



**Better**Briefs  
Project

# Topline Global Report



## How did the BetterBriefs Project come about?

Two strategists wanting to better understand why there's so much confusion and misalignment around marketing briefs and the briefing process.



# An important topic, lightly researched

## UK

*The Briefing Process* by IPA, MCCA, PRCA & ISBA (2003).  
Sample size = 277 (121 marketers and 156 agencies).



## NL

*Reclamebriefing. Een goede brief is het halve werk* by SWOCC (2007).  
Literature study, including 37 interviews with marketers and agencies.



## USA

*Enhancing Client-Agency Relationships* by the ANA (2015).  
Sample size = 231 (126 marketers and 105 agencies).

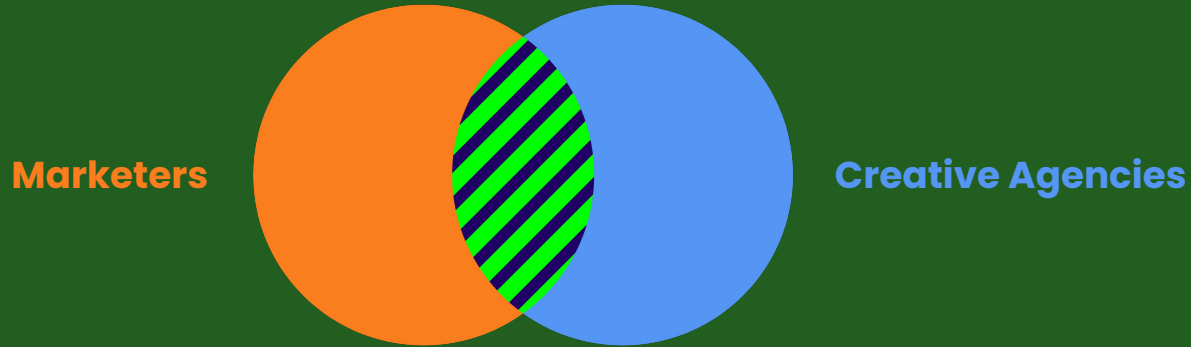


## Global

*Briefing for Integrated Communications* by the WFA (2014 & 2017).  
Sample size = 78 (32 brand owners and 46 from agencies) for the '17 study.



## The aim of the project



A survey to help agencies and marketers better understand where marketing briefs fail and where they succeed.

We hope the results help both parties have better and more objective conversations on how to make briefs better.



# An online survey with a difference

Created in conjunction with [Flood+Partners](#).

A quant. survey built to engage and involve people.

Fresh question formats made to capture Type 1 emotional responses *and* to elicit deeper thoughtful consideration.

The result: a vivid picture generated from over 1,700 highly engaged respondents.

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RESEARCH FOR HUMANS



# Sample

USA 172

UK 508

AUS 383



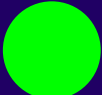
1731 respondents  
from 70 countries

944 from marketing  
organisations

and 786 from  
creative agencies



## Glossary of terms

-  **marketer** = brief-writers, contributors and approvers all employed by a brand (aka the client).
-  **creative agency** = account managers, strategists, creatives or management (aka the agency).
-  **marketing brief** = the brief written by the client, for the purposes of developing a creative solution (aka the client brief).





## Part 1: The Problem

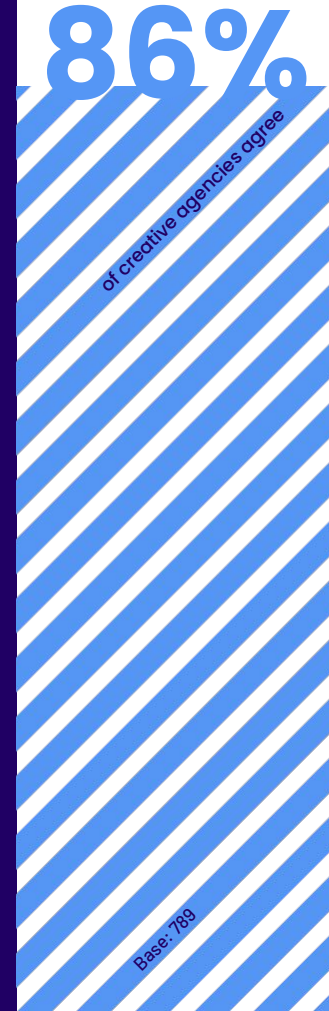
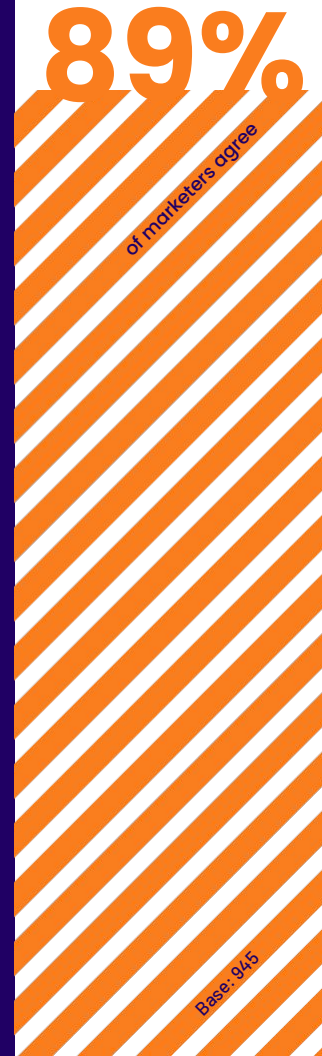
**Marketers and agencies  
are on different planets**





