



the
marketing
pod

The Marketing Pod's Guide to
**BRIEFING FOR
BRILLIANT
CONTENT.**



WELCOME TO YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO GETTING THE VERY BEST CONTENT FROM YOUR WRITERS AND CREATIVES_

“We believe that every great piece of marketing content begins with a careful brief”

Do you know what you want your content to achieve? It's a crucial question but too many businesses attempt to develop content without first answering it. Sharing the answer with your content teams can help them create the kind of effective and engaging content that will really make a difference to your brand.

This guide explains the **four steps** you can take to brief for brilliant content.

EXPERT AUDIENCES NEED WELL-INFORMED CONTENT_

Every great piece of marketing content begins with a careful brief. This is true whether you're creating a 30 second video, a 1000 word piece of editorial or a 140 character social post. It's true whether you're using your in-house team or an external agency, and it's particularly true if you're a B2B business with an expert audience.

The thing with experts, you see, is that they really do know their stuff. To create content that is just as intelligent and informed as they are, you'll need to make sure that your content creator has access to all the information they need. If you don't, one of two things will happen: either they'll do a less-than-perfect job and your content simply won't hit the mark; or they'll do a brilliant job but it will take much, much longer (and cost much more) than it should.



BEGINNING THE CONTENT JOURNEY_

A top-down view of a wooden desk with a laptop, a smartphone, a cup of coffee, and headphones. The desk is made of dark wood with visible grain and knots. A silver laptop is partially visible on the right side. A white smartphone is lying horizontally in the lower right quadrant. A white cup of coffee is in the upper left quadrant. A pair of white headphones is in the upper right quadrant.

Your brief is the first step of a content creation journey. It sets the direction and destination. It should give your content creator the confidence to take whatever steps need to come next - which might include conducting expert interviews or desk-based research, as well as providing opportunities for you to give feedback.

Get the initial brief right and each step on the content journey will be faster, easier and probably more pleasant for everyone involved. Provided you have the right talent at your disposal, it will guarantee that you never receive content that is inappropriate for your audience, sets the wrong tone for your business, or simply doesn't fit into the space it was intended for.

It's worth mentioning here that some web-designers are known to get a bit grumbly/sweary when given 500 beautifully crafted words for a 100 word space).

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?_

With so much hanging on the initial content brief, you might be surprised to hear how few businesses place value on a well-honed briefing document- and how many marketers and copywriters will attempt to start work without one.

Our own experience tells us that people often want copy or content without having really considered who they are talking to or what they want to achieve. Many more know what they want but have no idea how to relay that.

So, let's take a look at the basics...

“Get the initial brief right and your next steps will be faster, easier and more pleasant for everyone involved”



STEP 1

START WITH THE ESSENTIALS_

This bit should be easy. What do you want and where is it going to be seen? Aim to give a thorough overview of the practicalities, covering things like format, print or digital, spec, file type, word count, deadline etc. If it's a video, you'll need to say how long it should be and what platform you'll use to share it. If it's editorial, you'll need to say if it's an online piece or for a hardcopy magazine, as well as including word limits and deadlines. If it's a blog, should it follow a specific format?

It all seems so obvious but you wouldn't believe how many times we see briefs without this essential info. Whether your agency provides you with a form, or you decide on a set way to communicate these things that suits your business, get everything down in one clear document to make sure there can be no misunderstanding.

On behalf of all the time-pressed, occasionally exasperated copywriters out there, I'd also like to point out that a long email chain including a slight tangent about next Wednesday's sales meeting does not count as 'one clear document'.

- Format
- Spec
- Word count
- Deadline
- Inclusions

STEP 2

COMMUNICATE YOUR PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE_

How much information you need to provide here will depend on the content professional you are using. If you have an ongoing relationship with a full-service agency or use an in-house team, it's likely that they will already have a good understanding of your audience but you will still need to clarify whether you're talking to that whole audience or one segment of it. Is there a particular sector or job role you're trying to reach? Is the content timed to communicate with the delegates of a particular event? Is there a specific service you want to talk about?

Once you have this info down, make sure you also include anything relevant about the needs of your audience and how are you trying to address these with your content. The more info you include here, the better your content is likely to be. Begin by thinking in broad terms: ask 'who do I want to reach?' and 'what is the purpose of this content?' Then move onto specifics like 'what

action do I want my audience to take after seeing this?'. If this piece of content forms part of a customer journey or campaign, provide an overview of that too, so that your content creator can be sure it sits neatly alongside everything else and forms a logical step on the journey'.

Ask: 'what action do I want my audience to take?'

WAIT! DO YOU NEED TO PRESS PAUSE?'

If your customer journey looks muddled, you're unclear who your audience is, or you're having trouble shaping a campaign that can deliver results, it may be that you need to press pause on content creation and take a step back. A strong brand identity and clear marketing strategy can inform all of these things and give you peace of mind that the time and resources you dedicate to content will be well spent. **Ask us about our consultancy services - we might be able to help.**



STEP 3

INCLUSIONS AND INSPIRATION_

It's possible that the piece of content you want to create was inspired by something you saw at a recent event, or that it should look the same in style as an earlier version of a document/PDF but is region specific.

Perhaps you saw a competitor's promo video and thought 'we could do so much better than that', or saw a website that you'd love to mimic elements from. Make sure you include any of this type of thinking in your brief, along with all of the relevant links and references. It'll help to make sure your content creator understands where you're coming from.

On a more practical note, if you have design assets you want to be included, attaching them as part of an electronic briefing folder at the outset of your project will help to streamline the whole creative process. You won't get nagging emails and we won't have to provide versions with holes in or guess how things are going to look/fit in the final piece. This is also the time to include the contact details of any experts available for interview.

Speaking from experience, a neatly bundled briefing folder that can be shared with account managers, copywriters and designers is every content team's dream - and usually means slicker content in shorter time-frames. It's also, unfortunately, a fairly rare phenomenon in the B2B marketing world.



STEP 4

TALK IT THROUGH_

Once you've followed steps one to three, it's time to jump on a call or get together for a quick meeting. Even the most comprehensive briefing document will usually benefit from a quick chat through. This conversation gives you an opportunity to make sure you've covered everything and for your content creator to ask any questions. It's the fastest way of checking you really do understand each other.

On larger projects like whitepapers and websites or where content is part of a series, we'd usually recommend regular catch-up calls. These are often the easiest way to review drafts and provide detailed feedback, and will help keep the momentum up. A call is also often the easiest way to get your internal experts to provide their input. With the caveat that calls are short, purposeful and productive, they are also a fantastic way to build the kind of collaborative relationships that lead to intelligent, useful and compelling content.



GET IN TOUCH_

Are you interested in finding out more about our content and copywriting services?

Please get in touch by emailing hello@themarketingpod.co.uk or giving the team a call on **01564 742 848**. We'll be happy to chat.

THEMARKETINGPOD.CO.UK

