

design to sell

Resources for making design
your strategic marketing partner

Profiting from creative briefs

Creative briefs can save you time, money, and stress, while generating better results

Creative briefs can improve most projects through better communications

Whether you purchase or provide copywriting, graphic design, or marketing services, creative briefs can provide focus and eliminate misunderstandings. Briefs make it easy to specify project goals, deadlines, details, and mutual expectations.

These detailed 1- or 2-page documents should be filled out and signed by both parties at the beginning of every project.

Following are some of the elements typically found in a creative brief.

Description

Begin with the project title, the current date, and the names and contact information of everyone involved in the project.

In larger firms, each project and creative brief will have its own unique number.

Goals and objectives

Next, describe goals and objectives in detail. What is the cause, product, or service

being explained, promoted, or sold? What are the major messages and specific benefits that must be communicated?

Is the project intended to increase sales, launch a new product, reinforce donor loyalty, explain changes in health benefits, or build trade show traffic?

Describe the background and context of the project, identifying—for example—why a new brochure is needed or the reason a website should be updated.

Finally, the creative brief should describe how the project's effectiveness will be measured. Will the project's success be measured by sales, website traffic, white paper downloads, or new business leads?

Market

Next, define the project's intended market. Who is going to encounter and, hopefully, respond to the project's offer?

Does the market consist of small law firm owners, Fortune 500 CEOs, patients with heart conditions, or high school sophomores exploring college options?

The more market details you include, the better your project can target your market's needs. When possible, define the

Creative briefs don't have to be large to be effective

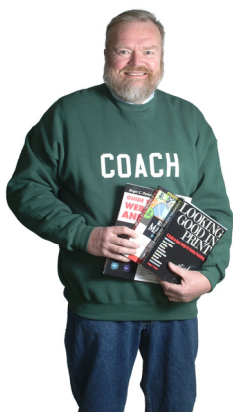
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Creative briefs should specify deadlines and expectations

Field or industry	
Occupation or profession	
Years of experience	
Age	
Sex	
Health status	
Geographic area	
Income	

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market's knowledge of the topic and their likely attitudes towards your message.

Deliverables

Project deliverables should be identified in detail. What, exactly, will the vendor deliver to the client? Options include a written critique, an hour of consultation, graphics files, word processed text, rough layouts for a website, or finished pages added to an existing web site.

If a project involves several steps, each step should be separately indicated, with its own deadlines, i.e.,

1. Copywriting
2. Creative design
3. Production and layout
4. Posting new pages to website

Deadlines

It's often useful to work backwards from the project's street date, when the market will encounter the message, i.e., "Nov. 23, the day after Thanksgiving," etc.

Deadlines should be specified for each stage of project completion. In the above example, the creative brief should include deadlines for copywriting, design, production, and project completion.

Expectations

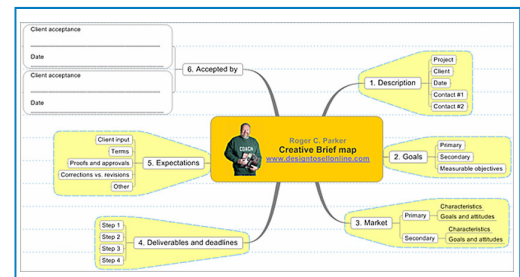
Projects often flounder because of flawed expectations. Flawed expectations usually result in clients or vendors beginning sentences with, "But, I thought..."

Creative briefs should specify client responsibilities like deadlines for providing necessary information and expected turnaround time for commenting on proofs.

Creative briefs can be important tools in eliminating misunderstandings due to differing interpretations of "corrections" and "revisions." Clients, for example, should not expect major changes in project focus after a project's goals and components have been mutually agreed upon.

Formatting options

There is no one way to profit from a creative brief. Different firms are likely to emphasize different contents.



[Click here](#) to download a sample creative brief created with mind mapping software.

Creative briefs come in many different formats. They can be printed and filled out by hand or completed using a word processor. You can also find creative briefs [online](#) (see example, far left). You can also download a creative brief map created with [Mindjet's MindManager](#), (above).

For more information

[E-mail me](#), or call 603-742-9673, for more information about coaching, consultations, critiques, and copywriting or graphic design assistance.

For over 25 years, I've been helping firms around the world improve the quality of their marketing. A fresh perspective on your marketing challenges can be yours for as little as \$250!