**General Marketing Brief**

# Company Background

Use this section to provide a simple description of your business. This should be a fairly high-level overview that sets the tone for what you are looking for.

The wording should have a balance; as part of your branding you should have keywords about your organisation, but don’t go down the corporate rabbit hole or indulge in flowery language. Remember, the agency needs to quickly get a snapshot of who you are. So, use short sentences and keep the syllable count low. In terms of length, keep it to under 200 words.

# Your Products and/or Services

Moving on from the company background, now you can highlight what you provide to your customers.

Start with a punchy 50-word description of the benefits of your portfolio. Your job here is to build interest within the reader. Get them engaged. Point out the single big reason why people buy your products or services. Then add two more.

When you have done that, list what you sell. State either the product name or what type of product or service it is. For example, if you sell cleaning products, one product family might be titled ‘bleaches’. But if you only sell bleach, then you could list the product names instead. Each item listed should carry a 50-word description. Again, start with benefits and use features to support the value it brings.

This section can be a great way to test your communication powers. When did you last write two or three 7-word sentences that sold what you provide? Doing this could well make you rethink how you write about your products and services. Which is never a bad thing!

# Your Customers

This is arguably as important as any other section – even the objectives you will be completing a little later. That’s because your customers are the only thing standing between you and closure. So, you must cover them in some detail here.

For each product or service you provide, describe whatever you know about the typical customer. Don’t forget to include their reasons for buying too. These should generally marry up with your brand values, but that’s not actually mandatory – sometimes other reasons creep in as well.

# Your Route To Market

How do customers buy your products or services? Whether you have just one or many channels, list them here. Also, it doesn’t hurt to mention if customers buy through major routes such as Tesco or Amazon. The point here is to help the agency understand whether projects might need to apply to different buyers. For example, a campaign aimed at both distribution and end-users may have subtly different use of images or copy.

Again, keep the wording short and simple.

# Summary of Brand Philosophy and Personality

We’re starting to get the meat and spuds now. This is where you should set out core points around your brand(s) and how you talk to customers. Again, keep the word count down; give the agency the factual hard points.

Bullet list your brand values:

* Are your products trusted? Loved? Cherished?
* What are the top 3-5 words customers say about your brand?
* What additional values do you provide around what you sell? Great customer service, for example?
* What are your brand hard points (colours, typefaces, logos etc)

If you have branding guidelines, state the very basics in the brief and provide the guide separately. Copying all the details over just distracts from what both you and the agency are trying to achieve.

If you don’t have branding guidelines then it’s a good idea to set out what colours and typefaces you use. If you have never really made any decisions around these topics, then just say so.

Now you can move on to communication. What do you say to customers? What key benefits to you push to them? Set out a concise list that spells this out. It really shouldn’t be more than 5 points, and usually 3 sows you can talk about your business simply.

Next, you should state how you talk to customers. When you write about your brand or what you sell, what style do you adopt? What impression do you want to make on the reader? Breakfast cereals, luxury watches, soft drink, industrial chemicals and life insurance all use a different tone of voice for customer comms.

A good approach here is to make between three and five statements about your style. This allows you to qualify each point with a short explanation. But don’t be afraid to follow up with a short set of bullet points that emphasise certain dos and don’ts as well.

There isn’t a word limit on this section. Just stick to the point and avoid going down any rabbit holes.

# Competition

Who is trying to eat your lunch? That’s a good question. You are bound to have competition from other firms, so you state who they are. They don’t have to be direct competitors, but they should be companies that you know can take sales away from you.

Your list here may be quite long so try to keep it focused on real competitors to your business, not just every player in your market.

# What We Want

Finally! But first, a word of caution. Only complete this section AFTER you have finished the ones preceding it, as they can result in you amending your aims slightly.

This section is for you to set out what you are trying to achieve. It could be any, all, or none of the following examples:

* Grow your business through increase in sales
* Develop a new or small area of the business
* Re-engage with customers
* Make your business better known for a product or service
* Evolve the business, moving away from old perceptions or steering towards new ones.
* Position the business towards specific types of customers

On a practical level, you should state if the work required from the agency is to be used for digital and/or classical marketing disciplines.

# What Have We Done?

Now you have come out and said what you want, you can give some insight to the agency what you have been up to recently. This can split into wo camps:

Relevant Activity: campaigns and activities that are part of the objectives above. For example, if you have been steadily gearing up to be known for a particular product or service, then include details around what was actioned and when.

Everything else: Notable marketing activity which isn’t connected to the objectives in this brief. As a general rule, don’t include anything longer than 2 years ago, and no need to include every single minor activity either.

Do remember to provide the results of any activities mentioned.

# What We Want From You

Working with an agency can be a beautiful partnership. But you have to mutually agree the boundaries. It’s important to set expectations within the agency about the workload they can expect to receive from you.

Starting here, you should describe what work the agency will expect to receive. The brief should include the entire work within the campaign, and then the agency told which areas they are expected to fulfil.

This allows to you clearly state what sort of approach you in turn expect from the agency. You may need a full-service agency which does everything. Alternatively, you may have most of the skillsets already inhouse and the agency will be providing additional resource capacity. Realistically your needs will fall somewhere in between these two extremes. You may also have one or more agencies providing the same work for your business, and you want another within your agency roster.

# Campaign start /end

Moving along with the specifics, time to give some hard points to this brief. Giving the start and end dates of the campaign helps the agency understand not just what they have to do but also when. It can also give some inspiration around seasonal activities to help you reach your objectives.

# Measurement

How are you going to analyse the success of this campaign? This section is partly a continuation of the points raised in before in ‘What We Want’. As an example, if it is an online activity then stats such as clickthrus, enquiries, visits would be stated.

# What You Like & Dislike

Your competitors, and other businesses in the wider market, are also busy marketing their products and services. They may be doing a good, or bad, job too, and it can help an agency if you point these out to them.

When you work on this section bear in mind three points.

1. Strike a balance If you have two bad examples, make sure you have too good ones as well.
2. Give objective reasons why you like or loathe the examples given. ‘I don’t like this’ is subjective and of no real value. Instead, think of yourself as the intended customer. How would the example be attractive or not to them?
3. Avoid being too descriptive here. There is no crime in taking inspiration but you shouldn’t ask an agency to simply copy someone else’s work.

# Compulsory Details

Some aspects of your brand or the campaign might be mandatory. It might be a legal requirement to include certain information in any visual work. Or there may be elements of your brand which must be presented in a specific way.

# Budget

Put simply, this is obligatory. You have to state a budget for the campaign work you want to undertake. This figure helps the agency provide a response which will be relevant to your expectations. Saying that, the figure does not have to be exact. But it should be realistic in relation to what you want the agency to do.

# Selection Process

This is also obligatory. You need to give the agency an idea how this brief moves forward. You should set out what happens and when. So, once the agency responds, when do you discuss the proposal with them and internally, who makes a decision, and in what timeframe does all this happen.

# Point Of Contact

Nearly there! It might sound obvious, but you should state who the agency should contact regarding this brief. If it is more than one person, set out what topics each individual handles.