



The Anatomy of a Creative Brief

Far too many people think that great communication starts with creativity. A wild, unrestrained brainstorm that changes the way people see a product or service. The problem is, what you see as creativity, others may see as stupidity. And the end result could actually do more harm than good.

A better approach to making a real, lasting difference is to plan your communications content so the right message is delivered and then use focused creativity to enhance its impact and memorability.

So, whether you do it yourself or partner with a team of communications specialists, the first step in the development of a simple project or campaign is clarifying what you want to accomplish and how. Within our "Defining Your Difference" process that means organizing our thoughts and strategies in a document called a "Creative brief."

As you'll see, it defines in writing the "who," "what," "when," and "how" type questions that are the framework of legitimate business objectives. Helping everyone involved stay focused on communicating the same message to the same audience. And providing an objective criteria to judge the most appropriate message expression to achieve the desired results.

So, let's look at the type of information we gather and the format of a typical creative brief.

Background Information

We want to gather as much information as possible about your product or service, your competition, relevant market facts, etc., to develop as clear an understanding as we can of the background and business environment in which we will be communicating.

We want to know:

1. An explanation of the product/service environment and any recent trends.
2. The type of communication project (print/direct mail campaign, ad series, cross-media, etc.).
3. The product's/service's current standing in the market; are they the recognized leader? Second? Third?
4. If geographic considerations will influence execution?
5. Who is the primary competitor(s) and how does their product/service compare with our client's?
6. If timing will potentially impact (either increasing or decreasing buyer incentive) the communication of the product/service' i.e., seasonality?
7. If the communication project needs to be coordinated with any other sales, service or marketing initiatives that will be active during the same time?



Target Audience

We want to understand the target audience so that we can develop the best words, imagery and context to deliver our message. Statistical research is especially valuable when available.

We want to know:

1. Their common demographics (age, sex, education, job function, income, geography, etc.).
2. Their psychographics (attitudes, values, motivations, etc.).
3. Their buying habits (timing, quantities, features, etc.).
4. Other buying influencers.

Communications Objective

What action do we want the target audience to take after receiving our communication? What do we want them to know, do and feel?

Key Point To Communicate

What is our most significant competitive difference and what is the strongest promise of benefit that we can make because of that difference in order to motivate the target audience to take the action we desire?

Brand Personality

Defining the product or service in terms of adjectives (tone/manner/style) associated with the brand.

Supporting Copy Points

Each point should directly support the communications objective.

1. Product/service features and related benefits.
2. Any added incentive to purchase and the duration of its availability.

For copy points that do not directly support the communications objective, explain motive for inclusion.

Other Important Considerations

1. Any mandatory corporate policies and/or restrictions that must be considered.
2. Corporate identity standards.
3. Legal or safety disclaimers that must appear on all communications.
4. Budget limitations.
5. Pre-determined restrictions regarding dimensions, weights, materials, time limitations, personal dislikes, etc.

Let's look at an example...



Creative Brief

**FirstChoice Buying Co-op
New Market Introduction**



DIFFERENCE MAKERS

DATE: 10/16/09

PRODUCT OR SERVICE

FirstChoice Cooperative materials management service for municipalities
Full buying plan for all available products or services as well as a single product or service trial plan.

TARGET AUDIENCE

County Judges, County Commissioners and other city officials with influence on buying who are attending the North and East Texas County Judges and Commissioners Annual Conference.
This show's audience is County Judges and other county officials, but the co-op is in the process of expanding their target for marketing to include school districts and other large groups with similar purchasing needs.
It would be beneficial to find an appeal that would allow the co-op to market to multiple audiences with a common main visual and strategy.

BACKGROUND (MARKET CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES)

The co-op is trying to open up this market as a new source for revenue and membership.
County and city governments, school systems and other like groups spend millions of dollars purchasing materials that the co-op has contracts for. If the co-op can sign them up for even a single product agreement, they can usually turn that into additional business in time.
Since all government contracts, and sometimes each individual product, must be put out for bids, the co-op can usually compete very favorably because of their powerful buying leverage if they can just get into the bidding process. We need to raise the awareness of the co-op to get them on the list of bidders.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

