

planning your creative project: the road map to success

At aha creative we are here to help you develop compelling and effective designs for print, text and electronic distribution that will get you and your organization noticed. But, how do we do it? What role do you play in the process?

If you're new to this whole "creative folks" thing, then this will give you a little overview of how we work and what you can expect. The creative brief allows you to help define your own road map if you want to plan ahead and make sure we're on track together. If you've worked with us before, you already know the drill and can feel free to use the creative brief anytime you like with your own planning. This document will offer you, in plain, non-creative-speak, an idea of how to plan and think about your project and the process we will follow to bring your project to completion.

one getting started

Your first step when embarking upon any creative project should be to answer the questions listed below. Before addressing details like selecting photos, choosing paper stock, etc. the answers to these questions will make it easier to make sure the project you choose is the best fit for your needs. They will also help maintain focus during the project's creation and development. In section three, we'll get more in-depth into the project specifics in the creative brief.

- What do you want this project to accomplish?
- Who is the primary audience for this project/piece (be specific)?
- What action do you want the audience to take after receiving/ seeing your creative piece (i.e. respond to a specific offer, call, seek more information, retain the item for reference)?
- Who needs to review and approve this project?
- Who will be your primary contact person to keep the project moving and answer questions?
- What is your target date for completion, launch or mailing?
- What is your budget?



two the process

Having a realistic understanding of the process will allow you to plan accordingly for deadline success. It is important to know there is no typical or standard timetable. Larger projects take longer than small ones and a project reviewed by committee will take far longer than one that needs approval from just one or two people. Each type of creative project will have a slightly different timeline, but this is meant to give you a basic idea of the steps we will go through together.

1. Initial meeting, discussion or email in which you share basic information about the project.
2. You receive cost estimates and a project plan, if applicable.
3. You approve the cost estimate and plan.
4. You provide any additional information, clarification, files, logos, photos, text, etc. as discussed in the initial meeting or plan.
5. aha creative provides you with a first proof.
6. You review proof and return it with your edits, requests or approval.
7. Additional proofs provided to you until you are satisfied that all edits have been made and you approve the final proof. (Your email or signature will serve as project approval.)
8. The finished project is prepared and sent for its final destination: production, printing, finishing, publishing, web, etc. - Finito!

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Brand attributes, promise, and mission. Outline brand equity, assets, and strengths. Primary and secondary brand attributes and differentiators. Define expected brand perceptions and adjectives. This is important so that every project adheres to your brand promise and vision.

Competition and positioning. Analysis of the competitive perspective, defining strengths and weaknesses, and determining how these are relevant to the project that will be developed. What are industry best practices and successes of the competition? Identify how are you set yourself apart from the competition and how you compare on product, service, price, benefits, etc.

Business objectives - criteria for success. Pinpoint the client's goals in developing a particular piece or service (i.e. Is the initiative meant to increase awareness, generate sales leads, educate existing clients, improve employee morale?).

Creative strategies. Define existing brand guidelines – (i.e. What is relevant and what isn't?) Logo, colors, images, typography, content requirements, information hierarchy, visual and editorial themes, tone and overall image. This is the section to turn subjective opinions into objective strategies.

Primary and secondary messages. Define the basic/bullet points of what your message will be, including your unique market position or niche. Supporting messages should define the messaging hierarchy—from most important primary message down to the least important.

Functionality specifications. This is mainly for web projects or other special, unique project requirements.

Comparisons. How the audience should perceive of the brand/product/service?
