

Elements of an Effective Design Brief

1. Background

The background should provide brief overview of the marketing strategy, and establish the rationale and key drivers for the call to action. It should identify what the new design is intended to accomplish and communicate, and what its role is in the overall brand strategy. The background may include a brief historical background, if necessary, and available information such as existing market research data and findings, corporate and competitive moves, etc.

2. Design Objectives

The design objective(s) should identify the product(s) to be addressed, as well as marketing and engineering goals. The objectives should also identify the specific design problems to be solved, as well as functional and aesthetic design properties to be developed or visual brand equities, if any, to be retained. The mix of internal/external components open for design exploration (and conversely those not open for consideration) should be specifically identified.

3. Action Standards

Action Standards set the performance requirements against which the product(s) will be evaluated. These standards may set actual qualitative or quantitative criteria that the product must meet in end-user testing or other market research, internal and/or applicable certification agency testing.

4. Market Opportunity

As an option, a review of the market situation or standing may be included. The marketplace context and strategic marketing objectives can be identified, and information such as expected brand and competitive market share can be included.

5. Target Consumer

Include any available information regarding the target consumer. This can be comprised of demographic profiles, purchase drivers, end-user research etc. – in fact any available information regarding the target consumer.

6. End User Requirements

It is important to include vital consumer issues and needs with respect to the product such as:

- Ergonomics: ease of handling, dispensing, installing, opening, closing, reclosing or resealing,
- Cognitive or other human factors: ease of understanding features/use of the structure, etc.
- Safety issues
- Convenience criteria such as storage, cleaning, etc.
- Environmental impact, if applicable

7. Brand Story/Brand Distinction

As an option, relevant background information can be provided to further develop the brand differentiation against both internal and competitive brands. For example, a description may include a brand story or claims (i.e. new technology or alternative materials, etc.) that may provide for brand uniqueness, authority, credibility, etc. to strengthen market position and give direction for product design.

8. Competitive Brands & Benchmarking

It is important to understand the brand in relation to competitive brands. All available and relative competitive information should be included, such as all targeted brands, respective market share, imagery, product attributes, and recent competitive moves.

9. Retail Distribution & Environment

Strategy for placement by distribution channel(s) should be presented, organized by order of importance and by key outlet chains, as appropriate.

10. Trade/Customer Requirements

If there are specific presentation considerations for the product at retail, this should be included in the brief. Examples of these requirements include:

- Shelf-space allocation or constraints
 - Merchandising requirements & opportunities
 - Pilferage/damage resistance
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11. Production Methods/Requirements

Specific production requirements should be detailed in the brief. These criteria can include:

- Specific components to be developed
- Stock or standard components available or to be used
- Criteria (including issues and limitations and relative importance) of product shape, size, materials, color, finishes, production methods, etc.
- Product delivery or capacity, specific sizes, volumetrics, etc.

- Shelf-life, product characteristics over time, product/packaging compatibility issues, etc.
- Method of applying surface graphics
- Unit costs- current and targeted
- Production constraints such as filling line restrictions, warehousing, and distribution
- Vendor preferences with respect to manufacturing and distribution

12. Mandated Information

Any and all legal and technical constraints should be included.

13. Timing

Timing expectations, limitations or demands should be included in terms of target deliverable dates, ship-to-trade, and key development events (presentations, meetings, research, etc.)
