longer than the standard thirty seconds; that the commercial is likely to be more information heavy; and there will need to be a clear call to action.



The increasing pressure for corporate profits makes it imperative that multi-channel briefs achieve greater effectiveness by having each communications vehicle amplify and reinforce all of the other vehicles used to communicate a sales message.

When briefing for the web, elements such as the architecture of the site plan, the navigation system and its design, and the way in which individual customer journeys work for that particular brand or service, all need to be considered within the brief.

Finally, as the mobile phone is being used more dramatically as a communications channel, the special considerations of screen size, bandwidth, and the balance between text use and visual use, all need to be considered. Probably the most important consideration is the consumer's view of the degree to which their private world is being intruded upon by sales messages.



- *Behind The Scenes In Advertising:* Jeremy Bullmore
- *APG Creative Planning Awards 2001:* Peter Dann and Marie-Louise Neill
- *All Consumers Are Not Created Equal:* Garth Hallberg
- *Brand Building On The Internet:* Martin Lindstrom and Tim Frank Andersen
- *Putting Customers First:* Angus Jenkinson