

## Keeping Everyone on the Same Page

### *How a creative brief makes for better marketing*

The creation of marketing communication vehicles is a collaborative process. First, there's the client, which means one or more stakeholders in a project. Then there's the creative team, which usually means a writer and designer, but could also include a creative director, web developer, project manager and other miscellaneous and sundry outside vendors.

Before you embark on that breakthrough marketing piece that's going to boost your sales into the stratosphere, you need to take a step back and clearly define the project so that all contributors are on the same page.

A good creative brief can do this, ensuring that your marketing hits the mark and produces the desired effect. That's why every marketing initiative, no matter how small, should begin with a well-written creative brief.

#### **Defining the job and its goals**

A copywriter we know was hired to write a series of bank brochures. Thrilled to get the assignment, he soon realized that both he and his client had neglected to establish the scope and goals of the job.

Enter the creative brief: a short document that names and fully describes a marketing project, be it a brochure, a press release, a web site, or an ad. A creative brief is

designed to ensure that everyone involved in the project knows what the job is all about: background, goals, deliverables and, if possible, schedule and deadlines.

#### **Stay on track and on budget**

So, who needs a creative brief? If you create any kind of online or offline promotion pieces for your company on a regular basis, you do. Not only will it eliminate any confusion about what you're hoping to achieve, it will save you time and money by avoiding those costly wrong turns that inevitably occur when everyone on the team doesn't fully understand the project.

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## Spread the Word: Painless PR Tools

Every business is trying to do more with less these days. Though effective public relations can pay tremendous dividends, it's often difficult for resource-challenged companies to devote the time to doing it right.

Take a look at some tools that can cut down on your media list development time:

**Vocus** — Nifty web-based subscription software lets you create targeted media lists, track interactions, and distribute press releases. Best feature: a detailed database of media contacts, including their communi-

cation preferences, schedules, and reporting beats. Add-ons let you integrate a clipping service, track email open rates, and create presentation-ready graphs and charts. Not inexpensive, but worth it in productivity gains if you generate a lot of releases (or would if you had the time or manpower).

**Check out:** [vocus.com](http://vocus.com)

**Gift List Media** — Anyone who's ever scored an inclusion in one of those seasonal product "round-up" features know they can be worth their weight in gold for exposure. But by the time many of us start shifting into a holiday mindset, deadlines (especially for monthly print publications) are long past.

Enter Gift List Media, which hands you contacts at magazines, daily newspapers, wires, syndicates, and news services, plus producers at national network, cable and syndicated TV and radio shows.

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# 3 Questions About...Business Etiquette

Corby O'Connor, etiquette expert, speaker and columnist, trains individuals representing the business and educational sectors in professional conduct, sales skills, networking, business attire, interview skills and dining skills — tools that provide companies and individuals with a unique competitive edge. Learn more at [corbyoconnor.com](http://corbyoconnor.com).

## What's the connection between business etiquette and marketing?

Marketing is the process of promoting and selling a product. On either end of that process are individuals: buyer and seller. While the seller may have an excellent product, if he does not make his customer feel valued, he will have trouble selling his product. A seller makes a buyer feel valued with business etiquette — actions that tell the buyer she is important. After a well-coordinated marketing plan, business etiquette is the personal touch point. It is the attention to detail: getting your customer's name right in correspondence, respecting his time, etc. When a contractor leaves your home in the evening free of clutter and tools, he is practicing proper business etiquette and effective marketing. Would you hire that contractor again if he left your house a mess?

## What's the single biggest mistake business people make when it comes to etiquette?

Believing that their product is more important than their relationship with the buyer. Buyers have options. If the seller doesn't value the relationship, the buyer will find another seller. Etiquette is the prescribed set of rules for making your customer feel valued and respected. We all want to do business with people who respect us.

## What tips can sales and marketing professionals use to boost their success rates?

Treat each customer as though he or she is the most important person in the world. Take the time to learn what is important to each customer. Do they play golf, travel, volunteer, have children? Show interest in the lives of your customers. Write a note thanking them for their business, pay close attention to their orders and follow up on the services you perform. Even the most well-crafted and executed marketing plan will fail if, in the end, the customer does not feel valued.

