

‘Developing creative solutions to meet the unique demands of the Life Sciences Industry.’



Lifescience Dynamics Ltd
28 Briar Dene
Pinkeys Green
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 6SF
England UK

Registered in England No. 5214740

How to write a market research brief

A market research brief is a document whose objective is to ensure that a client understands the market research requirements stated for a market research firm and in turn, assists in conducting more informative market research. Normally, the next step is to send the brief to one or more market research agencies, such as Revelation Consultants, (<http://www.revelationconsultants.com/>) who will then respond with either a proposal or a quote. The proposal recommends the best method for finding a solution, how much it will cost and a frame of time in which the problem should be solved. Other names for briefs are RFP's (Request for proposal) or RFQ's (request for quote). The resulting proposal is also known as a tender or bid, especially in government or public organisations.

Are you ready to write a market research brief? The following is a step-by-step guide on how to write a market research brief:

Step 1 – Pinpointing the needs of the business and its research objectives

The first step is to fully understand the underlying business problem, opportunity or decision at hand. Find out all you can about it by interaction. Obtain feedback from internal customers by asking questions and listening to comments and concerns. It is also a good idea to obtain exact definitions and eliminate any ambiguity. Then, ask yourself the following questions:

Is the problem of considerable strategic or tactical importance? How big is the risk associated with the decision? After that, try to figure out what your business objectives are and how to help meet them. Equally important is identifying the research objectives that the study is expected to fulfil. This involves an in-depth conversation with the client. Make sure you fully understand the task at hand inside and out. The more knowledge the research agency receives about the desired end user of the research, the better they can meet your needs.



Step 2 – What to include in the brief

The importance of a brief lies in whether it expresses the problems clearly and distinctly, allowing the agency to prepare an appropriate response. The following is a list of elements that a brief should not be without:

- **Background**
 - This is a analysis of the of the business issues that make up the foundation for the market research study. Summarising relevant, prior research is highly advisable.
- **Business Objectives**

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- Once you understand the key business objectives of the research brief take a little time to express them in your own words. It is also a good idea to make sure you are able to answer the following question: what sort of decisions do you expect to be able to make as a result of the research?
- **Research Objectives**
 - This is a short outline of what you expect to achieve. The best method is to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Relevant, and Timed. For example: Be careful to keep your objectives realistic and focus on your goals.
- **Information Requirements**
 - This is a checklist of the objectives and requirements of the study.
- **Expected use of results**
 - This is where you explain to the agency how the results of the study will be used; also referred to as the decision outcomes or applications of the research.
- **Action Standards**
 - Let the agency know of any action standards against which the decisions will be made. Actionable standards are decisions made beforehand that determine what would produce a good or poor result. Be prepared to discuss and review these in the light of agency's experience.
- **Useful Information and critical issues**
 - Always make sure that the research brief contains the information the agency needs to make its decision on which approach to use. Don't forget to provide an estimate of the costs and timings. In addition, including details such as the location of the briefing meeting and how many presentations are required, etc, is a great idea.
- **Approach to research**
 - This is letting the agency know which method is expected to be used in the research. Agencies are encouraged to suggest methodological alternatives to the client along with explanations to backup their choice.
- **Deliverables**
 - This is a list of deliverables that are expected from the agency. They can include the following:
 - A verbal presentation
 - A report
 - Other deliverables (such as tabulation and attendance at progress meetings)



Please Note: If you want the agency just to provide fieldwork, you may want a survey analysis or you may also need consultation as well as recommendations. Be sure that you express your expectations when you deliver the research.

Agency selection criteria

This is a detailed and specific list of the criteria by which agencies will be chosen. Including references for similar projects and experience will be helpful.

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Just a couple of suggestions: 1.) If a budget has already been agreed upon, indicate that amount to the agency. 2.) If time constraints exist they should be referred to so that the appropriate methodology can be used.

Step 3 - Select your agencies

Now you can choose to either send your research brief to an agency with which you have had business dealings in the past or make the brief a competitive tender. It is usual for three agencies to be invited to tender, but if that is the case, let them know that the tender is competitive. Be sure that all of the agencies competing for the tender meet your criteria.

Step 4 - Evaluate the proposal

Investigate whether the agencies have sufficiently answered your brief and ensure that they understand the issues involved. The most efficient way to do this is to ask yourself the following questions about the agency:

- Have they offered an appropriate solution?
- Do they have the resources and experience required?
- Is the fee acceptable?
- What alternative methodologies have they offered?

If this is the first time you are using this agency, it is advisable to invite the agency to your office to give a demonstration of their skills and past experiences. This is a great way to know the agency and its personnel better. The more comfortable you feel with the agency and vice versa, the more positive the result will be.



Step 5 - Select the agency

It is good business practice to respond to the agencies that were not selected to undertake the research. Providing these agencies with feedback will help them in the future. It is also advisable to confirm the expected service (e.g. timing, methodology, price, deliverables, and changes made in discussions) with the successful agency. Such a confirmation should always be put in writing.