

# How to Write a Graphic Design Brief...

**A Free Guide from DC-Graphics**



# How to write a design brief

***A design brief is a written explanation – from client to designer – outlining the key aims, objectives and time scales of a creative project.***

A well documented design brief will ensure confidence between client and myself, eliminating any confusion as to what is required – in turn your project will be delivered on time, within budget and adhere to what was originally intended. Creative designers like myself use a design brief to understand the clients needs and goals, the scope of the project and background company information. No professional designer or agency should embark on a project without first receiving and fully digesting the creative brief.

You may already be experienced in writing a creative design brief, if not, this guide is intended to act as a starting point. It provides a list of information I require about your company and project. Should anything need clarifying just call me – as I'm here to help.

## **Before you start, a few tips to remember:**

### ***1. Don't rush the brief***

Simple one really, if you do rush then your intentions will not be fully explained – in turn leading to a final product that may not meet your expectations.

### ***2. Don't provide solutions***

Guidance on visual styles are fine – but don't try to become the creative. You are paying me for my skills, knowledge and creative ideas – so avoid the temptation to tell me what to do. If there's something your not so sure of, or just don't like – take a step back and think *“the design isn't for me, it's aimed at my target audience”*. Remember, I have carefully considered the layout, typography, colours and imagery to best communicate your message, making changes to the design to suit your own tastes will only prove to have a severe negative impact on your project and budget!

### ***3. Formalise your design brief***

Although providing a brief over the phone is acceptable – ensure you have a clear, professional written copy (a word document or PDF will suffice) for yourself, your colleagues and me too! It will act as a reference point throughout the project for all parties involved.

## **Your company profile...**

Start your design brief with a short, honest synopsis of your organisation or company. Don't take this information for granted, and don't assume that I will necessarily know the ins and outs of your company and industry sector.

## **What to include:**

- What your company does
- Company size (No. employees) and how long your company has been established
- Your company's target market profile/s (age, sex, gender, geographic location etc)
- Your company's business sector – business to business, business to consumer or both
- Your company's position within your sector – where you exceed, areas that need improvement/help.

## **Who's involved in the project?**

### ***What to include:***

- Who is / are the project managers/s
- Key project manager/s contact details (telephone, mobile, email, postal address)
- Who will approve the work / sign-off the project
- Who is responsible for the budget
- Who will approve payment of invoices
- Who will evaluate success or failure of the project



## The aims of the project

Design can have a huge influence on the success of a project – but in order for success to be ensured, clear goals must be set.

*For example, do you want to:*

- Generate sales?
- Launch a new product / service or re-define an existing one?
- Attract a new market?

If you know what you want – write your aims down, it will help clarify your thoughts. If your aims are a little less clear then start by brainstorming and if you need help, consult colleagues. You should feel confident that you have explored all avenues to ensure your intentions will be fully understood.

## The project audience

Explain your primary, secondary and tertiary audiences. Detail if you are looking to consolidate your existing client-base or appeal to brand new markets. Include any demographic figures about your audience that may be useful to the designer – including age, sex, income, visual disability etc.

## Your budget

Even if you can only provide a ball-park figure, a budget expectation will give me a good idea of the type of solution I can realistically deliver. Time-scale is also an important consideration – so let me know if there is a specific deadline that has to be met – or milestones to be adhered to.

Your company branding

To ensure continuity and brand awareness will I be working with your company's current brand profiles or is there room for artistic licence?

*For example:*

- Do you have a logo that needs to be used
- Are there any restrictions on logo usage (minimum size, background colours etc)
- Does your company have a corporate type-face
- Does your company have a corporate colour scheme

I will need to be aware of brand guidelines before commencing the project – all logos will need to be supplied in workable formats – i.e high resolution JPEG, TIFF or PNG, including a transparent PNG version. If your logo has been professionally designed you should be in possession of these – if not I may have to re-create your logo, so remember to build this into your budget!

If your company has a corporate colour scheme I will need the colour specification before commencing the project. If your company has been professionally branded, you should be in possession of colour references / breakdowns for both print and web – these usually follow a numeric reference in either (CMYK), (RGB) or in some cases PANTONE reference numbers. If you are unable to provide this information, I can colour match, just provide a professional printed document featuring the colours you need replicating.

## Text, images and other resources

Your brief should mention if and when copy and images will be supplied, make sure both the copy and images have been approved before passing onto myself, this will invariably save both time and money. The copy and images can be a big help when setting the parameters for what can be achieved. If not supplied, then mentioning your requirements for either copywriting and/or commissioning of photography in the brief is a must!



## Design examples

Providing examples of what you consider to be an effective or relevant design will be a great help in writing and interpreting your design brief.

Make sure to include samples of your organisation's current marketing materials – even if their only purpose is to explain what you don't want from your new marketing materials! If there is a design style that you particularly like or dislike – then explain why in your brief.

### Examples can include :

- ➔ Your current relevant company marketing materials.
- ➔ Websites
- ➔ Brochures
- ➔ Annual reports
- ➔ Leaflets
- ➔ Advertisements (print, TV and digital)

Don't feel that you have to stick to the medium that I am designing for when giving a list of inspiration and influences. If a television advertisement or music video creates the atmosphere that you want a flyer to create, then that is a perfectly reasonable statement to make in a design brief. The more clues you provide, the more likely I will be able to produce something close to your aims. Remember, professional designers, including myself will not copy the ideas you submit... but use them as the start of the design process.

Best of luck, hope to design for you soon!



**Doug Canning**

DC-Graphics – Design & Print Specialists

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## Doug Canning...



*"Your image is my business"*

*Doug Canning established DC-Graphics in 1987. He is a Graphic Design and Print Specialist based in High Barnet, Herts and has over 25 years' experience in the design and print business. From logo design, branding images, corporate identity creation, direct mail campaigns right through to the design and print of all forms of promotional and marketing material that needs finished printing. His existing clients like the fact that they deal with him directly and trust his judgment, knowledge and long experience on advising them on not only on design, but ensuring all work is of the highest quality at pre-press stage and right through to the finished printed job – delivered!*

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