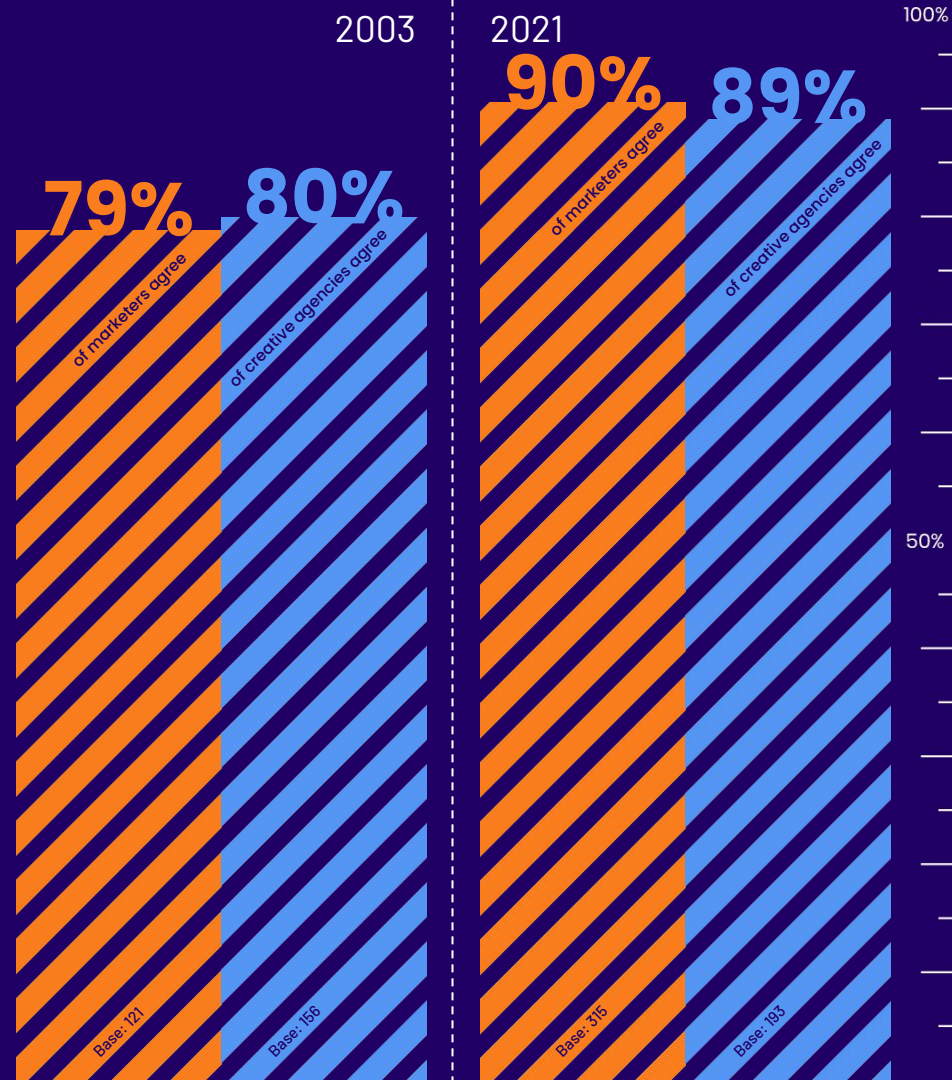
# Both marketers and agencies agree that briefs are important

'It's difficult to produce good creative work without a good marketing brief'



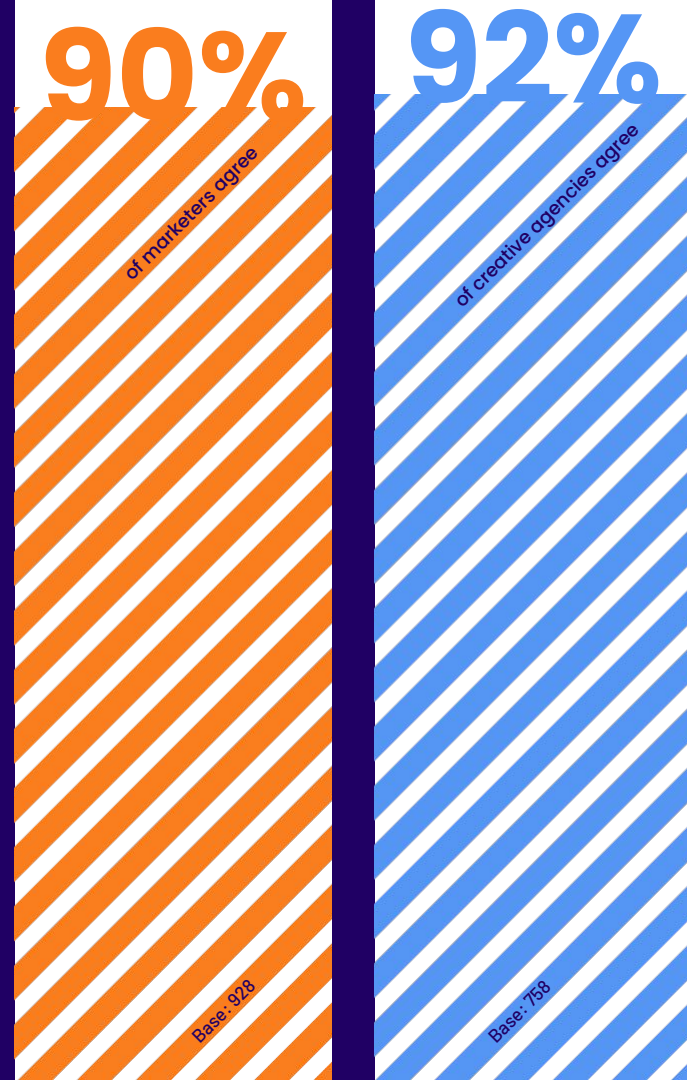
In the UK, briefs have grown in importance since the last time they were researched

'It's difficult to produce good creative work without a good marketing brief'



