

CREATING A CREATIVE BRIEF THAT INSPIRES CREATIVES

I've given consideration to the dictum that "marketers should write creative briefs with prose that inspires the agency creative team." My answer was, and remains, Poppycock! In fact, if marketers can develop and write inspiring prose they should be on the creative side of the business. Instead, if we want the creative brief to inspire the creatives then focus on demonstrating strategic leadership as evidenced by providing strategically appropriate, single-minded direction. That's it, pure and simple. But, it's not easy. Perhaps, that's a major reason why creative briefs, and the resultant creative brand communications, suck.

However, there is one other way to use the creative brief to inspire the creative team. That way is to invite them to collaborate in its development. They will then be more likely to use that work to create brand communications that successfully stimulate the needed target-customer behavior to drive incremental sales and market share.

The typical process is for the marketing team to develop the creative brief and *sell* it to the agency. The agency, account people that is, then translate the client's brief into their own so-called "proprietary" format. Their creative brief is, they claim, not only their special sauce but is needed to "inspire" (there's that word again) the creative team. They obviously feel a need to inspire, and don't believe the client is capable of doing it.

This poses the dilemma of "dueling" creative briefs. The agency's brief is no mere translation (which suggests client and agency creatives don't speak the same language) but, in reality, a second brief. Change one thought, one word, one punctuation and you risk changing strategic direction. Rather than everyone facing in the same direction there will be multiple directions, undermining the likelihood of successfully developing high impact communications.

If you want to use the creative brief to inspire the creative team then *invite them to participate* in its development. There are a number of reasons for this:

- For one *it will enhance the strategic direction*. Outstanding creative people are inherently creative just the way sound strategic marketing managers are inherently creative. So, their contributions can be meaningful. Additionally, they will push back if they believe the strategic direction is wrong, or not single-minded.
- For another, *the very act of participation will promote their buy-in*. The key difference is they will be inclined to buy versus resist being sold. Moreover, they will have a deeper understanding of what needs to be accomplished. It will be far more than an intellectual understanding. They will feel it in their being and, as such, more attuned to the messaging, target-customer, etc.

- Additionally, *they will begin thinking about ideas*, hopefully, BIG Campaign Ideas. It's the idea that translates the strategic language into compelling customer language that gets target-customers to *realize* the message and take-action.
- Finally, in those instances where you cannot fiat the development of dueling briefs it may negate its need or *minimize its potential for damage*.

Want to ensure your creative brief inspires the creative team then invite them to participate in its development.

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