

The Compressed Brief — a month, a week, a day

Brand Creation Brief, run against a deadline. Time: thirty minutes to plan the compression; then whatever you've got

You don't have a month. Use this sheet to decide **what to cut**, before you start cutting by accident.

The rule: compress by **reversibility**, not by importance. Everything in the brief is important — that's why it's in there, and sorting by importance gives you no cuts at all. Sort by what's expensive to undo.

Step 1 — Name the real deadline

We open / launch / announce on: _____

What's already committed and can't move (*signage, wrap, print run, paperwork, a lease, an event*):

Anything on that list has already made a decision for you. Find out what it decided before you spend a day deciding it again.

Step 2 — Sort by cost-to-reverse

For each piece, answer the one question: **if this turns out wrong, what does it cost to change it in six months?**

Decision	Cost to change in 6 months	Do now / placeholder
Emotional promise (§3)		
Productive tension (§4)		

Decision	Cost to change in 6 months	Do now / placeholder
Name (§8)		
Position / plain sentence (§5)		
Audience (§2)		
Personality + anti-traits (§6)		
Voice rules (§7)		
Wordmark / logo		
Color		
Typeface		
Photography direction		
Signature experience details (§10)		

The name, the promise and the tension almost always land in “do now.” A color you regret costs you an afternoon. A name you regret costs you every introduction, invoice and referral for as long as you keep it.

Step 3 — Pick your tier

- ☐ **A month.** Full brief. Name tested in real sentences with real people, the world it generates mapped, one signature detail per stage of the experience.
- ☐ **A week.** Sections 1–7 only. One naming territory, not five. Stress-test two candidates, not ten. One visual move, not a system.
- ☐ **A day.** Three decisions and nothing else:

After dealing with us, people should feel _____ and never _____.

We are _____, but never _____.

The name: _____ — said out loud twenty times, and it survived.

Then: one typeface _____, one color _____, one sentence
_____, and open the doors.

Step 4 — Write the placeholder list

This is the step that makes compression safe. Every deferred decision goes here, **labelled as deferred**, so nobody six months from now finds it and assumes it was chosen on purpose.

Placeholder	What it is right now	Decide by

☐ This list lives somewhere the whole team can see it — not in my head.

Step 5 — The contradiction check

A compressed brand isn't a lesser brand, it's a **smaller** one: three real decisions and the rest deferred on purpose. That only holds if nothing you shipped contradicts the three.

- ☐ The name doesn't fight the promise.
- ☐ The one visual move doesn't fight the tension.
- ☐ The one sentence would still be true after the full brief is finished.

If any of those fails, fix it now. A contradiction shipped on day one is the one thing that gets more expensive every week you leave it.

. . .

Kill-or-keep date: _____

On that date, open the placeholder list. Anything still sitting there untouched has quietly become a decision — either promote it deliberately or finish the section of the brief that resolves it.