

## How to write a good design brief

---

This handy guide on how to write a good design brief covers the key points involved in order to make this a seamless process for marketers. A well composed design brief will ensure you get excellent value for money and will avoid any miscommunications that can waste valuable resources further into the project.

A brand audit will help you decipher if what you promise within your key brand messaging is what actually gets delivered to customers. Done well, the implementation of new practices derived from the audit outcomes, can help to excite customers and prospects about what you offer, and create new levels of loyalty to your brand.

A brand audit is a vital tool to understanding the cross over between brand strategy (what you think you're saying, the ways you're saying it and the things you promise), and brand experience (what customers are actually hearing and experiencing).

An audit helps to align strategy with experience, and enables you to build a stronger brand reputation, both internally and externally.

### Why should I bother?

1. A design brief allows you to consider key questions around the design project such as, what is it we're trying to do? and why is it necessary? By using the brief to answer these questions you will be able to establish exactly what you want the design to be and, at the same time, the designer can come up with relevant concepts.
2. It can see an idea become a reality by fleshing out the details and affording sufficient consideration to what the final solution will be.
3. It will establish the working relationship between the designer and the key contacts within the client team.
4. It is the best point in time to set expectations between the client and the designer.
5. It will ultimately help you determine how successful the project has been once it has reached completion.

### What is a design brief?

A design brief is a written document that you, as the client, will produce for a designer and should be used as a starting, and reference point, for your design requirements regarding a particular job or campaign.

In essence, it is a set of instructions that you will put together that will answer a series of key questions that a designer needs to know when setting to work on a project. It will be an outline of the aims, objectives and milestones of a design project.

### Who is involved in the process?

Putting together a design brief is the start of what should always be a collaborative process between you and the designer, both having an equal share of accountability regarding the outcome of the project.

Decide who in your team is involved in the project and, if appropriate, include them in the brief writing.

It is important to remember that, once the designer has come up with a few concepts, it may be a good idea to get key stakeholders involved. They will be able to advise on how they see the design from their perspective and ensure that whatever you decide upon will be well received by the target audience, both internal and external.

Please ensure you consider everyone internally who will need to approve the project. Nothing is worse than getting to the final stages of approval and someone throwing a spanner in the works as they were not involved from the outset.

## Is there a set format?

Quite simply – no. Each design project is different; therefore the brief should be as well. Devices that work well to ensure sufficient detail is included are narrative and/or bulleted lists.

Use the design brief as an opportunity to include any copy and/or imagery required for the project, to identify the target market, agree what marketing method and channels you will use to communicate the message and what the final specification of the communication material will be. Using the brief as an opportunity to outline this will only help to further identify what the design project is for and flag up anything that might have been overlooked.

Remember that the design process is a fluid one, so if any key points change as the project develops make sure you amend and recirculate the brief accordingly.

## 8 Key questions for a brief to answer

### 1. What does your business do?

Providing a company profile will allow the designer to begin to determine the correct treatment, look and feel, regarding ideas for the project. If they gain an understanding of company size, history, your particular business niche, target audience and market competitors, then the design process will get off to a great start.

### 2. What are the goals of the project?

This should cover the broad and the specific – how will this design project fit in with other company communications and the overall brand? Is it a sales or an awareness campaign? Discuss audience profile and whether or not you will need to review and refresh your current branding components? Answering these questions thoroughly will define clear outcomes right from the start and provide a performance measurement for the designers proposed solution.

### 3. Who is the target market?

Key demographics need to be established, including age, income, occupation, tastes, views, attitudes, employment, geography, lifestyle, etc. Use the brief as an opportunity to identify if there is more than one target market and rank them in terms of importance.

### 4. What copy and pictures are needed?

Include any required copy and imagery that must be included in the design. If new imagery is to be sourced, consider sharing found imagery that could provide visual direction. A lead should be given by the designer as to the format images and logos should be supplied. If your business uses brand identity guide lines then they should also be shared with the designer to ensure branding consistency.

### 5. What are the specifications of the finished project for which the design is required?

Regardless of whether it's a poster, flyer, brochure, packaging, etc., or even if it's a digital piece of work, the specification needs to be decided in the brief. Dimensions, page counts and production runs for printed work or simple site map diagrams for websites and digital devices.

### 6. Have you got a benchmark in mind?

You can use a brief as much to outline what you do like, as well as to set parameters regarding styles you want a designer to steer clear of. Provide as many examples of existing work to give visual backing to your feelings. Consider examples from beyond your own industry if you wish to explore new features or customer experiences.

### 7. What is your budget?

Stating this right at the start will allow for a complete focus on using the design time in a way that will maximise your budget. Even a ball park figure at this stage is necessary for the designer to realistically tell you how they can help. Keep in mind that cost for design is directly related to time and not a figure that is plucked from the air. The more complex or expansive your needs, the more it is likely to cost.

### 8. What is the time scale? Do you have a set deadline to meet?

Agreeing this at the start with the designer will ensure the project stays on track in the time frame you require. To be realistic about time scales you must take into account the various stages of the design project, such as consultation, concept development, internal review and feedback, amendments, art working, production and delivery.

Hutt River Design is an award winning branding and design agency based in Exeter. We create engaging and iconic identity systems, packaging design, corporate and marketing literature, web and digital solutions for growing brands.

If you have a creative project and would like to know more about how we can help you realise your vision, call us today on 01392 253218.

enquire@huttriver.co.uk [www.huttriver.co.uk](http://www.huttriver.co.uk)

Copyright Hutt River Limited 2016©