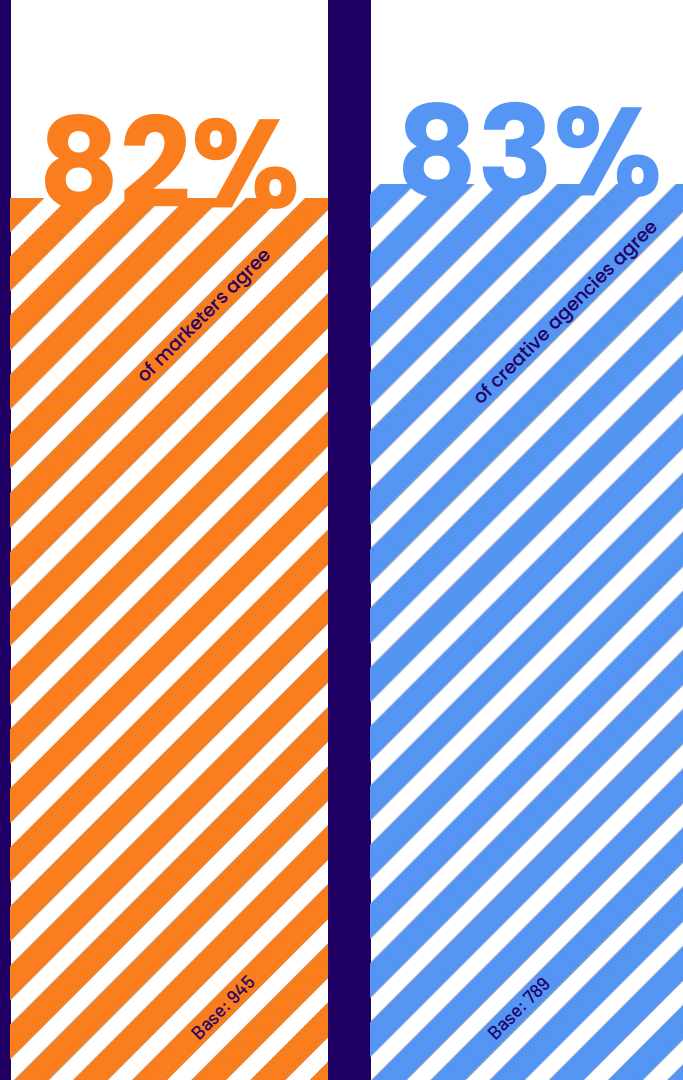
However, despite their importance and value, most marketing briefs are neglected

'The brief is one of the most valuable and paradoxically most neglected tools marketers have to create good work'



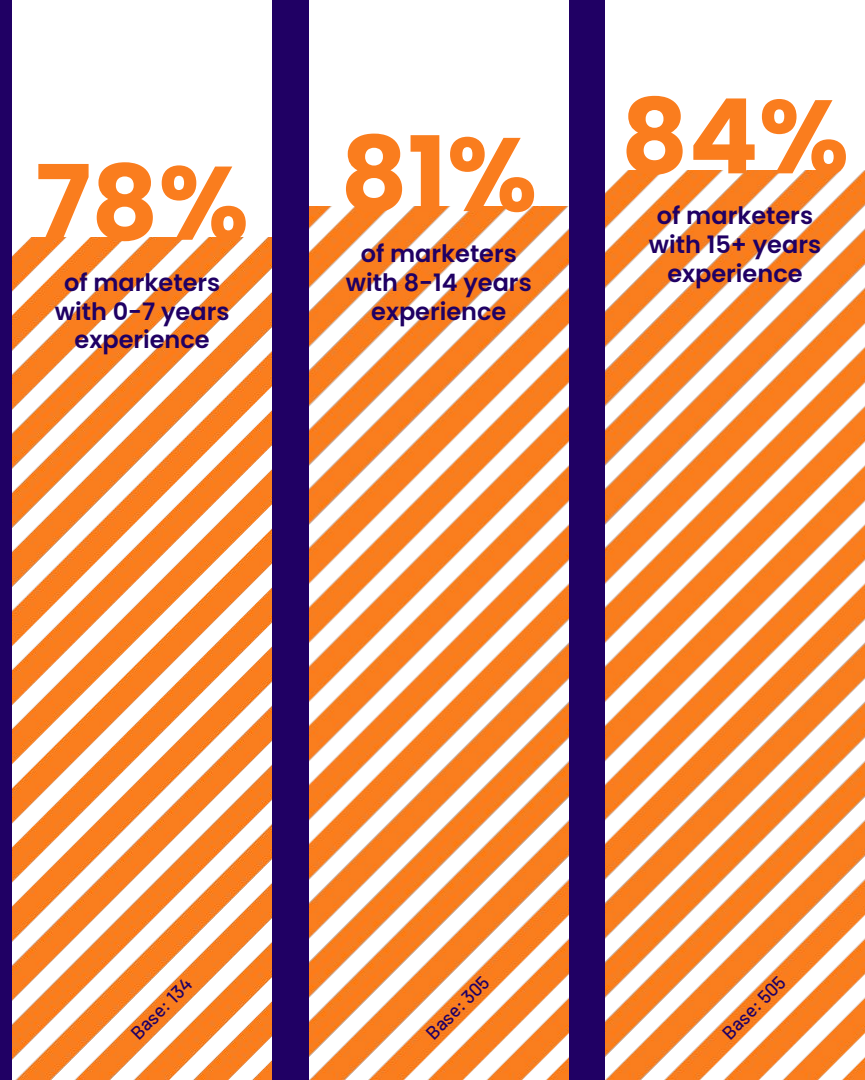
Both marketers and agencies  
acknowledge that writing briefs  
isn't easy

'Writing briefs is hard'



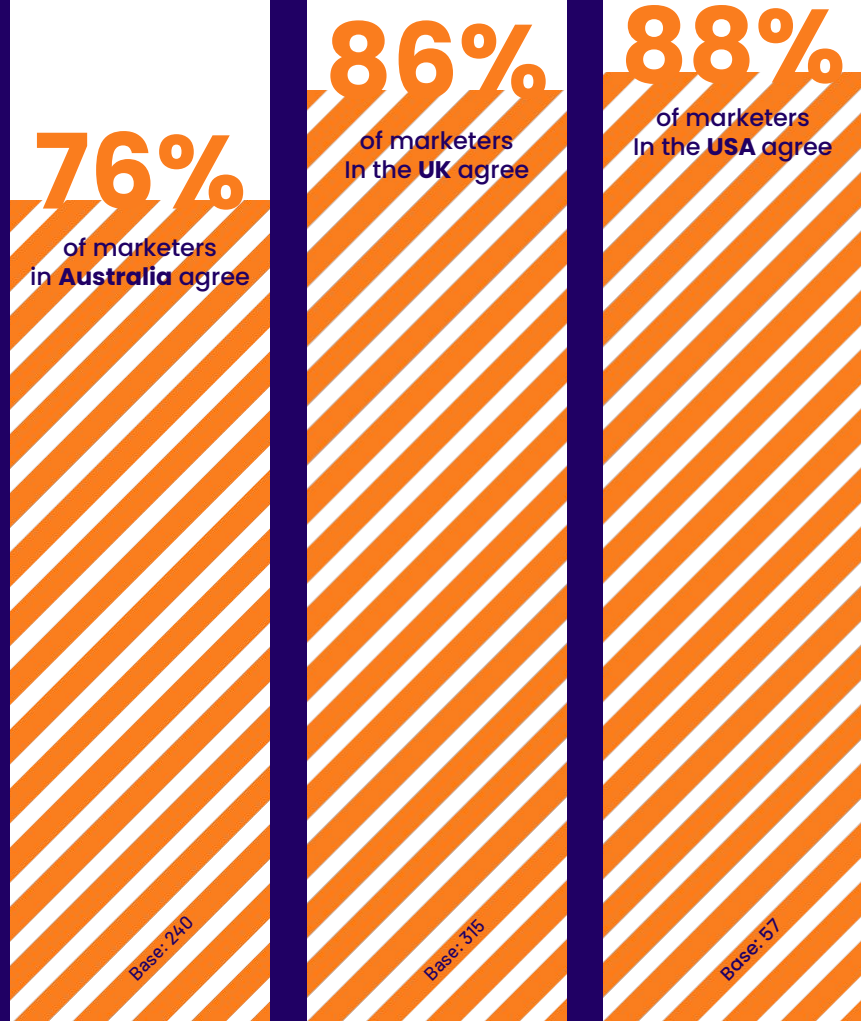
And it doesn't get any easier  
the more experience you have

