



**intouch**  
INSIGHTS

# The **brief** wears the **pants**

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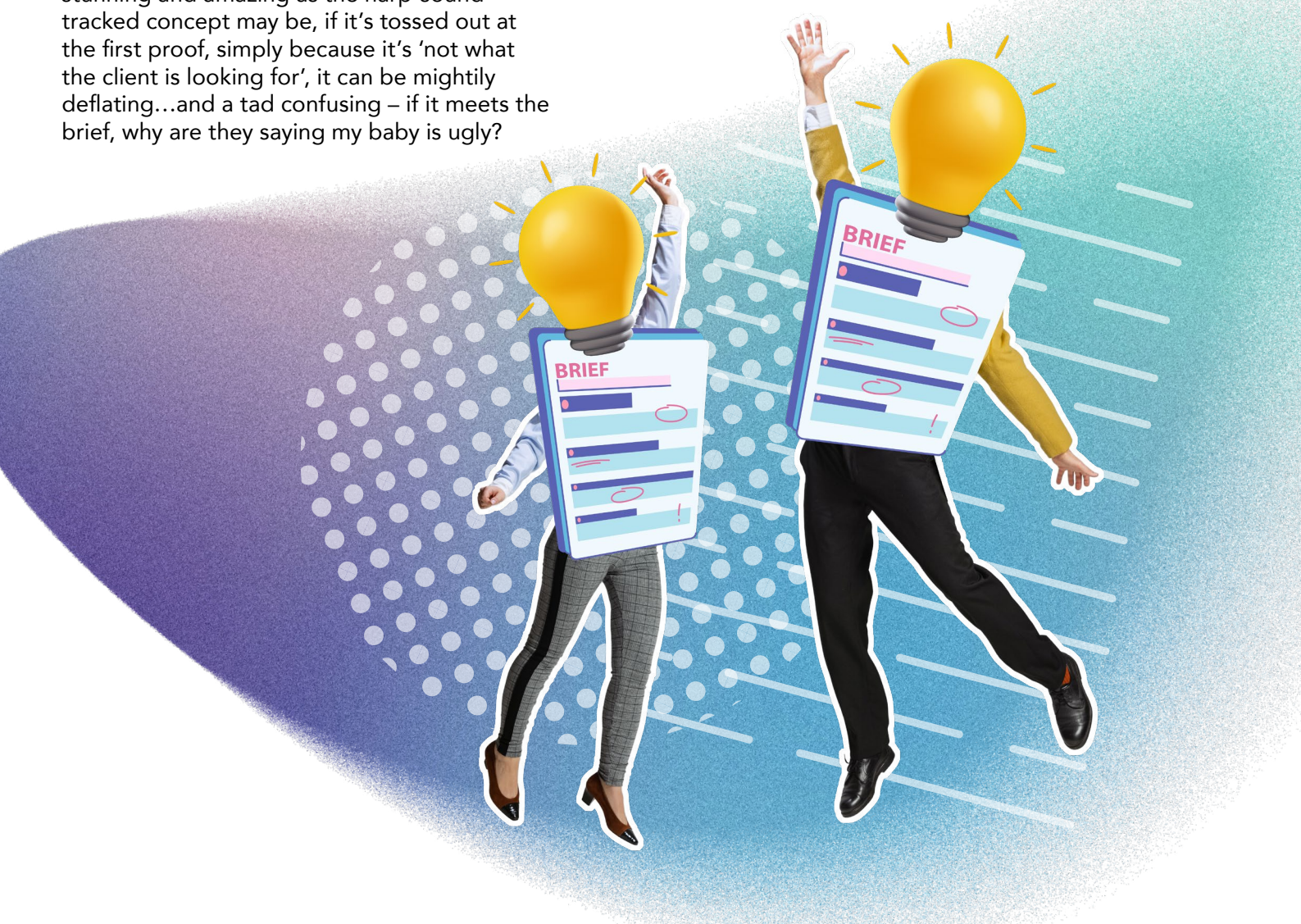
It's like a PB at parkrun, bagging a mountain summit, or getting home after a big night without incurring a taxi-cleaning fee. The sense of achievement is visceral, flooding your system with endorphins and filling you up with self-confidence ready to face the next challenge.

It's magical, largely mythical, and yet had been known to happen almost as often as my sister tells me I'm good at maths. Like I say, mythical. But it **does** happen.

I am of course talking about getting a creative design approved on the first proof.

With each new project we beaver away on concepts and ideas, searching for the nugget of inspiration, for that 'Eureka!' moment when a shaft of sunshine beams down to illuminate your desk and harps play in the background. But it can be a difficult balance to meet the criteria and satisfy all stakeholders. And as stunning and amazing as the harp-soundtracked concept may be, if it's tossed out at the first proof, simply because it's 'not what the client is looking for', it can be mightily deflating...and a tad confusing – if it meets the brief, why are they saying my baby is ugly?

This is where the importance of a solid, accurate and detailed brief makes all the difference. Ambiguity, missing information, or hazy objectives only slow things down. It's a misconception to think submitting half a brief early makes up for submitting a full brief later. While time is one of the biggest tools in our creative palette, wasted time is expensive – and when it becomes routine, it's exhausting.





To get things right the first time, we need to know where the goal posts are, and to which end we're playing. It's a bit bass-ackwards to send us out on the field to kick goals without the ball. If we're missing the budget for example, we won't know if we should aim for a Bentley or a bicycle to get the show on the road.

## Everyone needs to wear pants

A good brief is not just a tool for creatives. Its purpose is to get everyone on the same page...by including all the detail on the same page. Everyone involved who will have a say in the output needs to have responsibility for the input. Clarity upstream anticipates hurdles and leads to faster approvals – this applies to each deliverable.

If you're tasked with sorting a fab venue, you're going to need to know numbers and tiers of attendees, F&B expectations, lengths of stay, accessibility, transport and links, budget, tone and style and probably a lot more – without all the info, you can't really make a start, can you?

It's a lot easier for everyone to do their best from their first touch when they clearly know what is expected. It's also easier to keep a client happy by delivering everything within a well-educated budget rather than begging like Oliver for more money each time the scope creeps.

Asking all the questions – and the right questions – makes it more achievable for everyone to smash their goals. Clear communication channels open up hearts and minds, teasing and fleshing out the full story. When we have all the facts, we can make better judgements and decisions, or pivot quickly should the tide turn unexpectedly.

## Do as your mum always told you

Always go with your best brief. If things go pear-shaped, at least you'll have a substantial foundation to fall back on and re-build upon. In our industry, the objectives of a project probably aren't going to do a 180 degree turn, but there's enough variables that could still blow the best laid plans off course.

We won't always be able to nail it first time, even with a brilliant brief – our world is human after all. However, harps harping and sunbeams beaming down on a second proof can also be pretty rare and just as satisfying as a hole-in-one.





## A brief summary

It is in everyone's best interests to deliver a project with the minimum of avoidable hassle. It helps keep us motivated and enthusiastic when it doesn't feel like a hard slog to the finish line – like the home stretch at parkrun when you're overtaken by someone pushing a double pram (or is that just me?).

We are passionate people and we can sustain a buoyant, thriving and collaborative workspace if we're all enabled to do our best from the minute we get to the start line.

So remove the hurdles, keep the spectators on the sidelines, listen to the coaches, visualise the win and feel the euphoria of getting it right the first time! It's addictive, and with dedication and discipline, it's achievable more often than my sister gives me a gold star just for trying.

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