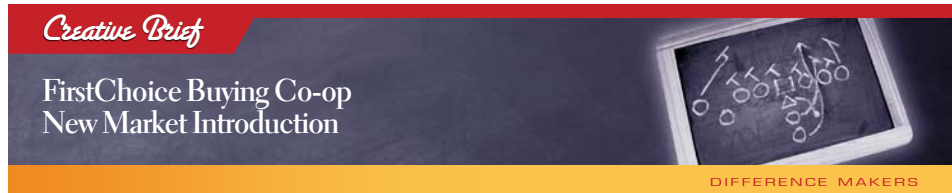
We want show attendees to provide contact information and request co-op information.
Before we get the attendees to give us information that will allow us to contact them again with a specific co-op presentation, we have to introduce them to the co-op. We have to make the benefit clear and begin building an awareness of your brand promise to "Help them make the right choice when it comes to materials management."
In addition, you want to encourage them to come to your show in August in order to see first hand the type of products and services they can purchase from the co-op.
Lastly, you want to inform them and sign them up for a single product buying agreement if at all possible, knowing that this is virtually a guaranteed way to get them to consider more products at a later date.





The anatomy of a creative brief - cont.

pg 4



KEY POINT TO COMMUNICATE

The attendees need to save money and the co-op's ability to save money make a good problem/solution match.

It will not take much effort to make a connection with the audience's need to improve cost-efficient purchasing. Most people are looking for a way to be more cost efficient these days.

The real key is to do it in a way that is both believable and uniquely memorable.

ADDITIONAL COPY POINTS

The case history from Tyler can be used as proof of the co-op's ability to fulfill its cost efficiency promise. The track record of the co-op to purchase materials for its medical clients can be used as extended proof as well. We must determine what can be said about this case history – how much is proprietary and how much is public knowledge?

The challenge is to present the co-op's benefit in a way that helps people quickly connect to and identify with your brand promise as well as making it different than all the other promises to save money. To build from the idea of saving money to the idea of saving money on many items to the idea of being part of a system that actually returns money with increased purchases.

The list of available products alone is an eye opener. Once the idea of saving money on an item repeatedly purchased is planted and supported, extending that concept to other items is not a difficult task. Some type of listing should definitely be part of the communications. Even the fact that you have a vendor show they can come and see for themselves (whether or not they do) is a persuasive argument.

Finally, the idea of trying one product before you buy into the whole program is a very easy way to let prospects test the value of the promise. This should be offered at the end of the message or as a separate component.

COMMUNICATION TONE

We want to convey a tone of practical resourcefulness.

Obviously we are appealing to the interest the audience has in saving money; but by doing it in such a way that we applaud and encourage the fiscal responsibility of the audience, we make them into champions instead of stereotypical greedy politicians. We think this will make them more responsive to your approach as well as any of their constituents who can either streamline or delay the decision-making process.

2 of 2

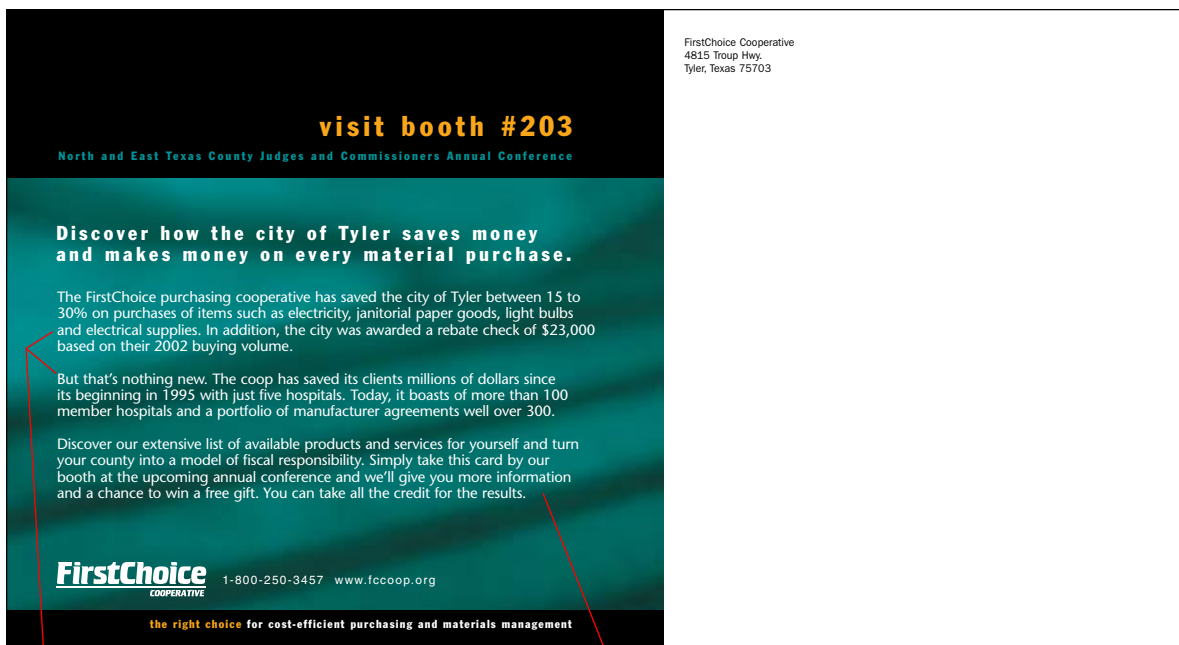
Now let's look at how this input shows up in the communications we produced...



