



In our role as marketing researchers we see briefs in all shapes and sizes. Research briefs, I hasten to add.

With the massive changes we are seeing in the world of marketing research driven by the growth in: available data; engagement channels; social media; user generated content; new methods; new technologies; analytics; AI; machine learning; concerns over privacy and so on, it is a source of bemusement at times that written research briefs are still often scant, lacking in key information, with unclear objectives or not done at all.

This may sound like a criticism of clients and prospective clients but it really isn't. It is just surprising that the briefing process seems to be so difficult to get right.

When teaching the subject, I always say "Without a good brief it is nearly impossible to get a good proposal". In the absence of a written brief we will often write one for the client and get agreement to it prior to delivering a proposal.

So here are my **five key tips** for writing that all important research brief:

1. **State the purpose** – what decisions do you need to take as a result of the research and why do they need to be taken?
2. **Write a 'shopping list'** – what information do you need to receive at the end of the research process to make those decisions. Writing a brief in this way short circuits the process of arriving at research objectives and enables the researcher or agency to deliver that information through the proposed method(s).
3. **Consider the research scope** – which products, services, markets, customers, clients, prospects, geographies, demographics etc.... need to be researched and why – if not clear from 1.
4. **Outline your preferred method** – what are your thoughts on the method that could be used? In general, most marketers have an initial view on how the research might be undertaken, via what channels and this can be a very good guide for developing the proposal.
5. **Think about timing and cost** – When is the research needed by? Yes, I know "ASAP" but think about the latest date by which the results must be available to make the decisions detailed in 1? Also, giving at least a rough guide on likely budget and insisting that the proposed costs are fully broken down so that you can see where your money would be spent is really worth considering.

Good luck with creating effective research briefs.

