

Preparing A Client Brief – Key Points

The better the brief the more accurate the results. Using guidance from best practice, this document will help you and your client capture and agree that all important detail that will make your assignment run smoothly

It's from the brief that everything else flows. Written briefs are a point of reference that can be agreed at the outset and therefore, to some extent, form an agreement between you and your client. The better the brief, the better and more accurate the results. The more time, effort and information you input at the start, the better the results and greater the time savings throughout the process

A GOOD BRIEF WILL:

- 1. LEAD TO BETTER, MORE EFFECTIVE AND MEASURABLE WORK**
- 2. SAVE TIME AND MONEY**
- 3. ENABLE YOU AND YOUR CLIENT TO CHECK THE VALUE OF YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

1. BETTER WORK

A brief is the most important piece of information agreed between you and the client.

It's from the brief that everything else flows. Therefore it's essential that every effort taken to prepare the best possible documentation of what is required.

Your clients brief can be considered the platform for your assignment. The better the issues and objectives are described, the more likely it is that you, as a strategic and creative student from the Solent Creatives Agency will be able to apply your specialist skills to produce great solutions.

2. SAVE TIME AND MONEY

The biggest waste of any agency resources is to put Clients through the process of developing a solution repeatedly without concrete direction. It wears on relationships and is costly in wasted time (on both sides) getting the work right first time, saves time and money. Producing a proper written brief makes the process more efficient; -that's good for clients and good for you.

A written brief instills a discipline on you and your client, so that you are both very clear about what the objectives and expected outcomes are.

3. ENSURE RETURN ON INVESTMENT (CHECK THE VALUE OF YOUR WORK)

One of the criticisms faced by marketing people is that they lack accountability. Ensuring that client briefs are written for every project is an essential place to start.

The scale of the project will dictate the depth and complexity of your brief – a brief for a major new brand launch will obviously be much more detailed than one for upgrading a website. But, whatever the task, a written brief that includes 'objectives' and 'success criteria' is the foundation stone for accountability and demonstration of the effectiveness of advertising, media, PR, direct marketing, sales promotion and all forms of commercial communications. Without the ability to demonstrate your effectiveness, you and your client will be unable to assess the value of your work.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BRIEF - THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND A GOOD BRIEF

- 1. WRITTEN BRIEFS**
- 2. CLARITY OF THINKING**
- 3. CLEARLY DEFINED OBJECTIVES**

1. WRITTEN BRIEFS

Research indicates that a combination of written and verbal briefing is the ideal, In this case the initial

inquiry document issued by the client and your research in advance of your first meeting, will provide a good starting point for discussion and further written information.

A written brief can also be used to ensure the 'buy-in' of other key people throughout the clients business. This buy-in is essential in order to avoid the significant waste of time and resources that can happen when other people in the organisation challenge key assumptions in the brief, leading to belated changes in direction.

2. CLARITY OF THINKING

'A good brief is not the longest or most detailed, it's the one whose clarity and focus creates the platform for a great strategic leap, a blinding customer insight and an effective solution'

Briefs are called 'briefs' because they are meant to be brief. They are a summation of your thinking. Try to attach all relevant supporting information as appendices. Too much information can fog the process. Relevance and context are more important than reams of data. 'The main difference between good briefs and bad briefs is that good briefs leave you with a clear understanding of what you are trying to do. Bad briefs drown you in contradictory information and objectives'.

3. CLEARLY DEFINED OBJECTIVES

Ensure you and your clients objectives are crystal clear. Use concrete business objectives rather than vague terms such as 'to improve brand image'. Every objective should start with the word 'to' - If your client's objective is indeed to improve your brand image, then go further. Explain the desired improvement that they want to achieve. From what to what? What will it do for their business? What's their business rationale for investing their time and your time to achieve this? How will they quantify and measure this? Concrete business objectives rather than woolly intermediate objectives are essential.

"The clarity of the objectives is the most fundamental part of a good written brief. The single greatest frustration is when there isn't a clear and credible problem to solve."

Clearly defining the objectives to establish the project's 'success criteria' i.e. what will success look like and how will it be measured? is the number one principle of writing a good brief?