'Writing briefs is hard'



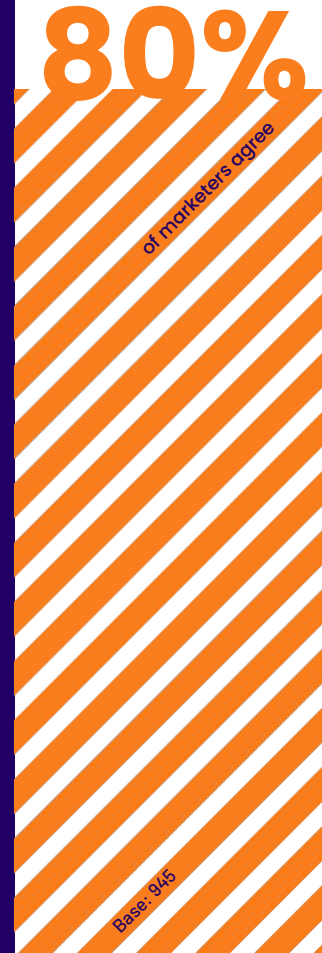
Our findings are fairly consistent across at least 3 markets

'Writing briefs is hard'



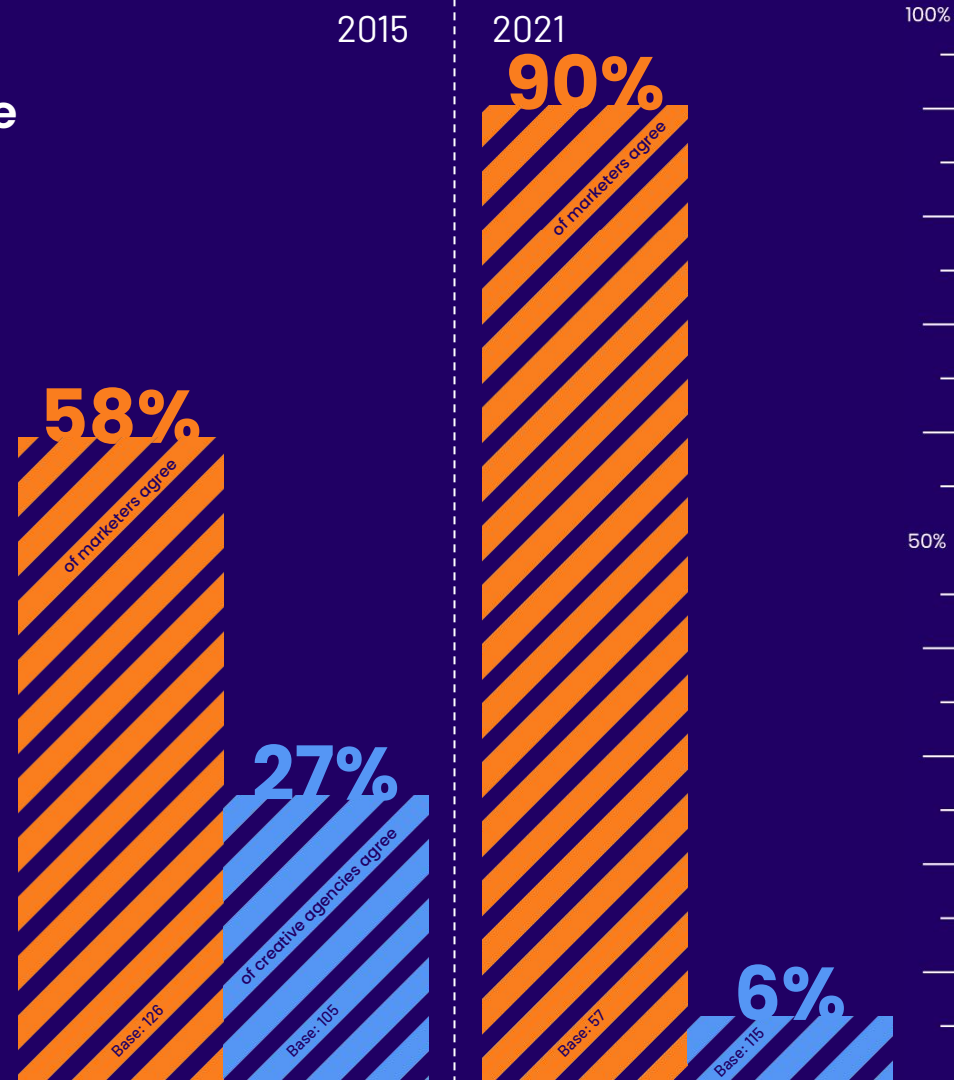
# Most marketers think they're good at writing briefs; most agencies disagree

'I consider myself/my clients good at writing briefs'



In the USA, this gap has widened since the last time the question was asked

'I consider myself/my clients good at writing briefs'





