Design brief

Here's a checklist of some of the things you might want to include in your brief...

Be absolutely clear about what you wish to achieve, but avoid prescribing solutions. The more accurate you are, the more accurate the designer will be able to cost out their solution for you. You are paying for the designer's ideas, so avoid the temptation to tell the designer what to do. Instead, be clear about what the end result needs to achieve, so the designer can explore ideas. This is where you need the designer's expertise.

Business background

A short, honest synopsis of your organisation or company. Never assume that the designer will know anything about your company. Be clear and concise and avoid jargon when replying.

Company profile
Explain as much as possible:
• What does your company do?
• What is your company's history?
• What is it's market?
• How does the company fit into its industry sector?
• Provide a realistic evaluation of your company, service, or brand relative to your competitors
• Why is there the need for this project?
• What is the geographical location and whether your markets are local, regional, national or international?
• How do you differ from your competitors?
• Current situation (what's happening to bring about the need for this project? Example: a new product launch that needs advertising).

Corporate personality

Create a list of objectives you want to achieve and things you wish to avoid.

How do you want to be perceived? Cutting edge? Relaxed and friendly? Stylish? Elegant? Inexpensive and approachable?
Any subliminal messages you would like to convey?

Target audience

Detail any demographic figures about your customers that may be useful to the designer.

Think of age, gender, income, occupation, location. And include also the psychographics (tastes, views, attitudes) of those you want to reach.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Provide existing marketing examples

Providing old promotional material will assist the designer.

This includes both previous and present communication activity, such as research, advertising, direct mail, graphic design, public relations etc.

Project aims and objectives

This is all about what you want to achieve and how the design will be used... Make sure that your aims and objectives are as clear as possible!

Desired outcomes
For example:
• Generate revenue and sales?
• Gain newsletter subscribers?
• Obtain information from your audience?
• Do you want to completely reinvent yourself or are you simply updating your promotional material?

Constraints on the design
• To fit with any existing designs or parts?
• Specific technical or legal requirements?
• Manufacturing processes needed?
• What is inside and outside the project's scope and any environmental issues?

Specifications
What size is the design going to be?
Where is it going to be printed/used? The web, business cards or on your car?
What other information should the designer know in regards to specifications?

Creative direction

What aspects of the product or branding can be used as a starting point for the design?

Style
Does a certain style already exist or is a specific style direction required?

Tone
Whilst you should write in clear, concise way – there is no reason why you cannot use emotive language to emphasise exactly what you are trying to achieve.

Mood
What feelings or metaphors reflect the spirit of your product or company?

Project management

Budget

Providing a budget prevents designers wasting valuable time and resources when trying to maximise your budget.

Do you have a budget that you are working to? Providing the budget up-front will allow the designer to know if the project is going to be worthwhile to complete. Make sure you are worth her/his time.

Schedule and deadlines

Rushing design jobs helps no one and mistakes can be made if a complex job is pushed through without time to review, However, there are times when a rush job is needed, and in these cases you should be honest and up-front about it.

Give your designer a detailed and realistic schedule of how you would like the project to advance and a deadline for delivery. You should take into account the various stages of the design project such as consultation (research, strategy, brief development), creative (concept and design development), production (artwork, printing and other production) and delivery.

How will success be measured at the end?

And some helpful extra's

Additional requirements

The copy and pictures used in a design are as crucial as the design itself and you should clearly state who is going to be providing the copy and pictures if needed. You may need to look into getting a professional copywriter/ photographer – ask your designer for some recommendations.

• Multiple languages?
• Include any specific colours or fonts to match existing corporate branding?
• What copy (text) and pictures are needed? Who is providing the copy? For example what imagery and/or diagrams need to be used? Who is providing these?

Design examples
Providing examples of what you consider to be effective or relevant design can be a great help. Make sure that you also include samples of your company's current marketing materials – even if their only purpose is to explain what you don't want from your new marketing materials.

Don't feel that you have stick to the medium that you are designing for when giving a list of inspiration and influences. If a television advert or music video creates the atmosphere that you want your flyer to create, then that is a perfectly reasonable statement to make in a design brief. Explain why you like or dislike a design style.

Remember that professional designers will not copy the ideas you send them, but will use them as the start of the design process.

If you're not entirely sure why you like a certain design style, then good starting points include:
• Colour
• Imagery
• Quantity and quality of text
• Typography
• The atmosphere that particular designs create

Provide the designer with things not to do, and styles that you do not like or wish to see in your design. This will give the designer an idea of what to avoid and will avoid disappointment on your behalf.

Writing a design brief marks the beginning of the design process, helping the designer understand the business problem he/ she is required to solve and your business clarify what it needs from a design project. Altogether a design brief is vital to achieving an effective design solution. Most importantly, design briefs provide an opportunity to ensure that all stakeholders are in unanimous agreement with the approach and process to be followed in developing an effective design solution.

Business background

Company profile

Corporate personality

Target audience

Strengths and weaknesses?

Please do not forget to provide existing marketing examples

Project aims and objectives

Desired outcomes

Constraints on the design

Specifications

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Style

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Design examples