

# Good Briefings — Bad Briefings

Why Good Briefings  
Release Creative Endorphins.

Bad briefings go nowhere, good ones lead to the goal. What exactly does that mean for companies, customers, agencies? We do not want to jump on the clients-from-hell, or the everything-was-better-in-the-good-old-days bandwagon, and claim that customers mostly write bad briefings nowadays. But, some don't write any at all, others too long ones, some simply send an un-commented collection of documents, from which creative folks hardly have a chance to draw the right conclusions. And many write top-notch briefings, otherwise it would hardly be possible to explain how good brand communication is created.

Creating good briefings - that is first and foremost up to the client. However, if the customer's briefing falls short, it is up to the agency to demand for clarification. And within the agency, this process is repeated when project management and consulting translate the customer briefing into a

creative briefing for copywriters and designers. Then it is important to reduce the briefing again to its essentials. Worst case scenario, it goes down like the telephone game at a children's birthday party in which the kids sit in a row of chairs, and the first child whispers "petting zoo" in the ear of the second child, and the last one only understands "kitty's loo". Results of this kind are indeed usually found in the kitty litter.

Good briefings  
are not whispered  
into ears but must be  
recorded in writing.

With brief directions on where to find further information (in other documents, on certain websites, etc.). Good briefings always contain the task (what), the client (who), the goal (why/for what purpose), and the deadline (by

when). This basic information can be enriched with brief and basic information on the current situation, the target group, as well as insights and formal guidelines, that is to say, the guard rails to which the creatives have to stick to.

The crucial question for customers and the agency is always the question of the goal: What is it good for? Why, of all things, this communication task? What do I want to achieve as a customer? What does the agency have to deliver to make the customer happy? What is the communicative goal (gaining more brand attention, initiating a change of image)? And what is the goal from an entrepreneur's viewpoint? (increased sales, more leads, more trades)? A good briefing that clarifies these questions offers the chance to make success measurable - for example by tracking clicks on a website. For the agency, this provides a basis for de-

veloping measures that meet or even exceed the set goals in a transparent manner. For the customer's marketing managers, these goals likewise provide an instrument for documenting their successful use of the marketing budget for reports to the management, to secure high budgets in the future.

This all sounds so obvious now. One might think that this is common practice between customers and agencies. But it's not. In fact, it almost seems as if there is a natural human characteristic in people not to want to commit themselves. One way of committing oneself after all is not to write the briefing alone, but together - in close cooperation. In this process, the project managers clarify the individual points with both the customer and the agency before the briefing is internally given to the creative department. The second option is: The customer creates the briefing, the agency checks and clarifies all open questions with the customer in a rebriefing, and then creates a creative brief for the creative department. Generally, it doesn't matter which option the participants choose,

as long as all of them agree with the result: That is to say, if everyone agrees to work with the final version of the briefing.

Communication is key: A briefing should always be recorded in writing. However, it should not just be forwarded without communication. An accompanying personal conversation between the client's project manager and the agency's project manager is as important as the agency's project manager's conversation with text and graphics within the agency. This offers everyone an opportunity to tackle open questions head on and to resolve misunderstandings immediately. It is even smoother when customers, project managers, and creatives gather at one table for a kick-off meeting. Then everyone involved in the process is in the same boat from the very start. Sounds complicated?

