

Why the Creative Brief is So Important

The project has started and you sit down and break out the trusty moleskin. It's filled with random sketches, notes, and the logo ideas from the last branding meeting. You are ripe with ideas for the new logo, UI, or layout and it feels only natural that as a designer you go to what you know best- even though we are getting ahead of ourselves because we have left out a very important step, the creative brief.

Yes, the creative brief comes first. No, it's not the sexiest part of the project and no, you don't get to use photoshop or fireworks. But, by doing the creative brief, you will be able to better communicate with the client upfront in a language they understand before throwing out designer speak such as white space, typography, or color theory.

WHY IT'S WORTH THE TIME

Over the years, as projects have gotten bigger, so has the number of people with their hand in the pot. This, of course, calls for more and more collaboration with the client and other writers and designers, often spread out all over the country. The creative brief was eventually put back in with other large-project-only steps, like prototypes and grey box model (to replace wireframes. As we worked on the creative briefs, we started to realize that the more we did them, the easier the design stage went and the fewer revisions we were doing on projects. Also, we found that the client felt more involved upfront.

We were able to:

- Focus on the meat and potatoes of the project before we, as the designers, translated what we had all agreed upon on paper (or words) into designs. We clearly understood the simplest, most basic goals of the project before moving into the design phase.
- Communicate with our clients. Because the client had spent time on developing the strategy before engaging us, they already developed basic beliefs and assumptions. The framework we provided, along with the exercise, required them to explain the project in a way that often revealed the beliefs and assumptions as well as some of the potential work still left to be done by their team to be in alignment on basic issues.
- Educate the client on how the design decisions we were making after the creative brief exercise were directly related to the overall goals and strategy of the project or company. For example, because we clearly defined the value propositions and how they related to the customers buying behavior, the client could understand why the bullets or content on the page flowed the way it did.

GET TO THE FUN STUFF

In the end, if you can get everyone on the same page in the creative brief, the design phase becomes that much more focused and concise. This will reduce your revisions and increase the clients faith in your ability to translate and enhance their strategy into an effective communication piece, rather than a pretty design they just don't understand.