Working to a brief in the media Industry

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## What is a brief?

A brief lays out details of what is required from a media provider for a particular project. A brief can include things like; the name of the project, contacts, background to the project, the aims and objectives, guidelines, who the target audience is, timings such as when it needs to be finished by and budget available, payments etc.

There are formal briefs and informal briefs and there are different types of brief structure. These are; tenders, competitions, commissions and contracts.

## Formal Briefs

A formal brief will have a contract between the client and the provider. It shows what is expected from the provider like deadlines, budgets, targeted audiences etc. The client knows exactly what they want and gives clear instructions, guidance and details to the provider.

What happens with a formal brief is that

1. The client provides a brief.
2. The production company sits down and thinks about how they can create a product to meet the brief. They will create a vision, research ideas and pre-production issues.
3. These ideas are pitched to the client so the client can see what the product will look like
4. There can be negotiation at this point
5. A contact will be made up including deadlines and budget.

## Informal Briefs

An informal brief doesn’t have such specific detail. A client has an idea of what they would like and makes an agreement with a provider to create the product. There may be some guidelines but the client relies on the expertise and judgement of the production company to create the product.

## My experiences of working to briefs

We are given plenty of experience working to briefs in college as all our assignments are given to us as briefs. They always have dates on when they are given, when they are due in and what is expected to be included in our assignments and how to get the best grades. It is important to read through the brief carefully and it can take me several times reading through it to understand what the tutor is looking for.

## Informal Brief Personal Experience

#### Foyle Hospice- Social Action Project

In the first year of my course, I worked as part of a team to make a short film about the work of the Foyle Hospice.

Client brief: Donal, the CEO of the hospice wanted a short film that showed the work of the hospice aimed at young people. He wanted to be able to show it in schools and also he wanted the services that the hospice has for young people to be highlighted. I did my research by looking through the website was given access to the services of the hospice including staff members, volunteers and users. I was given freedom to film and edit and worked with Donal in post production. To make sure we met his brief we added plenty of footage speeded up as some young people have short attention spans. We used music and we interviewed not only the woman who works with young people in the Healing Hearts Service but a child who had used the service. I went with my own instinct on what I would like to watch as I am young.

#### What I learned

It was useful experience to be part of making the film about the Foyle Hospice. I learned plenty of skills like working in a team, negotiating as well as technical skills like lighting, editing, framing shots etc. It was also interesting to learn more about the Foyle Hospice and the work they do.

Another informal brief that I worked on was I made a video for my auntie after her husband died. During the wake she was talking to a woman who also had lost her husband and she said she wished she had made a video for her kids to see when they were older. The brief was informal. My Auntie wanted two versions, a long version and an edited version of about ten minutes. The long version (which was 2 hours) included the full run of events with a little bit of editing to ensure it looked smooth. I also included photo montages that were used with original background music of her husband singing. The shorter version included highlights. There was no pre-production as it was all done in a very tight timescale and it was very informal as it was for a family member as a keep- sake for her children and for family members who couldn’t attend.

## Types of Brief

In the media different types of brief are used and they each have different advantages and disadvantages.

## Tender

In a tender the client advertises their brief and different production companies pitch for the contract with their ideas and their budget. Tendering is often done by companies who have public money or big organisations like government agencies. This means that the process is fair and every-one gets an opportunity to make a pitch. Tenders are an open invitation for any-one to make a pitch.

#### Advantages

There are advantages to tendering. Different companies may put in a tender so the client can look at the different ideas. The company usually puts in a price as well so the process can be competitive for the client. A production company gets experience in how to put together a tender. It is also fair rather than hearing about an opportunity through word of mouth or it being given to a friend or a relative.

#### Disadvantages

Putting a tender together can be a lot of work and the company may have to work very hard using a lot of time and resources in researching and putting together a pitch. This can be a waste if you don’t get chosen. Also a client might choose a provider because the budget is cheaper and not even look at the creative ideas.

#### Examples of tenders

Here are links to different tenders

1 <https://www.yortender.co.uk/procontract/attachment_19.nsf/dsp_frm_attachments/ATT-9SKE-CRFUOI/$FILE/Tender%20Brief%20for%20Radio%20Advert.docx>

This first tender is a brief to provide an 8 week radio advertising campaign to promote an organisation called Enterprising Young People which provides support to help young people set up their own business. It includes who the target audience is, how they want to used mixed mediums such as radio and websites, a budget, insurance details and a timescale.

2 <https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=11&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB8QFjAAOApqFQoTCL-Zu_nhhcgCFcQ7FAodiAQDRg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.keepscotlandbeautiful.org%2Fmedia%2F149343%2Fcommunications-itt-brief-7-oct-2013.pdf&usg=AFQjCNHjrXz1W8QW2t_d_vZEi7FktvACxw&sig2=FLySu9i2aYGaNE0-0yT1zw>

This is a tender to provide marketing and communication services for a charity called Keep Scotland Beautiful. This tender is by invitation only, so it is not open to all. The brief is to increase public awareness of the charities work and is looking for previous experience and expertise of the company that is making the tender as well as for specifications in how they are going to do the job.