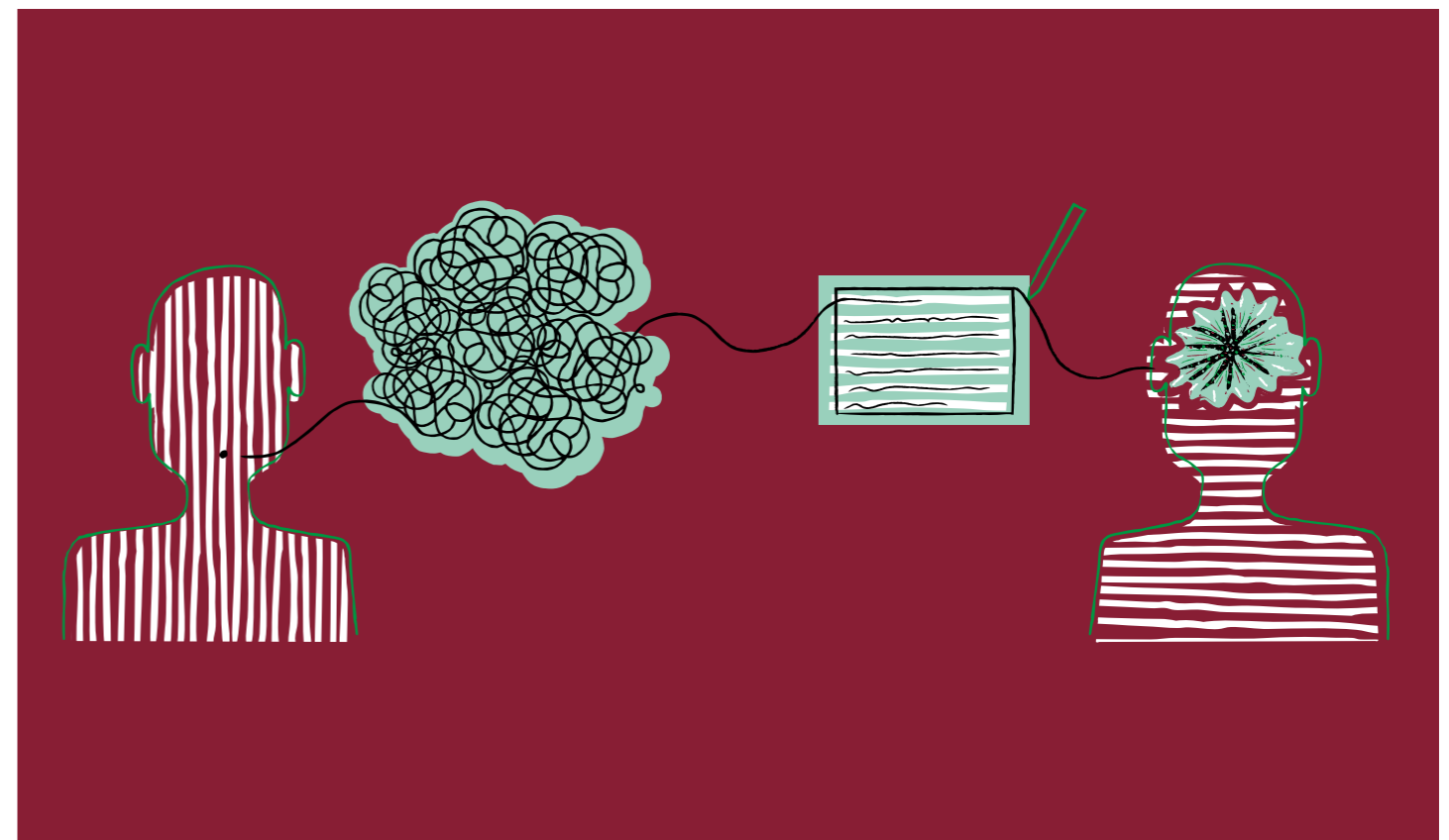
Sounds time-consuming? But what does the alternative look like? Countless telephone inquiries, because "one" is still working aimlessly. Endless correction runs because "one" - the

customer - initially meant something other than what "one" - the agency - implemented.

But if you take the time to do it properly, you will find that something much bigger is happening, something greater than what is put together on just a few pages of a good briefing: A basis of trust. Between customer and agency. And within the agency, between project management and creation. Then, the briefing will actually become a "living" document, whether you like the wording or not.

By the way, this is the creative brief that we usually create on the basis of the customer briefing for our creative team. It can also serve you as a guide to what information is required for your communication task.

What?  
Who?  
Why?  
By when?



# Creative Brief

<b>CUSTOMER</b>	What kind of company is it? How large is it? What is the revenue? Markets? Countries? Number of employees?
<b>BRAND MESSAGE</b>	What does the brand stand for? What is the brand promise?
<b>PROJECT</b>	What is it about? Brand? Company? Product? Service? HR?
<b>CURRENT STATE</b>	What is the problem? What is the occasion for the communication? Who are the competitors? What does the market look like?
<b>TASK</b>	What is our part in the project? Creating a campaign? A website? Brochures? Mailings? Everything?
<b>ENTREPRENEURIAL GOAL</b>	Key figures: Measurable values: Increase in sales (percent/absolute), more leads, more traffic online etc.
<b>COMMUNICATIVE GOAL</b>	Increased brand awareness? Product launch? Image?
<b>TARGET GROUP</b>	Who exactly do we want to reach? Age? Gender? Income? Profession? Interests? Information behaviour?
<b>INSIGHT</b>	What do we need to know that nobody else knows? What does the customer think? Inner motives?
<b>CREATIVE SPRINGBOARD</b>	What is the most important thing we want to say? Is there a USP/SMP? Why would you believe that?
<b>TIMING</b>	Time?
<b>BUDGET</b>	Money?
<b>CONTACT PERSON</b>	At the customer? At our agency?