

What is a Design Brief?

The goal of the design brief is to outline the company's needs, audiences, the message to communicate, and expectations as clearly as possible. The brief rarely provides creative direction. It outlines the problem to be solved, expecting the designer to provide a creative solution.

A good design brief should also provide any information on house style, corporate identity guidelines and company logos, fonts and house colors where they exist. It will include the ideas about budget.

Company's design briefs differ, depending on the type of project, but they always spell out expectations as clearly as possible and describe the audiences that have been targeted.

The most successful projects are those that answer all the points in the brief but take a new or unexpected form. In general, a design brief for a traditional (meaning print) product launch will include the following:

Product history.

When was the product introduced? Does it have a mythology? How has the product changed over time? Is it growing market share? What is the role of the product in the company's product mix?

Product potential.

What are the opportunities for growth? Is the product going to new geographical audiences? Will it appeal to new areas of the communications community?

Key Audiences.

A proposal also must support the overall position of the company with a diverse range of audiences. So, the company describes each audience in simple, real world terms.

Product attributes & end uses.

Everyone claims to make a quality product. What sets this one apart? What are the key attributes to be communicated in the promotion? In what way or ways is the product used. Is it, for example, used every day as part of our morning routine or only on special occasions.

The Competition.

Competition can be very different for different products. Designers are expected to do their own research into a product's competition and understand how the company's brand fits into the competitive landscape.

Positioning.

How should this promotion or product be positioned in a lifestyle sense? Is it a working tool or pure luxury? Is it Tiffany, Banana Republic, or Home Depot?

Budget.

Is this a small budget or big budget project. Budget constraints might influence choices in materials, printing options and time devoted to the final project.

Delivery: Clear, explicit instructions are always given on delivery dates and conditions. The project isn't complete until the components of the promotion are in the hands of the audience.