

THE AMAZON GUIDE TO

Writing a PR brief



What is a PR brief?



Working with a PR agency can bring enormous benefits, whatever your organisation. It can help improve your profile with the right audiences, shape people's views and stir them into action. However, to achieve the right results, you need to make sure your agency understands exactly what you're hoping to accomplish. Your reasons for employing an agency will always be unique, so it's important to pass on all the relevant information to make sure your agency knows your reasoning inside out. This is equally true if you're inviting agencies to pitch for your business, starting on work with a newly appointed agency or even embarking on a new project with an established agency.

The best way of making sure an agency understands your thinking is to prepare a brief. This should encapsulate where you're coming from, where you want to get to and what considerations need to be taken along the way. There are many models for writing a brief, but here we'll outline one way of structuring a brief which will give an agency the information they need and allow you to communicate clearly, knowing you're on the same wavelength.

Writing a PR brief, especially for the first time, can appear daunting – but don't be put off. By following Amazon's structured approach, it should be easy to set out the information that will make everyone's job easier.

The Amazon PR brief template



A comprehensive PR brief should include as many of the following points as possible:

Background

What has led you to this campaign or project?

Communications objectives

What are the specific goals you want to achieve through communications activity?

Target audiences

Who are you aiming to influence or engage? Can you define them demographically?

Communications channels

Do you know how you want to reach your audiences?

Messages

What do you want them to understand or believe as a result of your communications work?

Potential challenges

Are you aware of any difficulties which will need to be addressed?

Timescales

When do you want activities to happen? How long do you have to prepare?

Budget

How much do you have to spend? This may affect the choice of activities

Evaluation

How will you judge if activity has been successful?

You may be looking for a PR agency to help you answer some of these questions using their experience and resources. If so, make this clear – it will help them understand what you're looking for and get the job done quickly and effectively.

Background

The first thing an agency needs to know is a little bit about your background. You may take for granted the unique situation of your organisation, but it's likely that people on the outside have much less knowledge of the subtleties.

Provide as much information as you can to give your agency an understanding of where your organisation began and where it is today. Give an overview of what you do and the services you provide. You might like to include pointers on other organisations that operate in the same field and how you would like to appear distinct from them. If you can, include information on any other marketing or corporate plans your organisation may already have in place. PR campaigns work best when they reflect or complement overall organisational objectives.

Communications objectives

It helps to make clear from the outset exactly what you want to achieve from communications activity and make it as measurable as possible. You may

have specific aims – such as recruiting a certain number of volunteers or reaching particular groups with information – or you may simply want to raise your profile with the public in general. Even if the answer is the latter, it helps to think through exactly how you would like the public to perceive your organisation. As a first-class service provider? As a leading campaigning voice? Think about your ideal outcome and condense this into a few clear points.

Target audiences

Your audiences will depend on your objectives. You may have a clear idea of who you need to communicate with, and detailed demographic information on your donors, service users or members; or you may be looking for your agency to help define your priorities. Either way, sharing as much information as possible will help them devise activities to make sure the message hits the right target.



You might be surprised. Actually writing a brief down in black and white can be highly rewarding and revealing. It might help you clarify a whole spectrum of issues including, for example, why certain PR activities may not have worked for you in the past or what shapes your image in other people's eyes.

Communications channels

This is another area where you may be looking for an agency to supply fresh ideas, but you may equally be clear already that the best way of communicating with your target audience is through the tabloid press, regional media, social media or face to face. Whatever your ideas, share them clearly for discussion.

Messages

Your exact messages may differ from campaign to campaign and may need further work to ensure they are attuned to your target audiences. However, giving your agency an idea of what you want to get across, in the form of a few bullet points, will help them work out the best method for communicating your aims.

Potential challenges

You may be aware of factors which could affect your work with an agency or the outcome of your campaign – for example, staffing changes, competitor activity or media fatigue with the issues you represent. By giving your agency warning of these factors, you will give them the best chance of planning around them to maximise your chances of success.

Timescale

You may be looking for a year's worth of ongoing PR support or for help with a particular campaign over a shorter period. Letting an agency know the duration of your planned activity will give them an idea of what kind of tactics would be most effective – for example, a survey could be turned around in a couple of weeks, but may not get coverage in monthly magazines because they work several months in advance.



Based on the information you share, an agency may be able to suggest a completely new approach or ways of enhancing your existing approach. Working together closely and sharing information clearly will give you the best possible chances of mounting a successful PR campaign.

Budget

Your budget will dictate to an extent what kind of communications programme is possible – for example, a small budget may prevent you from holding a conference for 500 professionals, but might enable you to reach them by means of a specially designed booklet. Giving an agency this kind of information up-front will allow them to present you with effective but realistic ideas.

Evaluation

At Amazon, we believe passionately in honest evaluation of everything we do. This gives our clients the ability to judge for themselves the success or otherwise of our work and decide whether changes need to be made in future. Think about what success would look like for you and how it could be measured. Set clear criteria for reporting results early, as this will allow your agency to build your expectations into everything they do.

Other information

You may have additional information that you want to convey or other supporting documents which could clarify points. The more you can share, the closer your agency will come to creating a programme of activity that's just right for your needs.

We hope you found this guide useful. If so, you might want to check out our other guides: *The Amazon Guide to Hiring a PR agency* and *The Amazon Guide to Working with a PR agency*.



Photographs from www.third-avenue.co.uk

Whether you need a high-profile launch to put your organisation on the map, a sustained programme of public information, interim support or a long-term communications partner, Amazon will be happy to talk to you about your PR needs. Please contact Louise Morriss, Managing Director, on 020 7700 6952 or e-mail info@amazonpr.co.uk