

# How To Brief An Agency

A McConnells best practice guide



# INTRODUCTION

A Formula One team will brief its suppliers to produce components within exceptionally tight design parameters, in order to ensure its cars get off the grid with a flying start. If a part isn't right, it could slow down a car or send it careering off into the pits.

It's no different when briefing a communications agency. Without clear, concise guidance, an agency will have to fill in the blanks with assumptions. The result? Misunderstandings, delays in completion, escalating costs – an unhappy state of affairs both for the client and the agency.

If you know exactly what you want to achieve from a campaign or project, and can pass on those goals to your agency, it stands more chance of meeting your expectations first time. Creativity can be focussed where it is needed, leading to a faster turnaround and improved efficiency in launching the campaign.

The effort to get on the podium starts before the race has even begun. Taking the time and thought to produce a good brief will put your project in pole position.



# BENEFITS OF THE BRIEF

## It defines the work

Helps you to be clear in your own mind what is needed, before the agency is even approached;

Avoids misunderstandings or false assumptions;

Ensures mutually agreed objectives – otherwise, how do you know how effective the project has been?

## It saves time and money

On industry average, the initial creative response to a brief is reworked two or three times until it is ready;

A hurried brief is a false economy if client expectations are ambiguous;

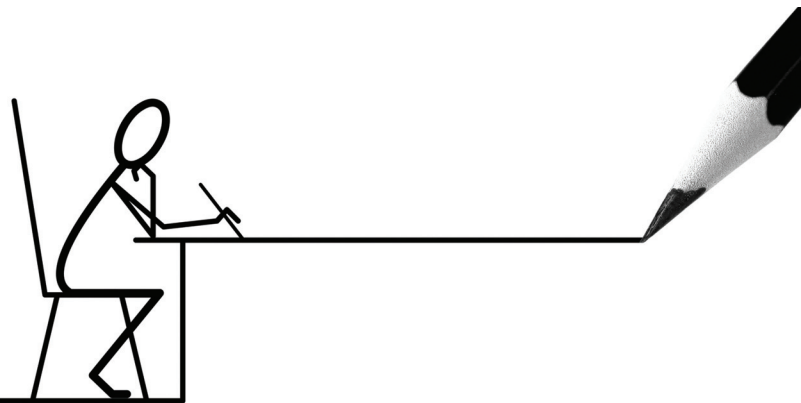
Delays in going to market can significantly impact on ROI.

## It leads to stronger client/agency relationships

Written briefs are a form of contract

Ensures objective criteria for evaluating the success of the campaign

Makes pricing and payment more transparent



# THE WRITTEN BRIEF

A good brief should be clear, provide all relevant information and excite the agency.

**Clear** – concentrate on the specific communication objective to be achieved. Don't confuse this with overall business strategy, and avoid jargon!

**Concise** – there's a reason it is called a brief. Keeping things succinct forces you to make decision about what matters.

**Inspirational** – motivate your agency by using the same passionate tone and language you'd used to sell yourself to customers.

IPA research suggests structuring a brief around the following strategic questions:

**Where are we now?**

Provide essential background on your business context and the brand values you wish to foster.

**Where do we want to be?**

Define the sales or marketing objectives you're aiming for – increased market share? Greater profile? More website traffic?

**What are we doing to get there?**

This is the crux: the agency needs to know the key message you wish to get across.

**Who do we need to talk to?**

This is not only a case of the demographic you wish to reach, but the attitude you wish to encourage in your customers and the tone of voice to use.

**How will we know when we have arrived?**

The small print. Set the budget, agree timings, make sure you know the approval process, and provide measurable evaluation criteria.



# THE VERBAL BRIEF

Written or verbal? Ideally, both!

The benefits of a face-to-face meeting include:

- Clarifying the brief
- Enriching the brief with a deeper understanding of objectives
- Increasing the agency's emotional engagement

Briefing meetings are useful for larger projects, especially if you need to co-ordinate work from more than one agency.

Face-to-face meetings are also ideal for existing agencies to restate strategy and discuss tactics.



Verbal only?

Research suggests nearly 50% of briefs are verbal only, with correspondence often reduced to a quick email confirming the details.

However, the usefulness of a written brief in setting creative parameters and agreeing business terms means that there are risks to ignoring it – so it's always worth getting everything down on paper!

# THE BRIEF - IN BRIEF

It defines the work  
It saves time and money  
It leads to stronger client/agency relationships

Clear. Concise. Inspirational.

Where are we now?

Where do we want to be?

What are we doing to get there?

Who do we need to talk to?

How will we know when we have arrived?

Meet face-to-face to clarify, enrich and engage.

m<sup>c</sup>connells |

So there you have it. As this introduction will hopefully have shown,  
there's so much more we can achieve by working together.

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