

The Campaign Strategy Brief

Every failed campaign I have reviewed died in the brief, usually because there was no brief, just enthusiasm and a deadline. This template is the one page discipline: **ten fields that force the strategic decisions before any money moves or any asset gets made.** It runs a product launch, an internal change programme, or a job search, because all three are campaigns whether you call them that or not.

FOR INDIVIDUALS

Your job search or personal brand push is a campaign: one audience, one message, chosen channels, a deadline. Brief yourself like a client.

FOR TEAMS

Internal launches and change comms fail from vagueness more than resistance. The brief makes the vagueness visible while it is still cheap.

FOR COMPANIES

A shared brief format means campaigns can be compared, approved, and killed on the same criteria. That is what makes marketing accountable.

01 The one page brief

Fill every field in order. The order is the method: each answer narrows the next. If a field stays empty after real effort, you have found the decision nobody made yet, and that discovery just saved you the budget you were about to spend finding it in public.

1 • Objective (one measurable change, with a date)

2 • Audience (one primary segment you can describe as a person)

3 • Insight (the true thing about them the campaign leans on)

4 • Single message (if they remember one sentence, it is this)

5 • Proof (why they should believe the message)

6 • Channels (where the audience already is, ranked)

7 • Assets (what must be made, mapped to channels)

8 • Budget and time (money, people, hours, real numbers)

9 • KPIs (two or three numbers that prove the objective moved)

10 • Risks (what kills this, and the early warning sign for each)

02 The three tests before anything ships

- **The stranger test.** Hand the brief to someone outside the project. If they cannot repeat the objective and the single message back to you, the brief is not done. Clarity for outsiders is the whole point of writing it down.
- **The subtraction test.** Remove each channel one at a time and ask whether the objective still lands. Channels that survive subtraction are habits, not decisions. Cut them and reclaim the budget.
- **The Friday test.** Can you say, for the coming week, what gets made, by whom, for which field of the brief? If the brief does not generate a week plan, it is a poster.

03 The channel decision matrix

Channels are where briefs quietly die, because teams pick them by comfort rather than by audience. Force each candidate channel through four questions. Anything scoring low on the first two does not belong in field six, whatever last year's plan says.

04 Worked example: the job search as a campaign

A condensed individual brief, drawn from coaching sessions in Seoul. Notice how each field narrows the next, and what the final brief forbids.

- **Objective:** three final round interviews for senior marketing roles in Seoul by March 31.
- **Audience:** hiring managers at consumer brands with 50 to 500 staff, not recruiters.
- **Insight:** they hire from their feed and their referrals long before they read applications.
- **Single message:** I turn flat social channels into measurable revenue, and I can show the numbers.
- **Proof:** three campaigns with published results; one case study written as a teardown.
- **Channels:** LinkedIn posts twice weekly, five coffee chats monthly, targeted applications only after first contact.
- **KPIs:** profile views from target companies, conversations started, interviews reached.

The brief forbids mass applications. The audience field already decided that: hiring managers do not live in application portals, so effort there cannot reach them. That is the brief doing its job, killing busywork before it starts.

05 Worked example: the internal change campaign

Teams underestimate how much internal launches need marketing. A new expense system, a reorganisation, a return to office policy: all campaigns, all with audiences who can quietly refuse.

- **Objective:** ninety percent of staff filing expenses in the new system by end of quarter, old system retired.
- **Audience:** the fifty heaviest expense filers, mostly sales, permanently travelling, allergic to training sessions.
- **Insight:** they will not attend anything, but they will watch a two minute video the night before a trip.
- **Single message:** your expense claim now takes four minutes from your phone, receipts photographed, done.
- **Channels:** manager cascade first, then two minute video, then a desk drop by the finance team during week one.
- **KPIs:** percent filing in new system weekly, support tickets, time to reimbursement.

06 Sign off and kill criteria

A brief needs owners, not an audience. Three roles cover it: one person **writes** it, one person **approves** it, everyone executing **reads and initials** it. Approval means the approver can defend every field to their own boss. And set the kill criteria on day one, while everyone is still calm: the KPI floor and the date on which you stop, review, or double down. Campaigns without kill criteria do not end, they fade, and fading spends money the whole way down.

ROLE	NAME	DATE	INITIALS
Brief owner			
Approver			
Executing team			
Review and kill date			

07 The five common failure modes

- **The everything objective.** Awareness and leads and retention in one campaign. Pick the one the date on field one actually needs; the others become future briefs.
- **The mirror audience.** The audience is described as people like us. Your audience is almost never people like you, which is why field three exists.
- **The insight shaped opinion.** An insight is true of the audience whether or not your product exists. If it mentions your product, it is a wish.
- **The channel buffet.** Eight channels at ten percent effort each. Three channels done properly beat eight done nominally, every measured time.
- **The KPI mirage.** Impressions and reach feel like progress and prove nothing about field one. Every KPI must trace to the objective, or it is decoration.

08 The post campaign review

Thirty minutes, within two weeks of the end date, everyone who initialed the brief in the room. Three questions only, written down, kept where the next brief will be written.

QUESTION	ANSWER, WITH NUMBERS WHERE THEY EXIST
What did the KPIs actually do against the objective?	
Which field of the brief turned out to be wrong, and how?	
What does the next brief do differently because of this one?	

A NOTE FROM THE CLASSROOM

My marketing students build campaign briefs for real Seoul brands, and the hardest field is never budget or channels. It is field three, the insight. Teams want to skip straight from audience to message, and the campaign that results is technically correct and completely forgettable. Sit in the insight field until it hurts a little. When the insight is true, the message writes itself in about four minutes. I have watched it happen every semester.

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TAKE IT FURTHER

The SOSTAC Planner and Positioning Map tools pair directly with this brief. Free, no signup: careercomms.com/tools