Writing great creative briefs

A creative brief is like a road map. A great brief leads to imaginative and persuasive communication (whether a campaign, website, video or detail aid). And it gets you there quickly (and we all know that time is money). A bad brief starts you off in the wrong direction. You have to stop, figure out where you’re going, and start again.

Top 10-tips for writing a great brief

1. **ACTUALLY WRITE A BRIEF**
Great creative work comes from great briefs. Average work comes from average briefs. Poor work comes from no brief. The vast majority of ‘fantastic’ work can be tracked back to a great creative brief.

2. **KEEP IT SHORT & SIMPLE**
In the words of one great creative “Give me the freedom of a strict brief”. A great brief doesn't need to be war and peace, instead it should be a concise and focused summary of the strategy, insights and thoughts. Stick to a maximum of 2 sides of A4.
3. INVEST TIME IN THE BRIEF
Time and effort in writing a great brief will have 3 major outputs. It will save time, money and result in great work. Invest time and brainpower up front to get the brief right. Using the actual creative work to clarify thoughts (and the brief itself) is a very expensive exercise and you also lose the initial creative input - which can often be the best.

4. WRITE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES
Avoid general marketing objectives such as ‘increase sales’. Instead include communication objectives such as ‘change perceptions about …’. You should base objectives around what you want the audience to think, feel or do.

5. GAIN STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN
Ensure that key stakeholders are bought into your brief. Again this will save vast amounts of time and money. Incorporating their feedback into the brief is far easier than at final review.

6. TURN THE BRIEFING INTO AN EVENT
Brief your creative agency face to face. Discuss the brief, debate it, explore initial thoughts and then start work. Always challenge yourself on how to make the briefing more than a meeting. The creative brief is the bridge between smart strategic thinking and great communication. The transmission of this information is key and email is the worst possible format for this. It’s all about getting people into the right frame of mind. A recent briefing for a women’s health product happened in a hotel room that was littered with magazines, make-up, a diary and a handbag for the target audience.

7. DEVELOP INSIGHTFUL PROPOSITIONS
A high proportion of written briefs from clients have one box left empty … the proposition (also known as the really hard bit). Behind all great campaigns lies a great brief. At the heart of every great brief, lies a killer proposition. This proposition should direct and inspire the creative minds to deliver some magic. To write a killer proposition, you have to be able to capture and deliver genuine insight. Whether your proposition is written as a strapline, or an open sentence, it has to be relevant, distinctive and truthful. Remember the great creative work for John Smith’s famous Peter Kay ‘no nonsense’ campaign: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2keX3felMQ  The proposition was ‘John Smith’s is the no-nonsense beer for the no-nonsense beer drinker’. What creative wouldn’t want a brief like that? The insight was derived at a time when beer drinkers were being offered ever more complex lager options, in fancy delivery systems, with fancy names. Or Guinness, with its thought-provoking, impenetrable messages. Work with your agency and their planners to develop great propositions.
8. SEEK THE RIGHT BRIEFING TEMPLATE
One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to briefing. A brief for a new campaign will look very different to one for a website or detail aid. Work with your agency to find the most appropriate template.

9. AIM TO INSPIRE
A great brief is not just a collection of facts and figures. It should inspire and set off explosions in people’s minds.

10. TELL US WHAT YOU WANT
Outlining your expectations and detailing out the deliverables gives us not only the scope to get really inventive in finding ways to produce your materials and meet your needs, but also the focus to concentrate our creative energy on coming back to you with work that wows. Not sure what you want? Tell us you’re looking for ideas. Know exactly what you want? Great – we’ll get right on it.