

a brief
guide to the
design brief

A Brief Guide To The Design Brief

A design brief is a written explanation for your designer—it outlines the aims, objectives and milestones of a design project.

A clear and thorough brief is the first and one of the most important parts of our design process. Not only does it help to fully scope the project, it is also an essential point of reference for both you and your designer. A well-written brief develops understanding of the project and confidence that you will achieve the result you are after.

Perhaps most importantly, the brief ensures that significant design issues are considered and questioned before your designer begins any work, and therefore before your meter is running!

Some important factors to consider when writing your design brief:

- What's the background of the project? Why is it being done?
- What do your target market/audience think about this subject? Is there anything we should avoid?
- What do you want to accomplish and how will you measure success?
- What is the most important thing you want to tell your audience?

You also need to specify your requirements:

- What components will be used to send the message? What is the best way or place to reach the audience? List all required components, e.g. brochures, posters, promotional items, website, email campaigns etc
- How many do you need? List required quantities for each item; as well as your choice of stock*, finish** etc where applicable
- What are the mandatory elements such as the client's logo, address, phone number etc? List everything carefully and inform us if there are any mandatory styleguide requirements for your brand
- How soon is this needed? When do you expect it to be done? List all required delivery dates and if there is any downtime (e.g. if you will be unavailable for proofing/approval at any time) in the timeline
- How much budget can be spent? Will you need any additional or ongoing to publish? (e.g. regular print campaigns, web hosting)
- Who is the contact for the project? Who will have the authority for proofing / signing off / approving?

Plan carefully—it will save you time and money, and ensure a result that is tailored to your specific needs. The following pages are suggested inclusions for your design brief.

* Stock refers to the paper, card, board etc that your project will be printed on. Paper stock can have a gloss, satin or matt finish, can be coated or uncoated, and is generally specified by these properties and by the weight measure grams/sq metre (gsm). The heavier (higher gsm) the stock, the more sturdy / rigid the paper will be.

** Finish refers to any collating, trimming, binding, and embellishment of the finished product; e.g. diecut, saddlestitched, folded, and special finishes such as varnish or laminate, embossing etc.

Your Company Profile

A short, honest outline of your organisation or company. The more relevant information you can give here, the better the understanding we will have of your industry sector. Don't take this information for granted.

Tell us:

- What do you do?
- How long you have been around? How many staff do you have?
- What is your niche market?
- How and where do you fit in to your industry sector?
- How would you describe your company / organisation's personality? e.g. conservative, classic, quirky, adventurous?

Your Aims / Goals

Good design can be a great influence on a company's success; by setting clear goals you ensure that is what you will get.

For example, are you looking to:

- Generate sales?
- Encourage enquiries / leads?
- Get more subscribers?
- Target a specific audience?
- Find out information from your audience?
- Encourage positive word of mouth?

Setting these aims down on paper—and the whole process of writing a design brief—helps to clarify your thoughts. You may also find that it can indirectly help to find any flaws or potential problems in what you initially thought was a sound idea. Issues that may not become evident until well into a project are often much easier to resolve at the outset.

Your Target Audience

Give us some details of who is your target market / audience for this particular project. Do you have any secondary or tertiary audiences? Explain if you are looking to unite / reaffirm your existing client-base or appeal to new markets.

Other demographics about your markets that may be useful to us include:

- Age
- Sex
- Income
- Occupation
- Location

Project Management And Your Budget And Timeline

List all of the components you require, and quantities. If your medium is print, select stock and finishes. Will you require delivery by courier? Be sure to provide information such as the contact for delivery, and address. If a digital project, list any and all functionality required. Outline any constraints / limitations the project may have, and technical specifications.

Even if you can only provide a ball-park figure, a rough budget will give us a good idea of the type of solution we will realistically be able to provide. Timeframe is also an important consideration— let us know of any specific deadlines to be met.

Don't Be Afraid To Include Design Examples

Supplying examples of your tastes, and / or what you think is effective / relevant design can be a great help. Also include any samples of your company's current marketing materials—explain what you do or don't like about them, and where you would like to progress to from there.

Is there a style that you really like or dislike? What is it about that style that makes an impression? Think about things like colour, imagery, quantity of text, typography, the vibe / atmosphere created by the piece etc. Don't necessarily be constrained by the medium of your project if giving a list of inspirations / influences. You might include any of the following:

- Design samples you like, or find relevant to your project
- Current relevant company marketing materials
- Websites
- Brochures / Posters / Flyers / Reports
- Advertisements (Print, TV and Digital)

The more clues you give us about your design tastes, the more likely we are to produce what you are aiming for. Rather than copying an existing design, we will build a concept based on your preferences for look and feel.

Ask Your Colleagues For Input

Talk to as many people within your company as possible before sending the design brief. Discussing the brief with different people may reveal differences in opinion on the project's aims and objectives. Resolving any differences at the outset will save time and money down the track when your project is already underway.

Include Any Other Information You Think Relevant

If you have discovered any other relevant information during the course of writing the brief, include it! It will all add to our understanding of your company and your project, which ensures an excellent end result for you.

To help make certain that you haven't overlooked anything vital, the following page is a checklist to use when developing your design brief; while of course if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. We look forward to working with you!

Design Brief—Checklist

HAVE YOU INCLUDED A PROJECT OVERVIEW?

- Title of project
- Your company profile:
an overview of who you are, what you do and where you fit into your industry sector; as well as how you perceive your organisation and how you are / want to be perceived by your audience / market
- Project background and purpose

HAVE YOU OUTLINED YOUR GOALS AND AIMS?

- Project goals
- Key message
- Target market / audience

HAVE YOU PLANNED YOUR PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

- List of all components:
e.g. quantities and specifications for printed material; website components / modules and functionality; email campaigns etc
- Mandatory elements such as logo, contact details, web address etc; corporate colour scheme or styleguide requirements
- Estimated budget
- Timeline and deadlines for delivery of components
- Delivery details
- Any constraints / limitations
- Proofing and approval:
define who will be the project contact and who will have authority to proof and signoff on components for supply
- Accounts / finance:
define any specific requirements for invoicing

HAVE YOU INCLUDED DESIGN EXAMPLES?

- Relevant company materials
- Design samples you like or find relevant:
of colour schemes, imagery or styling, fonts, graphics etc

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

- Anything that doesn't quite fit into the categories above—yet seems relevant—probably is