

# briefing a graphic designer

## **Briefing a graphic design firm well is the key to achieving a quality outcome.**

We've heard too many horror stories from clients who don't know how to brief a graphic designer and designers who present ideas which are not appropriate or too expensive to produce. It is important to clarify everything before starting work. This way, everyone knows what's going to happen and why, which is how to achieve 100% success rate with our design presentations.

## **Writing the initial design brief for quoting purposes**

The initial design brief must be in writing, kept simple and to the point.

Information should be restricted to a brief description and may include details about the organisation and its communication objectives; whether corporate identity guidelines exist; if and how copy and photographs will be provided; how many design concepts will be required; whether author's corrections are likely to be substantial or minimal, production specifications (eg number of pages, quantity, paper quality, size, preferred binding, dimensions of signage, architectural drawings, materials specified etc), and the proposed production schedule. Providing copies of previous examples of work is often helpful.

## **The budget**

Even if an organisation has not worked with graphic designers before, they generally have a rough idea of the amount they want to spend on a project. It can be a waste of everyone's time not revealing this amount to a design firm.

You are more likely to get brilliant ideas and wonderful executions if designers are given a budget with which to work, rather than placing them in the awkward position of trying to guess what your budget might be.

Being open about the budget allows the design buyer to concentrate on finding someone whose work they admire, rather than being restricted to (more often than not) the lowest price and questionable quality.

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## Finalising the design brief

The initial design brief gave a brief snapshot of what is required. Now more indepth discussions are necessary.

Subjects covered may include the following:

- market research
- an indepth analysis of target audience and stakeholders (age, sex, income level etc)
- requirements for regional or national appeal
- major message or theme development
- review of previous communication material
- organisation's corporate identity requirements
- the feeling, mood or look
- character and texture of the text
- graphs and any other graphic component
- photography
- colour preferences
- logos, symbols, trademarks
- branding limitations
- size and production limitations
- approval processes
- production schedules
- packaging limitations
- client contacts and responsibilities
- printing preferences
- delivery requirements.

This is also an excellent time to begin brainstorming initial ideas with the design firm's creative director and design team. The graphic design firm will then provide a reverse brief which confirms direction and offer a range of ideas, either in writing or as rough sketches, from which to choose.

Once direction has been approved, the design firm will commence work in preparation for the final design presentation.

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## The design presentation

The firm will present design concepts in colour and also provide mock-ups of how the final items will look if practical. If there are any changes to be made, then this is the best time to discuss them.

## Final Production

Ensure all involved with the project understand approval processes and production timelines before the work is despatched to suppliers for print or manufacture. At this final stage, the process should be seamless and controlled, with no hidden surprises.