How to Write an Effective and Inspirational Creative Brief

with Howard Ibach, the King of Creative Briefs that Sell

- Make sure you know your brand.
  - You can't write an effective brief if you don't know your brand. This is more than just the visual and verbal toolkit. This is about how your brand exists in the world.
  - You should be able to articulate why people use it, why people want it, and how they talk about it, how do they experience it, what they can expect from it, how is it different. Most importantly, how do they feel about it. It is very hard to create compelling creative around a product benefit because of the power of creative is in eliciting emotion. If you haven't figured out what that is, you don't have a brand and you will struggle to develop effective creative.
  - Once you know your brand, you should be able to simply and clearly articulate it. If you can't succinctly do this, you will struggle with developing creative because generally any creative execution is a succinct way of translating your brand. Keep in mind audiences have a very short attention span. Even "long form" content is like a 1-2 minute video.
- Build in the amount of time you need for real collaboration.
  - This is not an exercise that can be done in 20 minutes by one person. And you definitely shouldn't treat it like cut and paste job from other briefs you have done. What the tendency on the client side is for one person to create a draft and then pass it along to the next person to transcribe the client brief to deliver to the creatives. This sequential style of brief building doesn't leverage the most important aspect of developing a creative brief, conversation.
  - This conversation should occur two fold.
    - First on the client side, there should be a strategic conversation amongst all critical stakeholders about two critical points: first, what the work needs to do for the business. Be as specific as possible so you can have the right criteria by which to evaluate the work. Otherwise, discussions about creative work starts to become more subjective around what appeals to the receiver versus what is objective on what will appeal to your audience.
    - And regarding the audience, this is the second critical point, what does the consumer/customer/client need to feel and believe for this work to deliver for the business.
    - Second is internal to the creative agency where generally a second brief is written. In an ideal state, a conversation between strategists, creatives, and account folks would be had before a brief even gets transcribed for the creatives to work against. This helps drive clarity of objective, direction, guardrails so everyone is on the same page. The brief documents the convo.
- The brief should be a single page.
- Make the deliverable of the creative brief an idea.
  - The biggest mistake we see teams make is that they bypass the "idea" to get to the shiny stuff, the execution. The problem with that is that you start to evaluate the execution without even thinking if the idea behind it actually delivers on the brief. This is one of the biggest failures of creative.

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