Personalized Direct Mail Post Card Invitation



The Key Point to Communicate of "saving money" and the Communication Tone of practical resourcefulness are reflected in the headline and personal approach to the show invitation.



FirstChoice Cooperative
4815 Troup Hwy.
Tyler, Texas 75703

Additional Copy Points story of savings for city of Tyler and record of savings for medical clients help create credible story mentioned also in Key Point to Communicate.

Call to action to encourage reader to visit the trade show booth, request more information and discover how to save money comes from the Communication Objective section.



Handout for Direct Sales Support and Follow Up

The Key Point to Communicate of "saving money" featured as the focus of the headline and primary visuals

FirstChoice
COOPERATIVE

the right choice for cost-efficient purchasing and materials management

money off
on every purchase

money back
on every purchase

There's never been a better time to make fiscal responsibility a priority. Hospitals, governments, school systems and almost every major corporation is aggressively looking for ways to trim costs and bring in extra revenue. Here's a way to realize both objectives at once. The FirstChoice purchasing cooperative is a member-owned organization dedicated to maintaining cost-efficient and mutually beneficial relationships between purchasers and the vendors who serve them. Our combination of discounts, rebates and purchasing commitments makes the program a winner for everyone.

The core message of cost management and practical resourcefulness mentioned in the Key Point to Communicate and the Communication Tone are the main thrust of the introductory copy on the front of this handout.

The introduction of several audiences with similar needs and interests addresses a secondary desire in the Target Audience section to develop a plan that can be used later to open other markets with a similar message.



Handout for Direct Sales Support and Follow-Up

The story of the savings realized by the city of Tyler from the Additional Copy Points section is featured in a sidebar.

FirstChoice
COOPERATIVE

the right choice for cost-efficient purchasing and materials management

the right choice every time you purchase

FirstChoice will typically save you between 15–30% off what you would normally pay on common materials and services. All without membership or access fees. And all without tiered pricing so every member receives the same benefit opportunity.

In addition, we've negotiated with leading manufacturers to pay money back to the coop based on the achievement of contracted volumes. A rebate that is passed almost entirely back to each member according to their own purchases.

FirstChoice really works. We have the track record to prove it. From our beginning in 1995 with just five customers until today with a membership of over 300 organizations, we have handled purchases totaling almost one billion dollars. With rebates of over 15 million dollars distributed so far.

the right choice for a variety of purchases

Here are the types of products and services you can purchase through your FirstChoice membership:

Auto Parts	Laundry Chemicals	Paint
Light Bulbs	Books	Mailing Systems
Styrofoam Products	Ice Machines	Moving Services
Document Destruction	Housekeeping Products	Electrical Service
Electrical Supplies	Vehicle Graphics	Furniture
Computer Systems	Maintenance Supplies	Air Filters
Long Distance Plans	Paper Products	Office Supplies
Televisions/VCRs	Pay Phones	Food Services
Laundry Equipment	Carpet	Batteries
Phone Equipment	Floor Care Products	Copy Paper
Door Controllers	Rental Cars	Much, Much, More

the right choice is your choice

Because this organization is owned by its members, each member helps decide what categories of materials and services we consider, the vendors from whom we request proposals and which proposals are selected.

You also have a choice in how much you purchase through FirstChoice. You can contract for our entire program or just select products and services. That way you can test the program and the results.

So when you're ready to make the right choice for cost-efficient purchasing and materials management, make a call to FirstChoice. Do it today.

1-800-250-3457 www.fccoop.org

The main theme of the entire message comes directly from the Key Point to Communicate and Communication Objective.

This list of materials and services that can be purchased through the program is from the Additional Copy Points section.

City of Tyler discovers benefits of FirstChoice

- Coop member since January 2002.
- City experiences saving between 15–30% on purchases of materials such as electricity, janitorial paper goods, light bulbs and electrical supplies.
- City received a \$23,000 rebate check at the beginning of 2003 based on their purchase volume in 2002.
- City plans expanded participation citing efficiency and responsibility with taxpayer money and successful experience to date.



Trade Show Display

A portable display with matching message was developed for use at the show and future opportunities as well.