



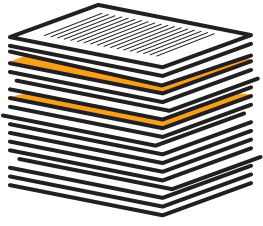
## **Brief Encounter: 5 ways to write a better brief**



Amberjack

A concise, well-written brief gets your marketing project off to a flying start. It creates a shared understanding of what needs to be done. And acts as a go-to reference for client and supplier across the project life-span. A poor brief poses more questions than it answers, and sows the seeds of confusion, wasted effort and uncertain results.

So how can we avoid the pitfalls? Here's a quick rundown of five types of dysfunctional brief and some simple tips for sharpening your brief-writing skills:



## 1. The Kitchen Sink

This reads more like a Russian novel than a marketing brief. It's packed with content, references, background and far too many words. Of course, supporting information is important but cramming too much detail into the brief only blinds the reader to the essentials. Ideally the core brief should never extend beyond a couple of A4 pages. Keeping it succinct and crystal-clear helps to secure internal sign-off more easily and get a swift, well-informed response from your supplier.

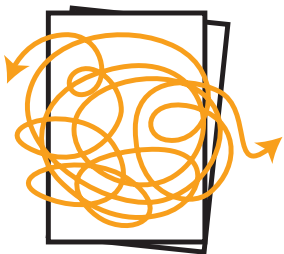
**Top tip: Only include relevant detail. Put yourself in the shoes of a reader coming to grips with the brief for the first time. Provide in-depth information as separate attachments, links or appendices.**



## 2. The Hot Potato

This brief is politically charged. You can almost feel the tension between the lines. The text is peppered with imperative words like 'must' and 'critical'. Deadlines are underlined in bold. Multiple approvals are required. Sometimes urgency or internal diplomacy clouds the objectivity of the brief's author who feels obliged to include every stakeholder's input. Without clear direction, the brief can become confusing, self-contradictory and leave your suppliers scratching their heads.

**Top tip: Keep cool when senior people or multiple approvals are involved. Flag and resolve any differences as early as possible. If in doubt, ask a colleague to give your brief an honest review.**



## 3. The Woolly Mammoth

This one never really gets to the point. It's filled with plenty of info, but the core deliverables and requirements are squirreled away somewhere between paragraphs 17 and 23. This is often down to a lack of confidence or clear vision on the part of the brief's author, who finds it easier to overload with content rather than take time to filter information and address the essential points head on. Ambiguous language and high word-count makes this brief a huge challenge to read and interpret.

**Top tip: Don't leave anything to chance by inviting misinterpretation. Be concise, clear and to the point. Use a tried and tested briefing template to help you structure the key information.**



## 4. The Phantom

This brief is long promised and much anticipated, but never actually materialises. The author's lack of preparation or procrastination means a written brief is neither completed or signed-off in time. The resulting eleventh-hour alternative is a verbal briefing or quick email to the supplier. Although this might seem an easy compromise at the time, you could pay a high price for providing sketchy instructions or assuming your supplier understands the essentials, when they don't.

**Top tip: Give yourself plenty of time to plan your brief-writing, consult interested stakeholders and collate the material you need. If in doubt, ask your supplier to replay the brief to you.**



## 5. Mind the Gap

This is a bare skeleton of a brief with incomplete information and whole sections missing. Of course, it's good to be concise, but this takes brevity to the extreme. It may be that some background material is unavailable, or the brief is written in a hurry. Or maybe the author is a bit on the lazy side and assumes the reader will be sufficiently clued-up to fill in the blank sections. Either way, if your brief is too brief, you can expect plenty of questions or potential problems as the project unfolds.

**Top tip: Never assume your reader knows as much as you. Doublecheck that every section is covered. Allow time for preparation, checking and editing. Don't be rushed into releasing a half-finished brief.**

## About Amberjack

Formed in 2013, Amberjack is a full-service marketing consultancy and creative agency. We combine smart strategic thinking with creative imagination and tight project management to make business brands shine. We conceive and build brands, grow sales pipelines through proactive lead-generation and develop responsive online platforms. We can help you too.

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