WHAT A GOOD BRIEF SHOULD CONTAIN

A good client brief should include information on:

- 1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT**
- 2. WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**
- 3. WHERE DO THEY WANT TO BE?**
- 4. WHAT DO THEY WANT TO DO GET THERE?**
- 5. WHO DO THEY NEED TO 'TALK TO'?**
- 6. HOW WILL THEY KNOW THEY'VE ARRIVED?**
- 7. THE APPROVAL/SIGN OFF PROCESS**

These headings and sections should be completed for every brief you write, with the depth of detail within each section varying according to circumstances:

- 1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT** - How you and your client are going to manage the project. The basic facts of the project/common information should include:
 - Date; Project Name, Project Type,
 - Company: PLC/Group Company where relevant,
 - Brand: Name/Variant
 - Client Contact Information: Names/Titles and Contact Details
 - Agency – i.e. the Solent Creatives Agency Name and Contact Details

2. WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Describing the current position of the brand, its background and the key issues it faces defines the start point for the assignment. . The brief should try to contain the product or service description, including key attributes and benefits, information on its market position, (volume and value) and other data relevant to the assignment.

3. WHERE DO THEY WANT TO BE?

The clients goal/objective, eg to improve sales, usage, awareness, image, reputation, profitability, customer profile etc.

4. WHAT DO THEY WANT TO DO TO GET THERE?

It's unlikely that the project you are assigned to work on will achieve the defined objective alone, so it's essential that you have a full understanding of the total marketing and communications strategy – and the marketing already in place.

5. WHO DO THEY NEED TO TALK TO?

All marketing activity is designed to elicit some form of response from a particular group of people. These target groups should be defined and prioritised as accurately as possible via demographics, lifestyle, product usage, attitudes, etc.

6. HOW WILL THE CLIENT KNOW THEY HAVE ARRIVED?

You and your client need to know what success (or failure) will look like. Measures should be put in place to establish whether or not your work delivers against its desired objective. How will it be measured? When will it be measured? Who will measure it? This is vital to the assessment of the clients return on investment (ROI)

- **Practicalities** The clients brief will have other implementation consequences, so it's important that all the key practicalities for them to bear in mind are included in your brief. These include:
- **Timings:** What/when are the key project milestones and key delivery dates? What are the booking dates or deadlines for any associated internal/external activities
- **Fit with other marketing activity:** for example is there a sales conference whose deadline precedes media copy date or website functionality? What if any phases of pre-testing research are planned? What are the logistics of any production required?
- **Other considerations:** Each client assignment will have different practicalities that should be thought through before you are put to work. For example, for creative briefs, are there any agreed media strategies? For media briefs, are there any agreed creative ideas to work with? What if any legal constraints are there in this market? Does the brand or corporate identity have guidelines or other mandatories? Are there 'softer' but nevertheless important constraints or considerations, which might affect your work? Does the client have any other complementary activity planned, eg trade promotions?

7. APPROVALS

The final piece of detail needed in the brief is who has the authority to sign off the work that the agency produces. This person (or people) should also be the one(s) to sign off the brief before you start work on the assignment.

SOLENT CREATIVES ASSIGNMENT BRIEF – EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

CLIENT:

NAME OF BUSINESS:

TEL:

E MAIL:

WEB:

NATURE OF BUSINESS:

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

STUDENT:

TEL NOS:

EMAIL:

INITIAL ENQUIRY:

BRIEFING MEETING:

FOLLOW-UP DUE:

ASSIGNMENT OUTLINE:

- **Issues**
- **Brand information**
- **Background Information**

Taking into account where are they now? Where do they want to be? What do they want to do to get there? Who do they need to talk to? How will they know they have arrived?

- **Objectives**
- **Success measures**

To reflect how will the project be measured, who will measure it, when will it be measured?

METHOD:

Points to consider include practicalities, timings, links to other marketing activity

TIMESCALE:

To include Milestones/Review Process/Completion Date

ASSIGNMENT APPROVAL/SIGN OFF PROCESS: