

The Design Research Brief



SUPPLEJACK™

Why is briefing such a challenge?

Briefing a design researcher should be **simple and easy**. But when people are concerned about risks, it's easy to **complicate** things to make sure all bases are covered.

A good briefing reduces your **risks** and increases your **gains**. It helps you and a design researcher **clarify** the challenge you face and your exact **needs**. Most importantly, it helps you work out if you and a prospective design researcher can **work well together**.

Here's how to develop a **simple, robust, effective** brief.

This tool draws on Barbara Minto's *The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing and Thinking* (1987, 2002). ISBN: 0960191038

Why brief a design researcher?

Design researchers are experts in helping you understand **what** your customers want, **why** they want it, and **how** to deliver it to them. Whether you are developing a product, service or brand, the quality of this expertise will be vital.

A good design researcher combines analytic, creative and communicative skills. The onus is on him/ her to learn **what** you need, **why** you need it, and **how** best to deliver it to you.

So you can make your briefing easier by encouraging a design researcher to **demonstrate** her or his skills.

What questions will a design researcher have?

A design researcher will have four basic questions (you might have these too as part of the project). Exploring these basics together at the start is vital.

1. Who? Who is the customer? What do you know about them?
2. Why? Why are you developing the product or service? What outcomes do you want for yourself and for your customers?
3. What? What is the idea or opportunity? What do you expect the developed product or service to do? What do you need to know about this from customers?
4. How? How do you expect your developed product or service to work? What do you need to know about this from customers?

What topics might your briefing cover?

As you answer these four questions, you can address three others to build a more robust briefing.

1. What is your situation? What does your organisation do? What is the challenge – the idea, problem or opportunity – that is driving your organisation to do this research?
2. What makes it complicated for you? What might limit or complicate your organisation's ability to address the challenge?
3. What are your expectations of design research? What expectations, values and approaches do you favour that might shape the design research?

What are some other key details to address?

Some other key details you might want to address are listed below.

1. The history of the challenge – what you know about it
2. Your desired outputs – what you want design research to deliver
3. Your decision-making – how decisions are made
4. Your team – who the design researcher would work in with
5. Your process – how you develop products and services overall
6. Your procedures – any specific values and practices
7. Your timetable and budget – project parameters

What might your briefing look like?

A good briefing involves both **verbal** and **written** communication. It also involves **exploring your needs** and **evolving ideas together** for the best ways to address them. Here's some ways to build a good briefing process.

1. Write a short, simple brief of a few pages only with a bullet-point summary on the front page
2. Discuss your brief and invite questions, insights and ideas
3. If the briefing is part of a pitch, select a design researcher who provides insights and ideas, and who you believe can work well with you

Please help us by providing feedback about this tool. You can do this by completing this brief, 6-question Survey (http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Supplejack_Tools) or by contacting us directly.

Thanks for your interest!

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