3 <https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=27&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CEIQFjAGOBRqFQoTCNa3847lhcgCFUfWFAod-UIKRQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdownloads.bbc.co.uk%2Fcommissioning%2Fsite%2Fgardeners-question-time-tender-2015.pdf&usg=AFQjCNGxK581djQ0-sceZMhPH8458VXH8g&sig2=b263-9feyFf_5pUnfnH__A>

This is a tender for a two year contract to make Gardener’s Question Time for Radio 4. It is aimed at Independent companies who work for the BBC and provides details such as the target audience, deadlines and that they are looking for a ‘fresh approach’.

## Commission

A commission brief is when a large media organisation (e.g. BBC, ITV) hires an independent media company to make a programme or a series for them. The brief is usually formal and after the commission had been undertaken then it can become contractual. This means that if the contract is broken, the company could be taken to court. The brief will include what is expected, who the target audience is, and other details like style or subject.

#### Advantages

The client can buy the programming it needs without having to do all the admin on lots of different projects. The independent company can get its programmes seen and can earn money every time it is used or if it is sold on. The client knows what it wants and may give guidance or information such as research or contacts to make sure it gets the programme it wants.

#### Disadvantages

The commission brief would need to be clearly negotiated so both sides know their rights and their roles. There could be conflict over creative or other differences. The media company will have to fulfil the contract even it doesn’t agree with certain aspects of the way it is going. The client may have an unrealistic expectation like creating a programme within an unrealistic budget or timeframe.

Below are the links to the BBC and ITV commission pages which explain the process of commissioning, contacts and current opportunities. If a media company has an idea they can pitch it to the appropriate contact and if successful a contract would be negotiated.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/articles/who-we-are-how-we-commission>

## <http://www.itv.com/commissioning>

## Commission Brief-Personal Experience with Fixers

In college, as part of a project we have been given a commission brief. Everyone in the class has the same brief, even though we all are doing different projects. I am doing a project for Fixers.

<http://www.fixers.org.uk/>

Fixers is an organisation where young people create videos to highlight awareness about an issue that they have faced. The target audience is usually other young people, schools etc. We have been commissioned by the Northern Ireland Fixers representative, Chris Polluck, to make a factual documentary to show how Fixers work and what they do. It will be like a ‘fly on the wall’ documentary on the some-one making a video for Fixers and may be another class member. I am working in a team and we have had one meeting with Chris, organised by our tutor where he gave us a verbal brief. We have been researching videos to get a feel for what they do and are having another meeting with Chris to explore ideas and negotiate the brief further.

It is useful experience to work on briefs in the course as it builds experience and my portfolio

## Competition

A client can put out a brief as a competition. This is a good way for individuals and independent companies to gain experience. A brief is put out and there is a reward of cash or of an opportunity. Sometimes the brief is for an idea and pre-production and sometimes it is for the final product. Competitions are informal and there is usually no contract.

#### Advantages

A competition is a good way to break into the industry or to showcase talent. There is often a prize of money or of getting some publicity. It can help an individual or young company build up skills and a portfolio. It is an opportunity to work creatively.

#### Disadvantages

There is a lot of hard work, time and money used in entering a competition. Sometimes people enter competitions as part of their courses. There can be lots of entries so competition can be strong and it can be time-consuming to go through all the entries.

#### Examples of Competitions

### <http://www.oneshow.org/images/youngones/2015_YOS_KidsTech.pdf>

This competition was set up by ‘The One Show’ for participants to explore issues around ‘Kids and Technology’. Entrants had to be students on graphic design or advertising courses then finalists were invited to make a pitch. You had to pay a small fee to enter.

<http://www.indiewire.com/article/sundance-institute-announces-short-film-challenge-regarding-extreme-poverty>

This competition was funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and entrants had to make a short (3-8 minute) documentary on combating poverty. The finalists each would win $10,000 and their film would be screened at the Sundance Film Festival.

<http://www.ipa.co.uk/document/direct-creative-competition-brief>

This brief is a competition to win a marketing contract for running an event for a re-release of some music (‘Assault on Precinct 13’ by Death Waltz). The entrants had to submit a 90 second video showing how they would successfully publicise this release.

## Contracts

A contractual brief is when a client employs a media provider to complete a project for a specific job. A contract will be negotiated and signed by both parties. The contract will include all the guidelines, the specifications including budget and deadlines. It is a legal document. A media provider will be expected to deliver after entering a contract.

#### Advantages

Both parties know exactly what is expected of them.

#### Disadvantages

If the contract is breached there may be legal action which could be financially damaging as well as damaging reputation.

## References

Guidance Essay Template – Unit 5: Working to a brief in the media industries by Faustina Starrett.

<http://www.slideshare.net/chamahan/working-to-a-brief-16916973>

<http://www.slideshare.net/heather1405/example-briefs?related=1>