# The perceived quality of the last three briefs written/received is concerning

marketers

**31%**  
not good enough

**52%**  
ok

**17%**  
good

creative agencies

**75%**  
not good enough

**22%**  
ok

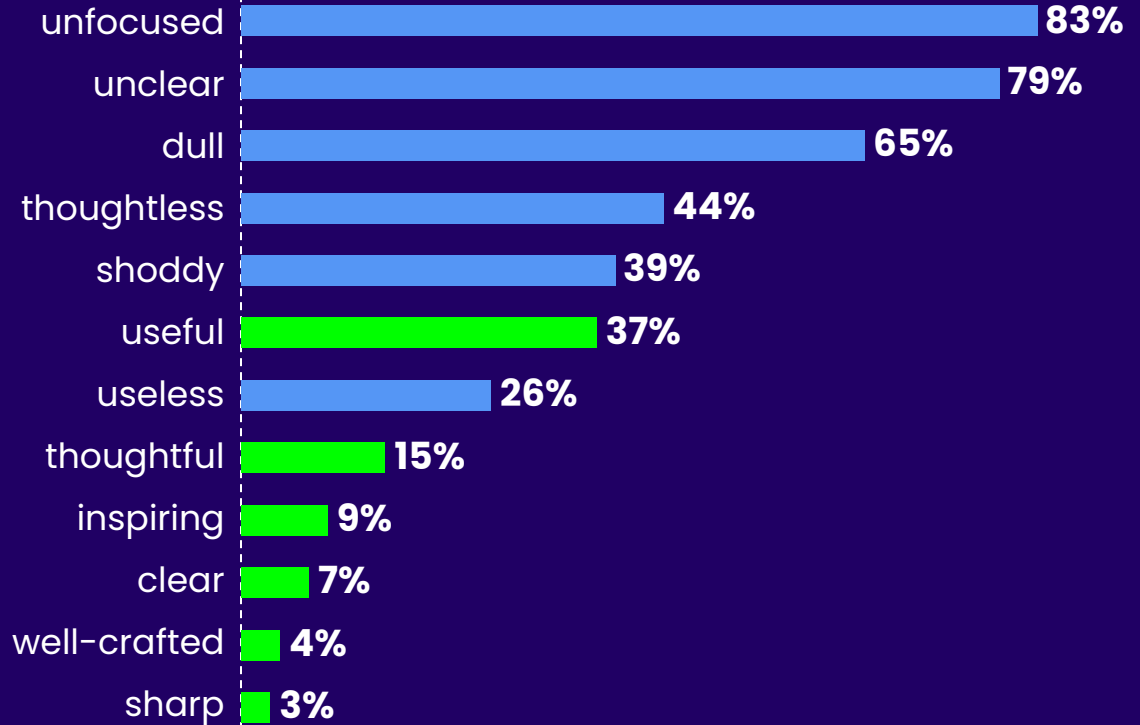
**3%**  
good

Base: All 1731



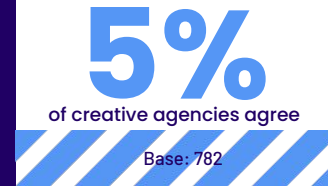
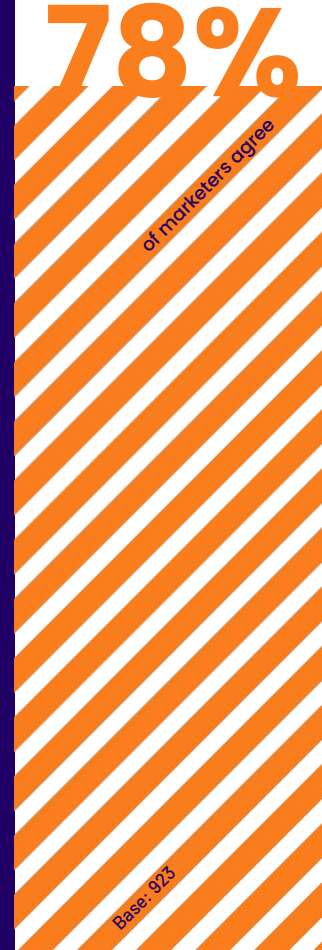
# Creative agencies think most marketing briefs lack focus, clarity and inspiration

'Choose from the list below the words that describe the typical client brief'



Most marketers think the briefs they write provide clear strategic direction; most agencies disagree

'The briefs I/my client write(s) provide clear strategic direction'



# The missing ingredient from most marketing briefs (according to creative agencies)



Clarity is key in briefs, however most marketers and creative agencies aren't even speaking the same language

'The briefs I/my client write(s) contain clear and concise language'

83%

of marketers agree

Base: 900

7%

of creative agencies agree

Base: 786



But it's not just language. 80% of creative agencies feel marketers have a poor or limited *understanding of what they need from briefs*