Want to be next month's Subject Matter Expert? Send an email to [compost@fahouryink.com](mailto:compost@fahouryink.com) with "Compost SME" in your subject line.

“ If you make people think they're thinking, they'll love you. But if you really make them think, they'll hate you. ”  
Don Marquis

## Painless PR (from p. 1)

Products include Spring and Holiday lists, plus a holiday version especially for online media. Interested in product placement in movies or TV? They've got those lists, too. Check out: [giftlistmedia.com](http://giftlistmedia.com)

**Bonus PR tool: Help a Reporter Out** — The brainchild of *Compost's* personal PR idol, Peter Shankman, this gem was originally launched on Facebook. Journalists looking for sources can post their requests, which are forwarded to HARO members two or three times a day. Sure, some days nothing is applicable, but it's always entertaining reading nonetheless. Check out: [helpareporter.com](http://helpareporter.com)

Of course, these tools don't do the thinking for you, just some of the legwork. You'll still need a compelling pitch that is accurately targeted to the reporter's needs — unless you've found an app that can do that, too! ☀



## Radio Daze Noteworthy New Uses of the Medium

WPLJ-FM, a CITADEL station in NYC, is running an interesting hybrid — a pop-song-turned-radio-commercial. It seems that Allstate approached Jason Wade of the band Lifehouse to pen a track for the insurer's new Teen Safe Driving campaign.

Says WPLJ's National Sales Manager Tina Ciancio, "Starcom, Allstate's agency, knew that Lifehouse was a core artist for our station, so they reached out to see how we could collaborate to get the word out on the new teen campaign."

In this case, the spot is the song — a 3:30 commercial that opens with Wade talking about losing a friend in a car accident before performing the song, "From Where You Are." The spot closes with information on Allstate's teen driving campaign. A great fit in terms of programming (which had to approve the spot, according to Ciancio), and an effective way to hold listeners' attention.

Source: [plj.com](http://plj.com)

CLEAR CHANNEL OUTLET WLTW-FM in New York is also raising the bar on creativity. The station offers year-long "Ask the Expert" sponsorship packages that combine on-air, online and print components.

In addition to frequent on-air mentions, participants are featured on the station's website. Pages can be customized with downloads, video, customer testimonials, and even the capability to book an appointment. Experts are also included in the station's seasonal print guides distributed by sponsors and street teams.

According to Bernhard Weiss, local sales manager for Clear Channel Communications New York, "Ask the Expert" launched last October 2007 on Lite-FM, and was quickly expanded to Clear Channel's five NYC stations. Participants run the gamut from healthcare providers to auto dealers and education experts. Source: [clearchannel.com](http://clearchannel.com)

## Creative Brief (from p. 1)

Most freelance copywriters and designers use creative briefs, as do other creative service providers such as photographers. Virtually all agencies and marketing companies use them too, though they may use different names to describe them, like Scope of Creative or Marketing Brief.

If you hire an agency for a project, you should expect them to send you a brief to complete, or to supply you with a preliminary brief they've already filled out based on the project information provided.

### Create a brief that meets your needs

Just Google "creative brief" and you'll find no shortage of opinions on what a creative brief should look like. But as any Googler knows, too much information can be difficult and time consuming to sort through. So while we encourage you to Google (and we know that you will!), here's a rundown of the key elements of a creative brief:

**Summary:** A brief description of the project and it's parameters.

**Background:** How the assignment came about. Ex. "To broaden awareness of Spiffy Kleen in the residential cleaning industry."

**Target Audience:** What group(s) are you talking to? Be as specific as possible on the intended audience, its mindset, level of sophistication, and buying motivations.

**Objective(s):** What do you hope the project will achieve? How do you expect your target audience to respond to the marketing message? Example: "To establish a market for and increase sales of Spiffy Kleen to residential clients." Be sure to clarify if the piece should drive sales or simply generate leads.

**Message(s):** What is the primary message that you want the marketing piece to convey? Is there a secondary message?

**Mandatory Elements:** What information must appear in the copy? For example, the majority of marketing pieces will require contact information — phone, email, URL, etc. — but most also require a call to action, such as visiting a website or calling an 800 number. What logos, photos, or charts will be used, and who is supplying or creating them?

