

Stating Your Intentions— How Marketing Briefs Can Help ©

By Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

Every business knows how important marketing is—in essence, marketing is the vehicle that tells your story. The challenge with marketing is that it is such a wide-open arena that often your messages can become inconsistent and thus confusing to your clients. Focusing on the intent of your message and creating a systematic approach to every marketing project will improve your consistency, and thus your results. In this month's article we will introduce you to one of the tools of our trade — the Marketing Brief. A Marketing Brief is a systematic approach to ensuring your marketing method and message is on track.

Below are 11 subjects that should be discussed briefly (though not necessarily quickly) about each of your marketing efforts and/or projects.

Tip From The Business Lab: To introduce this concept into your organization, consider completing your first Marketing Brief as a team. Pick an upcoming project (or even one you've recently completed) and address the following items. Use this initial brief as a template for all future projects—updating and refining as you go.

Project Description. Name the project and briefly describe what is being developed: brochure, postcard, self-mailer, promotion, advertisement, etc. Indicate the quantity (if applicable) and budget. Note: when naming the project get more personal than “fall brochure.” It helps to define the character of the project if you can get more creative and personal. Example: Our big image piece—Why we care brochure!

Market Situation. Give a brief synopsis of the immediate marketing issues. Example: We have a significant opportunity to expand our presence in the multi-family market by targeting two main categories: major REITS and mid-sized owners/property management companies. We are in a very positive position to establish relationships with the top 150 REITS due to our existing relationship with ABC Company. The deregulation of the energy market will create both opportunities with smaller companies as well as significant competition. As with any new product or service, immediate buy-in from the masses is unrealistic. Any new concept or technology is adopted by the market in stages so our focus should be on education and awareness to allow us entry into this area.

Communication Objective. List your primary and secondary purposes for this project. Example: Primary purpose is to educate our prospects on how we can solve their problem. Secondary purpose is to gain exposure and awareness and to establish a firm presence in the marketplace.

Marketing Objective. State the big picture—what you are trying to achieve. Example: To become the premier source for upscale / high-end living choices in the Columbus area.

Target Audience. Get more specific and describe your target audience. Touch on: title, department, industry, size, and geography. Note: The more specific you can get here, the more clear your message becomes. Example: Human resource directors of companies that employ 5000 plus located in Texas, Louisiana, and Georgia.

Customer/Client Promise. State your promise. What will your target audience believe about you and your company as a result of this project? Example: Our promise to our clients is that we understand the market so well, we can save them time, money and even offer new sources of income opportunities.

Key Support For Promise. Indicate specific information you will use to support your promise. Example: We will use case studies and client testimonials to educate and show credibility. We will list the awards we've won and the professional organizations we are members of to further demonstrate our expertise and position in the marketplace. The consistent, professional and unique look of all our marketing pieces will also enhance our position and promise.

Call To Action. Indicate what you want your prospect/client to do once they've received this specific marketing piece. Example: Log on to our web site at www.thebusinesslab.com to register for our FREE marketing newsletter and visit our portfolio.

Look/Feel/Tone/Manner. Describe the look and feel are you going after. How will you tie this look/feel into your overall corporate image? What specific elements will you include to be certain this marketing piece fits within your corporate identity standards? Example: We've established a signature look with the use of black dithered halftones saturated with our XYZ Corporate blue—we will apply this technique on this piece and all pieces this year.

Mandatory Information. List the elements that must be included on this piece. Example: phone numbers, toll free numbers, web site address, logo and tag line, legal disclaimer, etc.

Related Marketing Activities. List the other marketing activities that you have done recently as well as those you know are upcoming and check for creative consistency. Example: This is a series of ads leading up to the big trade-show. It will be important that the elements established here can easily relate/translate to our booth and the collateral we will hand out.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic or would like to receive our FREE Service Ideas Booklet, please send an E-mail to kathy@thebusinesslab.com, visit our Web site at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-374-0569.

Author's Note: Kathy Ellis is a Marketing Coach and the owner of The Business Lab, a full service marketing and graphic design company. We specialize in creativity and helping you think outside the box. We then help you implement those creative ideas through programs including database marketing, Web sites, interactive CD brochures, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials. We share with you our FREE newsletter to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX at 281-374-0170 or by E-mail at kathy@thebusinesslab.com