

# The Totally *Legal* ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

# Get the Most Out of Your Written Content

## Top 10 Steps of the Content Project Brief

One of the success factors of branded content is a good Content Project Brief.

It's critical that you make it as easy as possible for your writer to know your company, brand, and the project you've just tasked him or her to write.

And a big part of making it easy is the brief.

Build a strong and lasting relationship with your business writer with the help of a well-thought-out Content Project Brief.

This guide will help you create the perfect project brief for your content project...and ensure you begin creating quality brand content starting today!

**Let's get started!**

# The Totally Legal ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

### Step 1 Project Description

- Type of content needed. *For example, blog post, ebook, white paper, case study, etc.*
- Product, service and/or technology to be featured.
- How the project fits within existing content, and if the content is part of a new strategic direction. *For example, a blog post to launch a new technology, or market segment within the overall company's blog.*
- Is the content part of an integrated campaign. *For example, a new product launch including social media, sales program, advertising, conference, etc.*
- Scope of the project. *For example, is the project an one-time writing assignment, or is follow-on content needed.*

### Step 2 Your Company and Brand

- What makes your brand stand out from the competition
- What are your company's the mission and values
- Who are the key competitors
- What is the typical sales cycle
- What are the key technologies and expertise

*This step doesn't need to be lengthy, just those key nuggets which will help the writer understand what makes your company win in the marketplace.*

# The Totally Legal ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

### Step 3 Project Objective

- What is the key objective? Don't load your project with several objectives. Instead, find the main objective and work towards it.
- Keep it simple, measurable, and understandable

*For example, the primary objective of the new content may be to build brand awareness, improve engagement, create sales leads, etc.*

- Pick the one primary objective and include, if possible, the way that content will be tracked (analyzed) and measured to understand its effectiveness.

*Remember, the idea is to learn and build upon each new piece of brand content. If Google page ranking is an essential factor, mention this. (We'll tackle SEO in step 9.)*

### Step 4 Key Take Aways

- What do you want the audience to take away from your content?
- What is the main point and supporting points that help to emphasize the company's knowledge of the subject, and that help the audience to understand why the company is uniquely positioned to meet their needs and solve their pain points?

*I would argue that there are no limits here. What's key is to have the primary, overriding key takeaway and list the supporting points.*

*Just remember, the human mind can only process a limited amount of information, so think about the reader. If there are lots of areas to cover in the content, it is probably better to break it down into smaller, bite-size content pieces.*

# The Totally Legal ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

### Step 5 Target Audience

- Who is the key audience for the content?

*The more detailed, the better. For example, who is the target market, demographics, attitudes, key characteristics, persona, etc. The more specific the better.*

- The audience is singular. Why? Because the content should be tailored for one specific group.

*For example, if the content will be a white paper on the company's unique technology, and the objective is to drive leads, that content needs to assume a low knowledge level. Hence, it won't be of interest to the company's current customers.*

### Step 6 Format Requirements

- Is there a specific length (words) required? For example, a blog post of 1,000 words.

*The word count requirement makes a big difference, as the writer will use this information to determine the cost.*

- Are visuals to be included in the content, if yes list or attach.

*The writer can write subtitles for the visuals and propose descriptive tags (which can be important for search). If help is needed for visuals, mention what is expected of the writer concerning images, infographics, etc.*

Are specific headers and subsections required? If yes, you'll want to list them.

*These can come from the key points mentioned in step 4, which the writer will be able to extrapolate in the writing process.*

# The Totally Legal ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

### Step 7 Project Sources

- Are there specific sources the writer needs to use? Sources could include individuals within your company, customers, industry associations, influencers, etc.
- Provide website URLs, links to company documents, source documents, and information which the writer will need. This is essential, as it will dramatically reduce the amount of research time required by the writer.
- Equally important is outlining any specific sources that should be avoided as they are used by competitors. This will serve as a guide for the writer in the case further sourcing is needed.
- Are interviews required? If yes, provide the name of each individual, email, and telephone number.