**23%**  
poor

**57%**  
limited

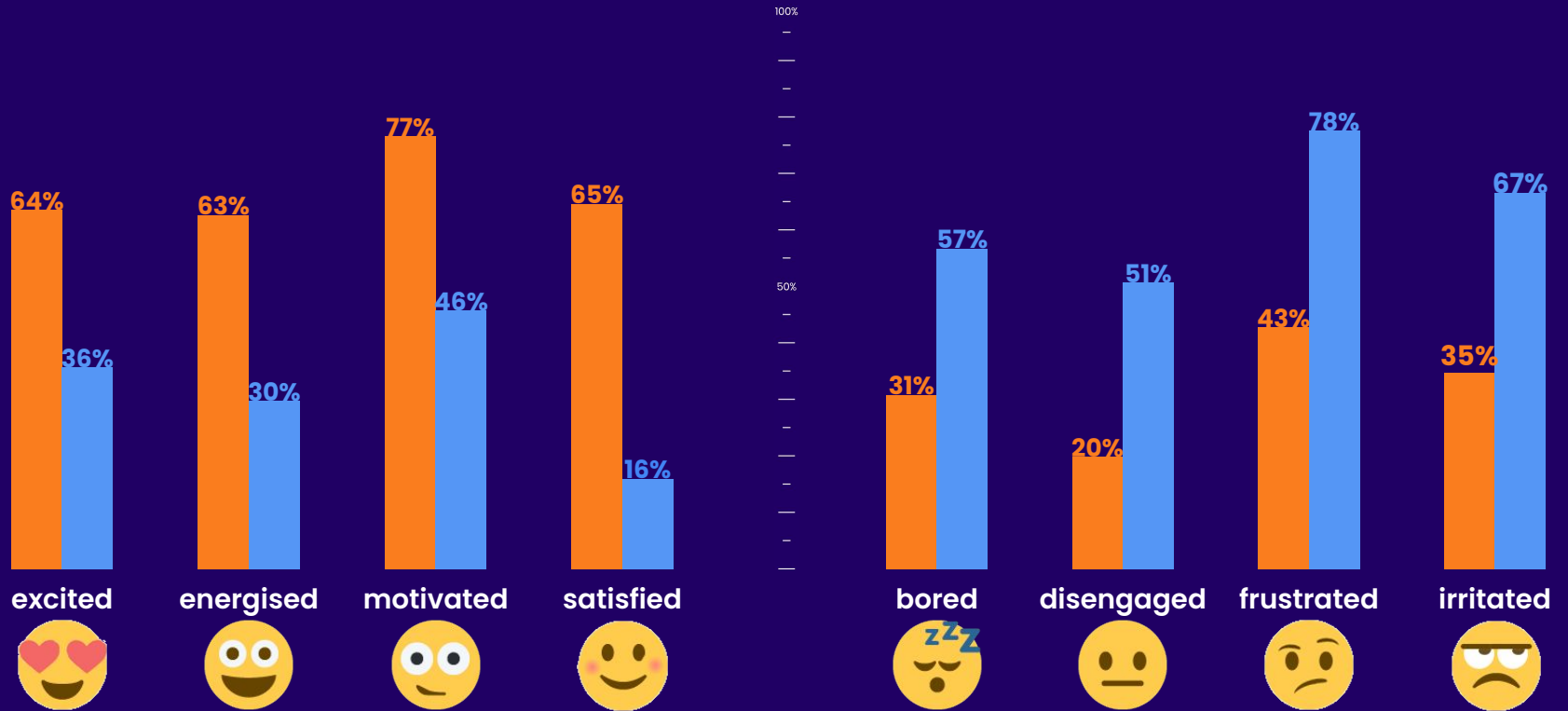
**19%**  
reasonable

**1%**  
good

Base: All Agency 786



# Most marketers feel positive about briefs; creative agencies feel the exact opposite



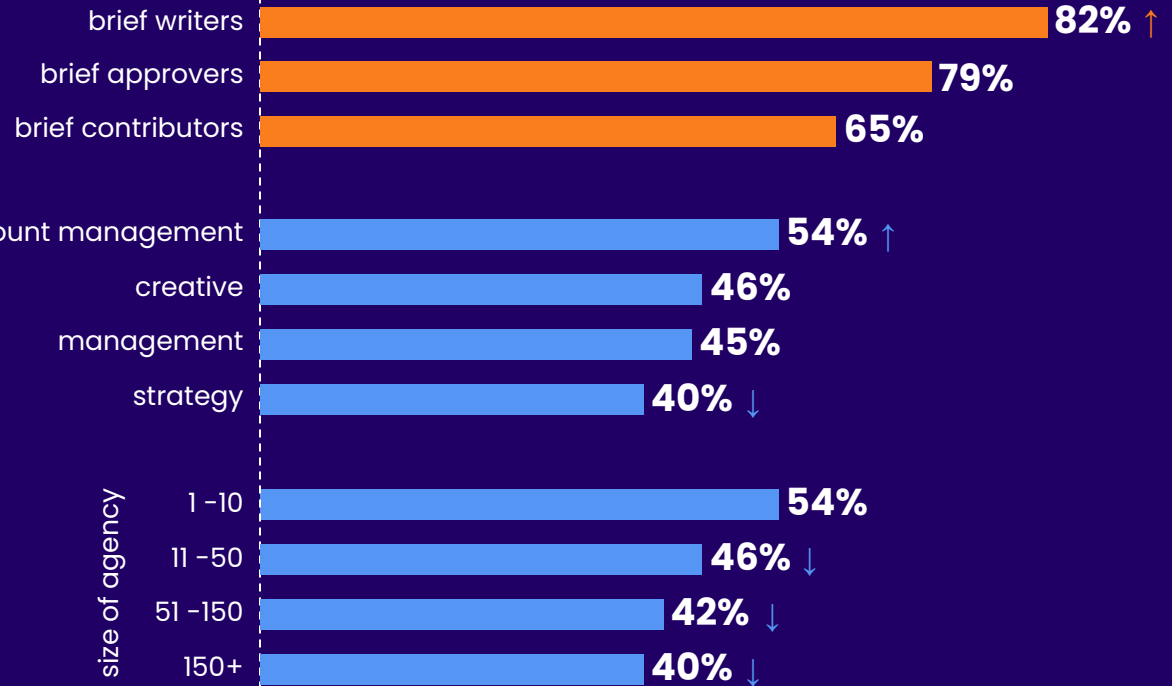
# And there are significant differences in how *actively positive* people feel towards briefs based on job function and size of agency

excited



&

energised







## Part 2: The Impact

**A lot of time, money  
and energy is wasted**



## Staggeringly, briefs often change

9 out of 10 marketers admit that their briefs change once they are briefed-in.

