



## QUICK GUIDE: the creative brief

**The creative brief is arguably the most important investment you can make when embarking on any marketing activity. The brief defines the starting point, clarifies the destination and identifies how success will be measured and as such provides the parameters for efficient, effective creative work. Moving goal posts and ambiguous strategy wastes time, budget and can damage relationships. Clear briefs are not only the critical success factor at arriving at good marketing, but without this foundation it is difficult to build success.**

### Clarity

Make sure you know exactly what you want. You may know you want to grow sales or acquire new customers but try to quantify and clarify what you really mean:

- > What type of customers
- > What will they buy from you
- > Where are they located.

Gather the background information needed to understand your current position. Keep this data relevant and within context. Next set out clear, measurable goals, as without them it will be difficult to implement the strategy effectively.

One analogy is to consider taking a holiday. You know you need a holiday but unless you know where you are going it's very difficult to make the necessary travel arrangements or pack the right clothes.

You know your product or service best, so now is the time to dust off the 4Ps (make it seven if you offer a service) and spell out in the brief what you want to tell others about your product or service. What are the key features, what are the benefits, what makes your product or service so special. These form the core messages of your communication activity. Get your whole team onboard and make sure any inconsistencies are ironed out at this stage, then find the right team with the experience and expertise you need to help you get your message heard.

### Objectives

Marketing communication is ultimately about creating action. Ideas and creativity are the tools used to find ways to drive someone to do something:

- > to buy a particular product,
- > to visit a specific attraction etc.

But which people and what action?

Vague targets such as 'improve awareness' are difficult to measure. All objectives should be considered in terms of a business problem that will cost money to solve. Ask yourself 'what is the rationale to spend this money?' Be clear and always define concrete business objectives:

*'I am prepared to spend £x to solve this problem.'*

Next, define your criteria for success — what will it look like, is it realistic and how much does it make good business sense to invest to achieve this.

### Framework

The process of constructing the framework of your brief enables you to define the start and end points of a campaign.

- > Where are we now?
- > Where do we want to be?
- > How will we know we've arrived?

It also sets out your expectations for success. The information within it will be relied upon and should be backed up with data wherever possible. Hunches and instinct can provide valuable insight and should not be ruled out, but a marketing communications agency rely upon the background information to develop a plan of how they are going to get you where you want to be. Add to this framework the operational considerations of project management, practicalities like the timescale and budget and identify the chain of command for approvals and you have a brief.

### Advice

6 hats creative marketing, (formerly known as tactic communications) has been around since 1999. Working with clients of all sizes from sole traders to large blue-chip corporations like Cable & Wireless and Computer Associates we have experience in helping clients through the process of developing effective communication strategies and campaign planning. If you would like some early input or advice to guide you through the planning stages, why not contact us to see how we can help?

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# CREATIVE BRIEF

## STEP 1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

PROJECT NAME / REFERENCE:

PURCHASE ORDER NUMBER:

COMPANY: operational site / registered office BRAND NAME/VARIANT

CLIENT TEAM: names / titles / contact details

AGENCY TEAM: account director / contact details

## STEP 2: DEFINED STARTING POINT *where are we now?*

PRODUCT OR SERVICE DESCRIPTION: key features / benefits

DELIVERY OR DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

MARKET SIZE: volume and value

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS: products / service / brands and relevant market position

CUSTOMER USAGE DATA: profile / segments and spend

HISTORICAL SUMMARY: what communication activity has been conducted before

## STEP 3: DEFINED END POINT *where do we want to be?*

PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVE: what specific and measurable action is required.

## STEP 4: WHAT IS THE BIG PICTURE *what is the overall strategy ?*

MARKETING STRATEGY: campaigns in isolation will never work. What other activity is already underway and how does this new campaign fit into the overall business plan and marketing communications strategy.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY: what is the key message. Is this consistent with the message across all media including, PR, advertising. Does every element of the campaign reinforce the brand values and message.

## STEP 5: WHO DO WE WANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH? *define and prioritise target groups*

MARKET SEGMENTATION: be as accurate as possible with demographics, lifestyle, product usage, attitudes etc

## STEP 6: DEFINED SUCCESS CRITERIA *how will we know when we've arrived?*

MEASUREMENTS: agree in advance when and how will the campaign success will be measured. Look at longer-term progress towards an overall brand or organisational objectives.

## STEP 7: PRACTICALITIES

BUDGETS: state your overall budget and if necessary break it down into component parts. Alternatively 'scenario budgets' can be requested i.e. what would it cost to achieve x , y or z objectives.

TIMING: be clear about payment dates, payment terms, delivery dates and key deadlines for production.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: what other activities are planned, legal constraints, corporate guidelines etc.

## STEP 8: APPROVAL

CHAIN OF COMMAND: who has authority to sign off creative work and invoices.

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