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How to Brief a Marketing Agency

By Chris Smith

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by: **Chris Smith**

A new client recently emailed us a brief here at Mano Design. It was very brief indeed. All it said was, "Can you write me some copy for a postcard?" Resisting the urge to write, "Dear Customers. Having a wonderful time – wish you were here. Love, The Client," we asked him for a more detailed brief and explained why it was necessary.

Why Write a Brief?

Even with something as simple as a small piece of copy, a proper brief will save you time and money.

The agency will also have a better chance of getting the work right first time, so you get the quality of work you expect.

Plus, it gives you something to measure the agency's work against; i.e. how well they responded to and met the brief.

What is a Brief?

A brief (sometimes called a 'creative brief') tells the agency what objective you are seeking to achieve. It answers the 'where are we now' and 'where do we want to get to' questions.

Ideally, the brief should be a written one. It focuses attention and provides the foundation for your marketing campaign. The brief should be agreed by both you and the agency before work begins and it can to some extent form a sort of contract.

The length of the brief does not matter as much as ensuring that it contains key information and objectives. Tell the agency what the business problem is, what you wish to achieve and how you will evaluate success.

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What Exactly Do you Put in a Brief?

The format of a brief depends on the task. A website creative brief will need to contain different information from one for a brand–building press ad campaign for example. However, below are some basic guidelines:

1. Project information

Include your company name, contact details, project name and project manager, brand or product/service name, agency name and date.

2. Background (where are we now)

Here, give background information on your company and your industry. Tell the agency about your product/service (including key attributes and benefits) together with the issues it is facing. Include information on past marketing communications campaigns and their results. Provide details of competitor activity.

3. Objectives (where do we want to be?)

Explain what you want to achieve, e.g. increase sales, improve awareness, raise response levels, etc. Try to make your objectives specific and measurable.

4. Strategy (how do we get there?)

Give details of what you want the agency to do for you, e.g. a direct mail campaign, a website, a brochure, etc. Explain how what you are asking the agency to do fits in with your overall marketing strategy.

5. Audience (who are we talking to)

Your objective is to get a response from your audience. Tell the agency who your target audience is. Define your audience(s) as accurately as possible and share any insights you have about them with the agency.

6. Evaluation (what success will look like)

How will you measure success? When will it be measured? Who will measure it?

7. Practicalities

Mandatories:

Is there anything that must be included; for example – offer terms and conditions? Are there any corporate identity guidelines? What legal constraints are there?

Timings:

What are the deadlines? What are the media booking dates (if applicable)? By when do you want to see creative concepts? Does the project have to tie in with dates of other campaigns?

Budget:

Specifying a budget up front will help to avoid reworking of solutions. If you are reluctant to do this, then suggest three budgets and ask the agency which they would recommend and why. Alternatively, ask the agency to recommend a budget.

8. Approvals (who signs off work)

This should be the same person who signs off the brief before you give it to the agency.

The time spent preparing a brief will pay off in the long term. The agency needs a starting point and to know where it is you wish to go. Your brief should inspire them and enable them to do their best work for you.

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SHOULD I START MY OWN COLLECTION AGENCY?

By Michelle Dunn

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If you are wondering if you should or can open your own collection agency, the answer is yes, you can! There are some things you should do before opening your own agency. You should have experience in the collection industry. You must know what type of business the collection business is before you can understand what you are getting into. You need to know the day-to-day activities of collections. You need to know the laws in the state you are in and the states you will be collecting in. You want to have experience dealing with people and negotiation skills.

You should also be ready to spend a lot of time getting people interested in your business. If you have worked in the industry for other people, new clients will know you have experience and be more comfortable placing accounts with you. If you don't have any experience, you need to build credibility

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so potential clients will know you can do the job and do it well.

Write a business plan. If you are going to borrow money to start your agency you will need a business plan to show the bank. Usually a business plan is made up of:

- An Executive Summary
- A Business description
- Marketing Strategies
- Competitive analysis
- Operations and management plans
- Financial statements.

I have an example of a Business Plan and a Marketing Plan in my book, How to make money collecting money, Starting a Collection Agency. You should also include a cover or folder for your business plan. Include a title page and a table of contents. This will be very professional and impress any bank you may present it to.

You should LOVE collection work. You either love it or hate it! If you love it, you will be passionate about making your business work.

Michelle Dunn is the Author of the FREE e–book How to Help You Get Paid, Credit & Collection Forms and Letters. She has also written and published How to Make Money Collecting Money, Starting a Collection Agency that is available from www.michelledunn.com. For more information on Starting a Collection Agency, order her book for immediate delivery.

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