90%

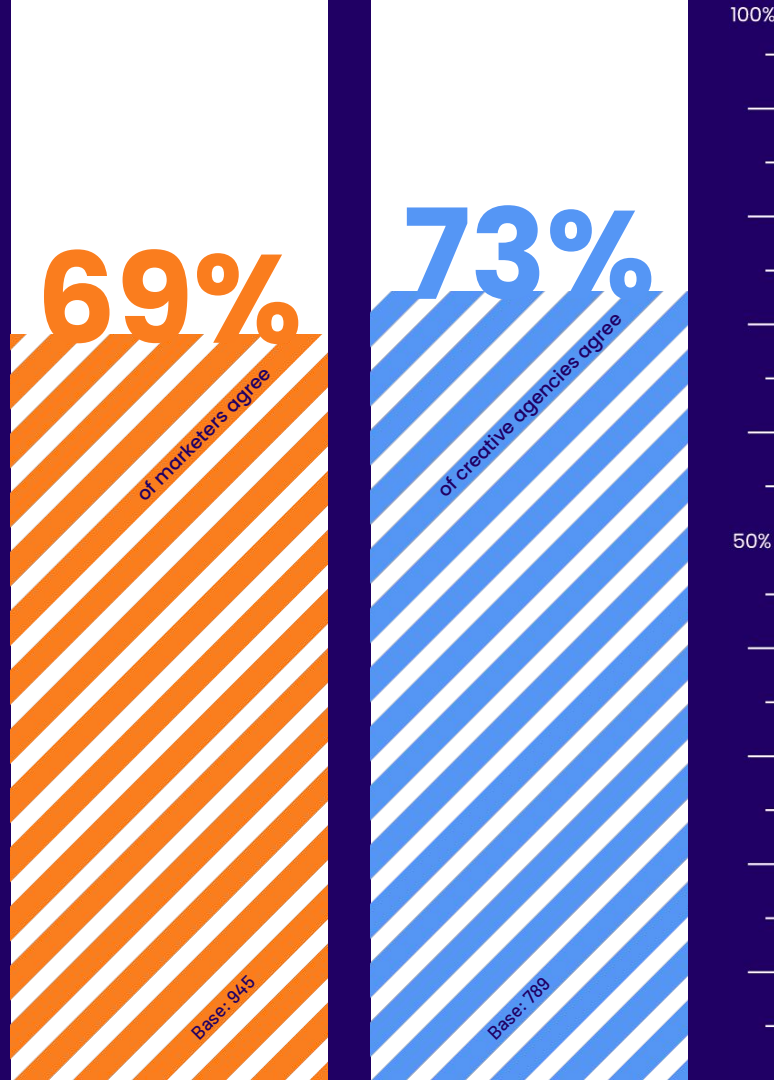
A vertical bar chart representing 90%. The bar is filled with orange and white diagonal stripes. The percentage '90%' is written in large orange font at the top of the bar. To the right of the bar, a vertical axis is visible with tick marks at 50% and 100%.

Base: 945

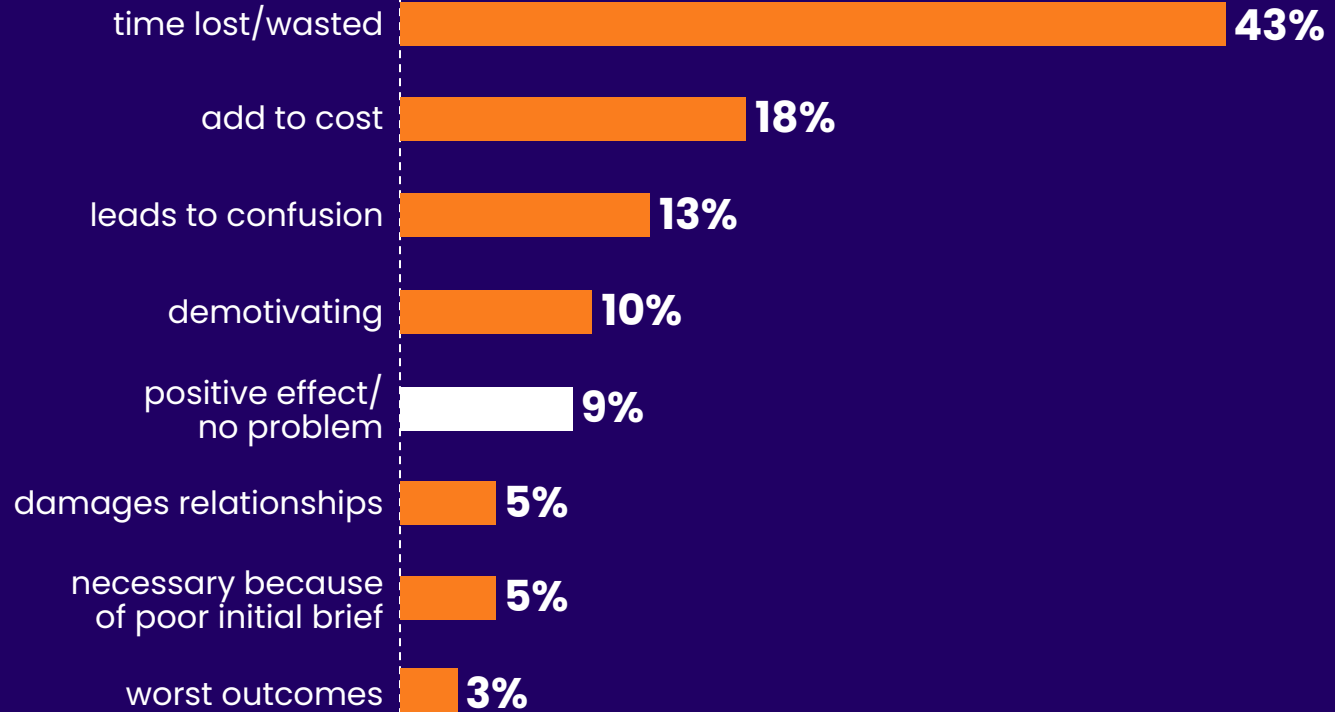


## And rebriefs occur too often for anyone's liking

'Rebriefs happen too often'



# Most marketers understand the negative impact of a rebrief



It means that unfortunately,  
the creative process is not always  
used for what it's intended

6 out of 10 marketers admit  
to using the creative process  
to clarify the strategy.

