



How to Write a Research Brief for Effective Results

A research brief is an essential tool in formulating a plan to procure, manage and implement actionable research to improve your asset's performance.

A research brief is most effective when it is a concise and considered document. Most research briefs generally do not need to exceed two - three pages. Any supporting material that needs to be included can be done so as an appendix.

A research brief is made up of eight key sections.

Section 1: Background

In this section describe in 1-2 paragraphs the history of the centre and the current status. This may include:-

- The development timeline of the centre
- Recent trading performance
- Recent competitive changes
- Other trading issues

Section 2: The Issue

In this section concisely identify the critical issues facing the centre and why they need to be addressed. This should only take 1-2 paragraphs, and should clearly identify the nature of the matter to be resolved.

Section 3: The Objective

In solving the issues outlined in Section 2 it is important to state the Research Objectives. These are usually in bullet point and may include items such as:

- Identify current trade area boundaries
- Identify current users and non-users of Centre X
- Understand customer preference to marketing options 1 - 3.

Section 4: Information Requirements

This is where any exact information required from the objectives should be listed in approximately 6 to 8 brief points. This would include the depth of information needed. For example, with proposed centre changes what is the percentage of customers likely to be converted to users of Centre X from the suburb of ABC.

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Section 5: Target Market

Who is this research project targeting?

Who is the crucial person on whom the decision is to be taken?

Do specific segments need to be identified or geographic areas need to be addressed?

For example, women with high disposable income living in suburb ABC.

Section 6: Application of Findings

It is useful to set out what the findings are going to be used for. For example if you receive a positive result to idea Number 1, will you then:

- Redevelop the centre at a budget of \$90 million over two years
- Remix the centre over 6 months at a budget of \$2 million
- Re-market the centre over 12 months at a budget of \$100,000

It is also useful to identify who the business audience of the Research Project will include. For example is this for the Board of Trustees, Senior Management, or Internal centre level only.

Section 7: Timing

What is the research project completion date required? What expectations and real deadlines are imposed, keeping in mind the fall of school holidays and other time barriers? It is important to note any Key Dates that would be affected in the project overruns or is curtailed e.g. Board Meetings.

Section 8: Budget Estimate

Where ever possible avoid putting To Be Advised. If you have a budget put it in so the best possible solution can be designed around your budget outline.

It is important here to also state if you require a “real” budget proposal and/or an “optimal” budget proposal.

A “real” budget proposal means “what can you do for my issue under \$A?” and an “optimal” budget means “what do I need to do to solve this issue to the full extent stated if budget \$A was not a barrier”.

This approach allows you to ascertain the cost/benefit of your Research Brief and the resultant research recommendations.

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