

10 TIPS ON WRITING A BRIEF FOR A COPYWRITER

I'm always sceptical when a prospective new client contacts me to write some material for them but they haven't done the groundwork yet. The person starts off by saying, "We've jotted down some basic notes and will send these along with a technical manual about the product. Can you please write something fresh and appealing?"

This is almost an impossible task unless the client has put in some serious time answering the following questions. Writers are not magicians, or mind readers, or have a crystal ball (well most don't); instead they are researchers and writers.

But before we can put fingers to keyboard, we need to know a whole lot of information. You need to prepare a brief, which you can do from the following checklist. Once you have it clear in your mind what you want, then it's time to speak to the writer.

Talking to the writer first, is definitely the way to waste time and money.

1. Decide what your product or service is. Don't say a new way to get finance, that's too broad. Narrow it down – refinancing an existing property. Or whatever fits your product or service.
2. Decide the type of material you want the writer to produce. Is it a brochure, a report, copy for a website, a press release. For example, if it's a brochure how many pages are there, how many colours, and the type of graphics required.
3. Define the audience, or target market, including age, financial standing, and other demographics.
4. Is the product or service for general consumption or are you going to sell it business to business?
5. Once you know the material to be produced and who will read it, you will have a better understanding of what tone and style will suit. If the age demographic is 18-24 the material will have a different tone and style to something for retirees.

6. Describe the major benefits the customer can expect from the product or service. If the product is unique, what makes it so and is there any other competition. You can't claim it's unique if it isn't. What you're determining is the unique selling point, which is different to a unique product or service. If the product is more common, you may have a unique way to promote it.
7. Has this product or service been promoted before, if so in what form and how was it received in the marketplace.
8. If this is the first time the product has been promoted, what are your expectations? What do you want new customers to do?
9. Does the product or service have a deadline or a use by date?
10. How will you track the success of the promotion?

The Next Step

When you find a copywriter that you think you can work with, tell them everything about your business, products and service. He or she will need to know as much as possible which makes it easier to shape the type of material that is right for you and the consumer.

If you couldn't write the material with all the knowledge you have about your company and product, how do you expect a writer to dream up an idea without you having done the groundwork.

About the Author:

Barb is a successful business writer/editor/communicator. She writes in plain language and believes material for print and the web should be clear, concise and user-friendly. Please visit her website at www.barbclews.com to find out more.