### Step 8 Tone

- Is there a 'brand voice' to be used, or content pieces to be used as tone guidance? If the answer is yes, it is important to attach or list examples. Not sure? Talk with the writer.
- If the company has an editorial content style guide, definitely provide it to the writer.

*The tone is a tricky part of content writing. It's essential that the writer has a clear understanding of the tone expected. If this one is missed, it could mean a total rewrite of the content piece.*

# The Totally Legal ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

### Step 9 SEO Requirements

- If a SEO specialist is part of the team, ensure the writer knows if tags and descriptions are needed.
- List keyphrases the content piece will be measured on.

*The keyphrases should match the key points, and the intended reader should reflect the search query audience. The goal being the content matches the intent of someone typing in a search query.*

*Yes, content can be written to get found, but only if it matches the needs of the reader.*

### Step 10 Deadline

- Set the date the content needs to be live or published. This is especially important if the content will be part of an integrated campaign.

*When planning out the deadline, think about who needs to review the first draft (less is best). The rule of thumb is to keep corrections to no more than two revisions.*

- List the review process if it will involve several people in the company.

*If the review process includes several people within the organization, this will impact the deadline. A recommendation is to keep the number of people to the minimum as too many will impact overall quality, take more time, and will increase the cost.*

# The Totally *Legal* ! Cheat Sheet

## Step by Step Guide

### Final Tips

- Discuss the project budget. Not only will it avoid lost time, it will help the writer provide a clearly thought out plan which will be attainable by both parties.
- Freelancers (generally) only earn money on billable hours, meaning attending lots of calls and in-person meetings is an investment by the writer.
- Freelancers have to budget time for each client. So, it is best to work towards a calendar which takes into account everyone's constraints.

Working with a business writer can be an enriching experience.  
The writer brings a fresh, new approach to your company's brand content.  
Just remember, it's a two-way street.

Let the writer be a part of your company's team, and brief him or her well.  
Together you'll build a lasting relationship.

Are you looking for a native American business writer in France? Is your company ready to scale, to get more international customers and to build your global audience. English brand content is essential.

If yes, let's talk!



## Content Project Brief

This Content Project Brief (a.k.a. Cheat Sheet) outlines all of the steps you need to cover to get your Content Project started. If you read through the previous pages, you'll be ready to get your business writer well briefed and on your way to creating great content for your company.

**P**roject Description : *Product, service and/or technology to be featured and the type of content required (ie blog post, article, case study, etc).*

*(fill in)*

**C**ompany and Brand : *The company's mission and values. Typical sales cycle. Key technologies and expertise. Emphasis the value the company and brand bring to the marketplace, while ensuring the writer understands the sales cycles.*

*(fill in)*

**O**bjective of the content / project: *For example, build brand awareness, improve engagement, create sales leads, etc.*

*(fill in)*

# Content Creation Brief

**K**ey take aways : What do you want the audience to take away from your content? What is the main point and supporting points that help to emphasize the company's knowledge of the subject, and that help the audience to understand why the company is uniquely positioned to meet their needs and solve their pain points?

*(fill in)*

**A**udience: Who is the key audience for the content? The more detailed, the better. For example, who is the target market, demographics, attitudes, key characteristics, persona, etc.

*(fill in)*

**F**ormat requirements: Is there a specific length (words) required? Are visuals to be included in the content, if yes list or attach. Are specific headers and subsections required?

*(fill in)*

## Content Creation Brief

**S**ources: Provide website URLs, links to company documents, source documents, and information which the writer will need. If interviews are required provide the name of each individual, email, and telephone number.

*(fill in)*

**T**one: Is there a 'brand voice' to be used, or content pieces to be used as tone guidance? If yes, attach or list examples. Attach the company's editorial content style guide (if available).

*(fill in)*

**S**EO: Are tags and descriptions required? List keyphrases the content piece will be measured on.

*(fill in)*

# Content Creation Brief

**D**eadline: Set the date the content needs to be live or published. Take into account the review process, especially if it will involve several people in the company.

*(fill in)*

**B**udget: Project budget.

*(fill in)*

**F**inal points to be taken into account:

*(fill in)*