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Creative Brief Guide

A creative brief is a document used during the design process to help keep projects running smoothly and prevent misunderstandings/mistakes by summarizing all the factors that impact the design project.

A creative brief is created through initial meetings, interviews, readings and discussions between a client and designer before any work begins. In our academic setting, this document will be the place to organize your project details, research, and creative direction (whether or not a project includes an actual or simulated client). Throughout a project, the creative brief continues to inform and guide the work—ensuring that the design direction is informed by research and meeting all project goals.

A successful creative brief:
- connects objectives with creative strategies
- builds team consensus
- aligns expectations
- defines clear, measurable goals

All sections should include detailed supporting research for each business, creative, and process decision. The following guide can be used for professional work as well as in-class projects and therefore is worded based on a designer to client relationship.

Client Background
- Who is your client and what products and services do they offer?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What are their values, and what is their current mission and vision?
- What are their brand attributes?

Knowing who your client is would allow you to use the most fitting format, tone, and approach that would represent your client the best. It also helps you understand the situation better and allows you to look at things from the point of view of the client.

Project Overview
- What is the project all about?
- What is the design for and why is it needed?
- What opportunities will the project present?

This will give you a general idea of what to work on and how to attack it. Understanding why the project is needed is just as important as finding out what the project is, because this would allow you to take the most fitting format depending on the situation.

This would also allow you to see a myriad of possibilities that this project could open up, giving you the chance to study different approaches and see which options would give the most value to the end product.

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Project Drivers
- What are the project's goals and objectives?
- What is the team trying to achieve?

Explaining the end goal and objective would give the entire project a clear direction as to which options to take and what methods to use to arrive at the desired destination. The team should never leave point A without knowing whether they want to go to point B or point C. There has to be a clear end point so that the necessary routes to be used to get there could be planned more effectively.

Target Audience
- Who are we trying to address? (see demographic information)
- Why do they need this?
- What are the audience's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge and current actions related to the project/company?
- What are effective communication channels for reaching this audience?
- What value will this give to them?

   Demographic Information
   - *Socio-demographic* characteristics such as sex, age, language and religion.
   - *Geographic* characteristics like where the audience lives and how that might impact behavior.
   - *Psychographic* characteristics such as needs, hopes, concerns and aspirations.

At the end of the day, no matter how great your output is, if it doesn't appeal to the appropriate audience, then all the work goes to waste. A project meant to be shown to younger audiences will need a youthful approach, while something that's for an older audience might require something deeper and more serious. When you fail to understand the audience that will be viewing your work, then you fail to do your job in helping your client reach their end goals.

Competitor Analysis
- Who are the competitors?
- What approach are they using in their own campaigns/projects?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What differentiates your client from them?

Going into the battle without knowing who you're going up against may end up with you bringing the wrong weapons. Understanding the competitor's approach would allow you to decide how to outdo what they're already doing. Do you apply the same technique to show that you can do the same things they do, but better? Or would you go for the exact opposite of what they're doing and emphasize the huge difference between you two?

Targeted Message
- What is the message that you're trying to deliver?
- Has this message been delivered before, or is it something new that you have yet to introduce?

The message and how it is delivered gives substance to the entire project. Whether you are trying to gain the audience's trust by telling them that you're the best, or if you're trying to tell them about your new product, this should be translated effectively with every piece of graphic and every single text that you create.

Graphic Design Process

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Project Specifics
- What visuals will I use? (colors, fonts, photography, etc...)
- Do I need to add the content (text/information) or is it provided by the client?
- If re-designing something—are there existing aspects from previous design that need to be included in the new one?
- Is there a specific design that the client has in mind?

This gets down to the smallest details. It discusses whether the client wants a large logo or a small one, and whether they want their visuals to be loud and proud or neutral and subtle. The client may also want you to apply something that's already familiar with their audiences, so there might be a need to integrate their old projects with the one you are working on now. It is also important to find out if the client has gotten inspiration from somewhere else, as they may want to see that in your work too.

In our academic setting, often times you will be playing the role of the designer AND the client. Fill out all information as best you can to help define your design goals.

The Numbers
- How much is the budget?
- Is there any way that this can be adjusted?
- What are the time-lines?
- How do you measure success?

Yes, this is a creative brief, but numbers will still be a part of it. Make sure that the budget is clearly detailed so that you'll know what you're working with and whether it is feasible. After all, if your client is aiming for something grandiose, then you should also be able to demand a bigger budget as well.

The time-lines should also be detailed, with each section of the project carefully plotted into the schedule. Remember that a single delay somewhere in the middle of the process will automatically affect the output of the rest of the people down the line.

Because this document is most likely being created for a class project, some of this information may not be available or applicable to what we are doing. Skip over the areas that don't apply as needed.

People Involved
- Who approves the project?
- Who is assigned to each task and each section?
- Who is the point person for different aspects of the project?
- Who approves each stage in the time-line? When?

Knowing who to approach will save everybody a lot of time especially when it comes to information dissemination. Questions can also be answered faster and more effectively if you know exactly who to ask.

Again, because this document is most likely being created for a class project, some of this information may not be available or applicable. When doing group work, this area is definitely valuable to fill-out—otherwise if this is a solo project you can skip this section.