

How to write a design brief

Here at BTL Creative, we receive an incredible variety of design briefs – and sometimes figuring out what they are asking for can take almost as long as delivering the goods. So we thought we'd give you a little guidance.

Giving your agency a decent design brief can save you a lot of time and money, as it ensures that the creatives understand exactly what is required and focus their energies in the right direction.

Of course, the content of the brief will vary hugely depending on what outputs are required, but there are some definites in terms of key points to include which you should try to keep in mind.

First off, what is your top line **objective**? For example, is it to generate sales or perhaps to build brand identity? Maybe you are looking to educate your audience, or simply to share important information. Whatever your objective, it will help both you and your agency to state it from the outset and ensure that everybody keeps their eye on the ball.

Next, try to include a **company profile**. Although you would hope that your agency will have the nous to find out something about you, they won't start out with the same understanding as you will about exactly what your business does, the industry you operate in, or who your competitors are.

A part of this is likely to be about your **audience**. In thinking about your audience, you should remember that you may need to make a distinction between your company's target market as a whole and those individuals who this particular design brief is aimed at. Try to think about age, gender, location, and occupation, as these will all influence the execution of the final piece.

What **tone** do you need to set? Informative, solid and professional, or maybe friendly and approachable? Don't be afraid to supply examples of other designs – however random – which set the right tone for you, as these will also help provide a framework for the creatives to work within. Also, if there is other existing company literature or corporate guidelines that it needs to fit in with, you should supply this too.

OK – so you've now set out your stall. It's time to get down to the nitty-gritty, which will enable your agency to advise and quote you accurately.

What **outputs** do you need? A brochure, a website, a social media campaign? Maybe a combination of different items? Be as precise as you can, or – if you're not sure of the best medium to get your message across – don't be afraid to ask your agency for advice. If it's something potentially complex – such as a website – then you need to give an idea of what sort of functionality you require.

It's also key to tell your agency where the **content** is coming from, as this will dramatically affect the time they spend on your project and how they approach it. Are you supplying your own, fully-proofed text, or would you like your agency to copywrite for you? Do you need bespoke photography, or will you be supplying images of your own? And, crucially, just what is the **quantity** of content that needs to be covered? Enough for a couple of pages, or a multi-layered document?

Finally, you should really try to give your agency a **budget** and realistic timescales to work to, rather than expecting them to pluck something out of the air. It's too easy for an agency to overcook – or undercook – a project. Much better for them to tailor their response to your expectations and your requirements – after all, you want your chosen agency to be working with you, rather than against you, and you should be able to trust them to come up with the goods if you've given them the right information in the first place.