

Writing a brief

Most people going on that big overseas holiday spend a lot of time researching their options before committing their hard-earned savings. Likewise when building a house, plans are agonised over in minute detail for fear of missing something important. However, a lot of people don't work the same way when writing a design brief.

While the size of the budget might not be the same as for a big holiday or building a home, it's still important to spend time getting your thoughts straight and the information correct and in detail. After all, a graphic designer is going to use this information as the basis for all the work they do. If the information in the brief is lacking, or incorrect, changes in the project could very well become a reality - either by choice or by necessity.

Considering that graphic design fees are based on the hours worked and the development required, it makes sense to put in the effort at the start, to ensure your project comes out on budget.

The following worksheet can be used as a guide in preparing your brief; it is essentially the same worksheet used by Grassroots Design during briefing meetings. There may be some aspects you don't fully understand or believe are relevant – no problem, during the meeting we'll cover all of these topics anyway.

By briefing the designer correctly you will have clarified your own thinking about the project and will in return receive an accurate estimate of costs.

Client: _____ of _____
(Representative's Name) (Business Name)

Industry sector: _____

Contact details: _____
(Address)

(Email) (Phone)

The business

History / Present / Future of company:

How long in business? Current size? Proposed future growth? Business objectives? Long-term goals?

Organisation's practices and core values:

Include words that describe your business eg: spiritual, compassionate, open and honest, contemporary, innovative, dependable, traditional, established, edgy, strong, enthusiastic, unique, high-tech, integrity, fun, serious, original etc. What does your business and product stand for?

How do you want customers to perceive your business and products?

Key words, Do you feel you currently achieve that?

Products:

What products relate to this project? What other products?

Services:

Is this service your actual product, or something you do "above and beyond" the product?

What is your central message to customers about your products and business?

Customers (or Target Audience, if materials not directed at customers)

*Age, education, employment, lifestyle, income, gender, geographic location, Their purchase motivation (needs/wants).
What decisions do they need to make and what influences those decisions?*

Key competitors

Company names, URLs, product names, Products same or similar? Things they do better than you, Things you do better than them. What sets you apart from competitors? What do you offer that they don't?

Marketing strategy

What previous marketing activities?

What types of materials? How did they perform? Succeed or fail? Were you happy with that? Are they still relevant/useful? Why?

What present and future marketing activities do you have planned?

Research, advertising, direct mail, printed materials, internet, TV, public relations, etc

What new materials do you believe you need right now? Why?

What do you want these materials to achieve for you? What format? Printed? Electronic? PDF? Webpage? Emailed?

What key message do you want this project to deliver?

eg. My company is friendly and professional, My product is reliable, What do you want people to do/feel when they receive the item? Is the material meant to increase enquiries? Increase sales?

Do you have printed/image samples that give the kind of impression you are after?

Why do you like these materials? Any materials that you dislike? Why?

How is the end material going to be used?

Where? By whom? How will it get to them? eg. in the post, from a brochure stand, via the web? Can the target audience use the material by themselves, or need to be walked through it? (by salesperson, etc) If the primary usage is for the web, typically horizontal logos work best.

How will you measure the success of the project?

What is your approximate budget?

Have you had similar past projects? Estimates from others? What do you expect this project to cost? Would like it to cost? What other projects/materials need to be budgeted for? Do you have contingencies for unexpected costs?

Project specifics

Who will we be dealing with on a day-to-day basis?

How much project management (meetings / updates etc) will the job involve?

What format is the new project?

Printed? What material? Size? Number of pages? How much content?

What information is to be included in the designed item?

Copy (text), images, graphs, technical data, other graphical items, logos, tag lines, trademarks, barcodes. Are these things ready to go, or need to be prepared? Professional photography required? Copywriting? Translations? Illustrations? Proof reading? How will the materials be supplied? File type? On disk, via email, FTP, Dropbox?

Do you need us to co-ordinate production of artwork (illustration/ photography), copywriting, translations?

Provide any details. These services will be quoted by the relevant service provider.

Do you have a current look and feel (style) to your company's materials? Do you want a new style developed?

What should this new style reflect? How do you feel it should differ from the current style? What other materials might this style be applied to in the future? Other printed materials? Electronic? Vehicle branding?

Are there any other branding requirements to be considered?

Existing colour schemes, colour preferences, colours you don't wish to use, logo usage, typefaces, paper stock etc.

Are there any "non-negotiable" elements of the design?

Are there any additional materials to be considered at this time?
Eg. business cards, envelopes, letterheads, technical documents, etc.

How many differing design concepts do you require?

Approval and output

Who will be involved in final approval of the project?
These people need to be involved from the very beginning if possible to avoid "design by committee".

What are the print requirements?
Number of pages, number of copies, folds, pockets, business card slots, die-cuts, embossing, foiling, UV highlights, binding type, paper stock, colours, size

Do you need us to co-ordinate pre-press and printing?

Timetable

When do you need the final materials delivered?
Is there some kind of event driving this? What date? Location of event? Where to deliver materials to? Short deadlines may require higher fees to ensure undivided attention.

When are you able to start?
Providing materials, approving formal brief and estimate.