

How to prepare the perfect brief.

The simple answer is that you can't. Like anyone in business, every copywriter has their own way of working. That said, good briefs are few and far between so if you can provide the answers to most or all of the following questions, then any experienced copywriter should have more than enough information to produce a first draft.

The Technicalities...

What is the format? (size, number of pages including covers)
Is the text content on each page to be heavy, medium or light?
Are there any corporate branding guidelines to follow?
Is any artwork available?
What is the artwork/print deadline?

The Company...

What does the company do?
Is the company a recognised name within this market?
Who are the company's competitors and in what way does your company differ from them?
What is happening in your market? (new products, increased competition, economic trends)
Does the company or sector suffer from any negative perceptions?
Are there testimonials available from satisfied clients/customers?
Do you have any qualified research to substantiate any claims that may be made?
Are you able to provide any examples of existing company literature?

The Product or Service...

What is the company selling? (increased productivity, peace of mind, cost savings)
What are the most important features of the service or product?
Are any of these features and benefits unique or exclusive to the company?
Are there five words which best describe the product or service?
Why would the prospective customer need it? What will do for them?
What are the key issues that determine whether people will buy these products or services?
Are you able to provide any existing product or service literature?

The Audience...

Which markets or demographic is the company targeting?
What issues might the prospective client/customer be facing?
What motivates this type of person?
What sensitivities is company aware of? (audience likes and dislikes, concerns and aspirations)
What is the level of audience knowledge and understanding?
What will be the customer's main concern? (price, performance, service, quality, efficiency)

The Communication...

How will the communication be used and by whom?
What are its objectives? (generate enquiries, provide product information, build brand recognition)
What key messages does the company want to communicate?
Is there any particular information which must be included?
What is the tone and style? (compare it to a television show, magazine, newspaper or advertisement)
If it's replacing an existing document, what were the successes/weaknesses of the previous one?