

The Creative Brief: A framework for developing and evaluating marketing materials

The Creative Brief is a planning tool widely used by advertising agencies and marketing personnel when designing or implementing a marketing program. It can be used when creating communications directed at clients, employees, shareholders, potential investors, the media, or any other target group.

The Creative Brief is a cooperative tool by which the various people and groups involved in a project focus their thoughts and analyze the best method(s) of approaching a program. When used properly it can also reduce the time and cost associated with marketing projects, as it requires all the key participants to agree on important factors at the onset of the project.

Many organizations and agencies have a very refined, occasionally bizarre, possibly even copyrighted Creative Brief tool that is specific to how they do business. Most, though, have a few important elements in common:

- **Objective:** What is to be accomplished by this program? Is the goal to create awareness, knowledge, preference, or purchase? One traditional tool used for this purpose is the definition of **SMART** objectives: Specific, Measurable, Agreed Upon, Realistic, and Time-based.
- **Primary audience:** Who is this campaign meant to reach? The more specific and detailed the better. When possible, list details like title(s) of audience members, industry, size of company, revenue, number of employees, geographic details, affiliations, key behavior attributes (i.e., do they make the buying decision or influence it?). Demographics and psychographics go here.
- **Attitudes/Beliefs/Objections of audience:** Another way to state this element is, “Why hasn’t the audience already done/thought what you want them to?” If you were hired to argue against the purpose of this campaign, what would your points be? What is the status quo?
- **Current/Proposed behavior:** What is the audience doing now? How are they thinking/dealing with the situation about which you are addressing them? What do you want them to do differently?
- **Call-to-action:** What do you want the audience to do/think? Again, the more specific the better. One of the Ten Commandments of good advertising is: tell the audience what you want them to do. If you don’t know, don’t advertise until you do. Examples of good calls-to-action include: “Call today,” “Visit our website for more information,” “Complete and return this form.”
- **Tone:** Should this be a friendly, relaxed message, or a hard-sell with a sense of urgency? Should the audience feel like a confidant, pal, victim (in need of rescuing), partner, controller, etc? Should the ad convey a rich, textured impression or something more Spartan and utilitarian?
- **Key message:** What is the one thought that the audience should be left with? The initial level of regard given to most print advertisements has been measured at between one and two seconds. If you absolutely had to, how would you state your message in seven words or less?
- **Secondary message(s):** If the advertisement does draw in a reader, what are the other one or two points that should be conveyed? Another advertising commandment: people never remember more than three things.

Creative Brief

Project name: _____ Version: _____ Date : _____

Participants: _____

Objective(s): _____

Timeframe: _____

Primary Audience Demographic: _____

Primary Audience Beliefs: _____

Current Behavior: _____

Desired Behavior: _____

Call to Action: _____

Tone: _____

Key message: _____

Secondary message(s) _____

Approval requirements at stages:

Brief	Concept(s)	Drafts	Finals
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____