60%



Base: All Marketing 9145

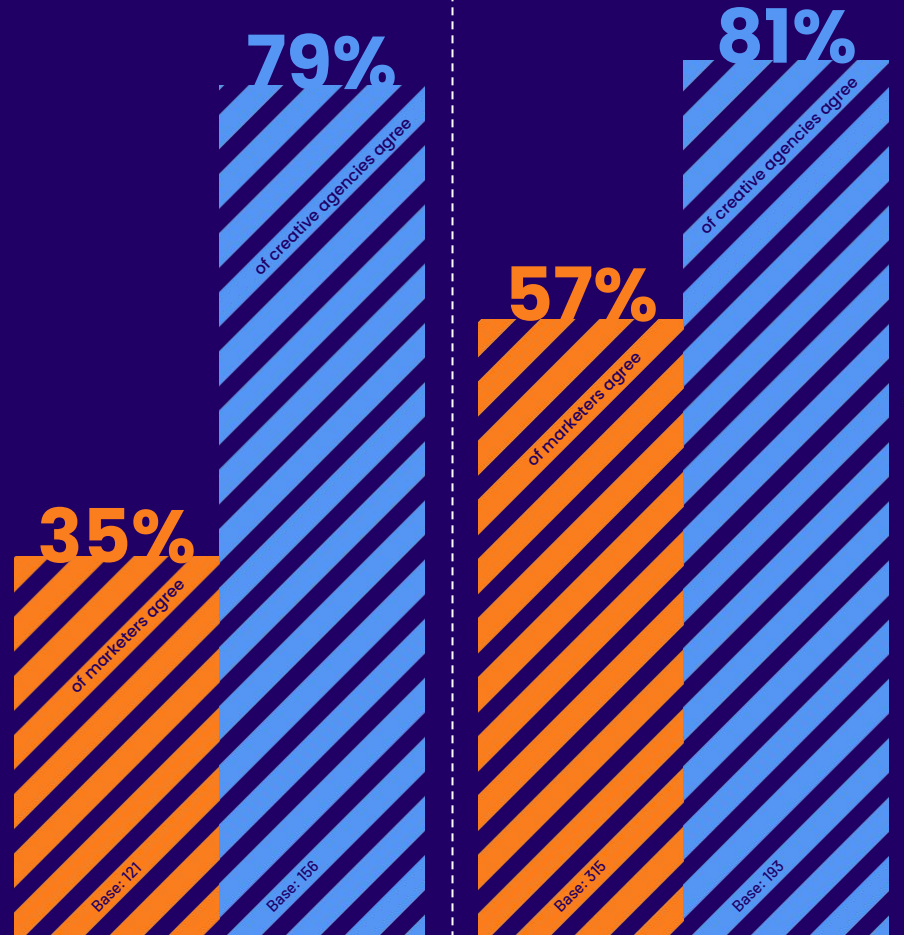


2003

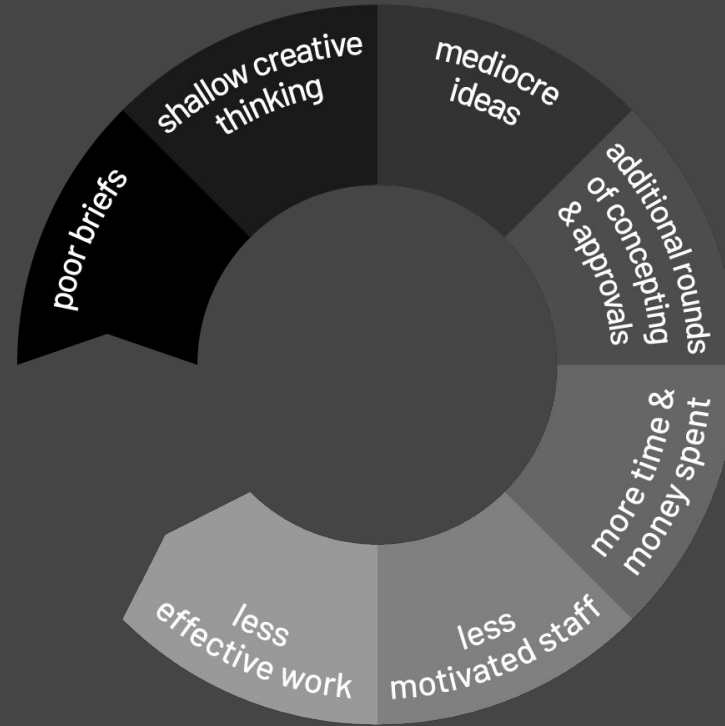
2021

And in the UK, this is happening more than it has in the past

'The creative process is often used to clarify the strategy'



# A lot of time and effort is wasted as a result of poor quality briefs



# Poor briefs can have a big impact on marketing budgets

It is estimated that 1/3 of marketing budgets are wasted on poor briefs and misdirected work.

33%



Base: All 1636








## Part 3: A Way Forward

# Suggestions for making briefs better





Be clear on the strategy  
before writing the brief



**2x**



Creative agencies are  
**twice as energised**  
to work on briefs that provide  
clear strategic direction.



# To help provide clear direction, ensure every marketing brief contains clear objectives

'Rank in order of  
importance the  
most critical  
elements of a  
marketing brief'

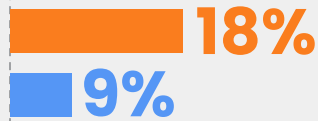
1

objectives



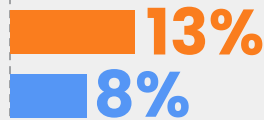
2

insights



3

target group  
definition



## Bring more structure to the briefing process

More than 7 in 10 marketers state agency briefings could work better if they were more structured.

72%

A vertical bar chart representing the 72% statistic. The bar is filled with orange diagonal stripes. The percentage '72%' is written in large orange font above the bar. The chart is set against a background with a vertical axis on the right side showing percentages from 0% to 100% in 10% increments.

Base: All Marketing 659





## Get the right people to sign-off the brief

Half the time, the right people aren't  
signing-off marketing briefs internally.



50%

A vertical bar chart with a white background. The bar is filled with orange diagonal stripes. The top of the bar is labeled '50%'. To the right of the bar, there is a vertical axis with tick marks and labels '50%' and '100%'. The text 'Base: All Marketing 945' is written diagonally at the bottom of the bar.

Base: All Marketing 945

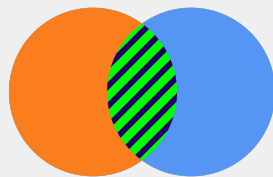


## A quote that sums up the internal struggle from a passionate marketer in the UK

“ My briefs get re-written by committee – and those people are very senior but with no clue about marketing. My briefs get filled with jargon, nonsense and irrelevance, plus audiences, targets and topics are added in order to keep everyone feeling like their area of work is valid. I’m ashamed to send them over. ”



## General advice



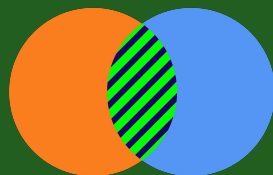
### Marketers

Be clear on your strategies and use clear and simple language.  
Don't send briefs to your agencies that you're not happy with.

### Creative Agencies

Don't be silent. Flag what's missing, clarify what's unclear with your clients. Better briefs are your responsibility too.

## In summary



**Invest more time in briefs**

**Work closer together on briefs**

**Ensure you're speaking the same language**





# The BetterBrief cycle



## With special thanks

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Incorporated  
by Royal Charter

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COMMUNICATION

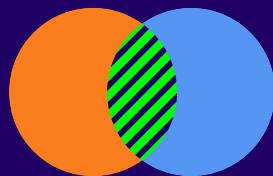
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