**Deliverables:** What is the client expecting to receive at the conclusion of the project? What has the creative partner agreed to provide? In what format?

**Timeline:** Has a schedule been established? What are the deadlines for completion of the assignment's various stages?

**Budget:** How much money has been allotted for the project? Does this number include production, or simply creative development?

**Approvals:** Who is the main client contact on the project; who has final approval on the work? Do multiple stakeholders need to review the work at various stages of the creative process?

More than anything else, your creative brief should clarify the assignment for everyone involved. If details are spelled out in no uncertain terms, there's much less chance that a project will get sidetracked or fail to generate the expected response.

Ideally, a well-designed creative brief is a document that can help you get what you want. And who could argue with that? ☀



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## It's My Party and I'll Blog if I Want To

Bloggers are younger, with higher percentages of Hispanics and African Americans compared to the general population, reports the Center for Media Research and BIGresearch.

The BIGresearch Simultaneous Media Survey found that 26% of U.S. adults say they regularly or occasionally blog. A slight majority (53.7%) are male, 44.7% are married, and 28.4% hold a professional or managerial position.

More blogger factoids of interest:

- Average age is 37.6 years old
- Close to 70% are white, while 20% are Hispanic and 12.2% are African American
- 24.6% of registered voters say they regularly or occasionally blog

No surprises here: A look at bloggers' new media adoption shows higher-than-average usage, from cell phones and IM to texting. Though bloggers are better educated than the general population (14.3 years of education vs. 14.2), they also average lower incomes (\$55,819 vs. \$56,811). Probably because they're blogging rather than working.

**Source:** [centerformediaresearch.com](http://centerformediaresearch.com); [bigresearch.com](http://bigresearch.com)



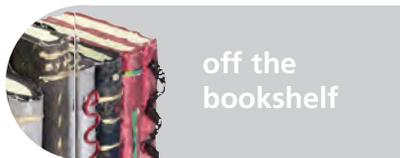
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**Inside: The Secret to an  
Effective Creative Brief**



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**212: The Extra Degree**, by Sam Parker and Mac Anderson

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212 is a mindset. 212 is a training tool. And if Sam Parker has his way, 212 will become a revolution. Co-founder of [justsell.com](http://justsell.com), Parker focuses on simple effort as an essential fundamental for sales success in his book, *212: The Extra Degree*.

Written in the same down-to-earth style that's made [justsell.com](http://justsell.com) a hit among sales and non-sales types alike, Parker and co-author Mac Anderson tout the rewards of incremental effort — going one step beyond the norm.

According to the authors, "Success in anything has one fundamental aspect — effort. To achieve exponential results requires additional effort."

Not convinced? Consider this: from 1980-2004, the average margin of victory among professional golf's four annual major tournaments was less than three strokes. More impressively, the winner pocketed an average of 76% more in prize dollars than the second-place finisher.

Another example: the payout for Triple Crown winners averages nearly 400% more than the horse coming in second.

Parker and Anderson use inspirational tidbits like these to best advantage, mixing them in with quotes from Patton to Forbes. They also make good use of brief, well-crafted stories to showcase values such as commitment, leadership and perseverance.

#### Turning thought into action

Inspiration is all well and good, but 212 doesn't stop there. The book features ideas

for implementing the 212 mindset — ways to begin taking action today as a friend, a parent, and a businessperson:

- Connect with one extra friend each week
- Add an extra 15 minutes every day to the time you spend with your children
- Open doors to business growth by having an encouraging talk with a member of your staff or a friendly chat with a customer.

Finally, commit to pausing and reflecting on something important that you may read or hear during the course of your day.

#### Taking part in the revolution

Parker views the allegorical wisdom of 212 as a simple way to capture the attention of your staff and inspire them to new levels of effort. When the "extra degree" message connects with even a handful of people in a company or group, he says, it can have a tremendous and systemic impact on results.

Ready to turn up the heat? Find out what a difference a single degree can make. 🔥