



PROJECT CREATIVE BRIEF

This brief, supplemented with additional material as necessary, can help ensure your creative project gets off to an excellent start.

I often use this brief as a starting point for certain branding and advertising engagements. It asks some pointed questions that can help launch a creative framework and help spark more in-depth gathering of relevant research and data.

The more you put into this brief, the better. Try not to settle for short or convenient answers. Strive to dig deep in providing insights and information. You may be surprised by what you uncover. (Be sure to read the 'Guidance' section at the end of the document before you start.)

Please feel free to use this sample creative brief as your own.

>>>PRELIMINARIES

Stakeholders and contacts:

(titles, names and contact info)

Project name:

Billing number: (if applicable)

Budget:

Deliverables:

(What are we creating? New website? Email campaign?

Digital ads? Something else?)

Deadlines:

(Please include presentation date and final delivery date.)

>>>DISCOVERY

What is your company's background?

(Type of business, locations, number of employees, etc.)

Besides generating sales/profits, what is the objective of our advertising?

What communication or business problem do you face that can be overcome by the advertising? Please include an overview of past advertising efforts if available. What has worked, what hasn't, and why.

Who are we trying to reach?

Describe the target audience(s). Please include demographics, psychographics and a personality profile of those likely to respond to the messaging.

What does the audience think of you?

How does the audience perceive you, your products, services, reputation, etc? What habit, perception or belief must we address to generate better ad response? And, what surprises the audience most when they learn more about you.

How do you see the competitive picture?

Who is your competition: (list names and websites, please). Indicate how you believe the benefits of your product/service compare to the competition.

What single benefit or unique selling point (USP) should the advertising focus on?

What unique piece of information or overriding benefit can best sell your product/service? Remember, your USP or overriding benefit should be powerful, true, and easy to understand.

Why should the audience believe your USP?

What facts lend credibility to our advertising claim and messaging? Are they derived from research, the business press, the business community (awards/acknowledgements), consumer feedback, etc?

What is the desired brand positioning?

How do you wish to be viewed by the audience? To help define this, please answer the following four questions:

1. How do you believe your current brand is perceived and received by the public?

2. What change to that public perception do you want to make?

3. What personality do we want to convey?

If your company were a person, what would that personality be? Professional and conservative? Outgoing and Gen-Z? Innovative? Introspective?

There is a caveat here. The personality should be authentic to you. It should portray you accurately. It should be consistent throughout all ad executions and should guide the tone and manner for all brand communications.

4. To what degree, if at all, should any parts of your current brand messaging be preserved and leveraged?

What should we avoid?

Please include any relevant issues, past media or messages that have failed. Detail any political considerations, negative press items...

Where is the messaging going to appear?

What is the media strategy for this project? Please include desired components, channels and outlets.

Corporate standards or guidelines?

Please include any relevant instructions for use of logos, fonts, colors, taglines, etc. Is there a corporate style manual?

3am thoughts?

Include any ideas or insights that popped into your mind after putting this creative brief away for a day or so. The ideas don't have to be logical or seemingly relevant. Anything could be a springboard to a creative solution.

>>>GUIDANCE

Objectives. What are we trying to achieve? Improve market presence? Sell more donuts? Provide new information to customers? Change the company image? The most successful creative approaches are developed around a primary (and perhaps a secondary) objective only. Keep this simple and clear.

Product/service description. What are its features and specifications? How is it made? What is it made of? How is it used? What is different or unique about it?

Competition. Are there similar products/services already in the marketplace? Provide information (product/service names, pricing, performance, etc.). Supplied information should be factual, not opinion or conjecture.

Target audience. Who will consume the messaging? Think gender, age, occupations, socioeconomic level(s) and geographic location(s). Are they familiar with the product/service? What motivates them to buy or consider a purchase?

User benefits. How will the lives of our audience be better for using your product or service? Is it cheaper? Better? Both? Are there any negatives (e.g., price,

environmental concerns)? Rank the 5 most important positive benefits and the reason(s) for their ranking.

Substantiation and proof. Remember to provide proof for any claims that are part of the advertising/marketing message. These may include: test data, focus group reports, substantiated user testimonials, etc. Support for benefits claims should consist of facts, not opinions; specifics, not generalizations. The information you supply should be quantifiable and verifiable.

Media. Where will the messaging appear — on a website, in a brochure, email, social media feed, at trade shows, etc? What special creative processes or requirements may be involved?

Design and copy considerations. Are there any set guidelines that may impact the creation of the advertising and messaging? Use of color, type of photographs or illustrations, brand language, personal likes/dislikes? Also, include a corporate style guide if there is one.

This is key. The best advertising usually focuses on making one overall, powerful, memorable impression. Maybe two. What should our most powerful impression be. What one thing should consumers remember after seeing your messaging.



Dan Stech has more than 20 years of ad agency experience — serving as an award-winning copywriter, copy chief and creative director. Now as principal and owner of danwillwrite, Dan provides copy, concepts and content to a wide variety of clients. He also eats a healthy breakfast every day and strives to exercise regularly.

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