

### 1. What do I need to produce a long document?

While one person can easily write a short letter, email or article, a larger publication, such as a magazine, white paper, book, report, manual or web site, is likely to require a team of people to research, write, edit, design and produce it. All these activities need managing to ensure consistent writing and design, and to keep production on schedule.

### 2. When do I need my publication?

A long document can take a long time to produce, so establish when you need it printed or published in order to devise a production schedule.

Date required: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

### 3. What are my publication specifications?

Before you can start, you need to specify your publication, its size and, if printed, how many copies you require:

Magazine      12 / 20 / 36 / 48 / 60 / 72 / \_\_\_ pages x \_\_\_\_\_ copies

Manual          50 / 100 / 150 / 200 / 250 / 300 / \_\_\_ pages x \_\_\_\_\_ copies

Report          50 / 100 / 150 / 200 / 250 / 300 / \_\_\_ pages x \_\_\_\_\_ copies

White paper    12 / 20 / 36 / 48 / 60 / 72 / \_\_\_ pages x \_\_\_\_\_ copies

Web site        50 / 100 / 150 / 200 / 250 / 300 / \_\_\_ pages x \_\_\_\_\_ copies

Other  
\_\_\_\_\_ pages x \_\_\_\_\_ copies

This information, plus detailed specifications – such as paper sizes, paper stock, finishing requirements for printing or databases and other technical details for web sites – will enable you both to draw up a project schedule and to work out all costs.

Time, although invisible, can be a large cost, while extra costs could include distribution and postage of printed material.

To reach a final cost that includes everything, list all activities from the initial meeting to discuss the concept of the publication to its arrival on a reader's desk or computer screen.

### 4. Who do I need to produce my publication?

To enable you to draw up your production schedule, identify the production team you need to assemble:

- Project manager \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Researcher(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Writer(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Editor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Designers(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Photographer(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Illustrator(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Programmer(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Proofreader(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Printer(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- Distributor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

This will also identify which employees to include and which activities need to be handled by external suppliers.

Consult with your internal team members and external suppliers to establish:

- What does each one need to do?
- What tools, raw materials and information do they need to do it?
- How much time do they need?
- At what stage of the production process will you need them?

For example, designers will need images and text before they can complete their tasks, while proofreaders will need the fully written and designed document to check. This will enable you to draw up a production schedule, building in the time needed for each activity. This should also identify any potential problems that could interrupt production.

### 5. Draw up your production schedule

A typical schedule could include some or all of the following stages plus additional specific actions (work backwards from delivery date):

- Delivery date    \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Distribution    \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Web testing    \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Printing        \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Production     \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Final amends   \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Proofreading   \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Review design  \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Design         \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Photography    \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Review text    \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Write text      \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Research text   \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_
- Brief team /    \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_  
suppliers
- Select team /   \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_  
suppliers
- Plan document  \_\_\_ days / weeks From \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ To \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Agree your production schedule with everyone involved so that they are aware of when their participation is required and can alert you to any problems they foresee.

Update them as the project progresses and advise of any hold-ups or other delays to the schedule.

### 6. What is the purpose of my publication?

Usually the purpose of a long document or large web site should be clear, but ensure you establish your target readership and what you want your publication to achieve. If you are a business, this should reflect your business objectives. If you want advice, discuss this with copywriters, designers, team members and suppliers so that they work with you to achieve your purpose.

### 7. Ensure consistent writing with a house style guide

If there are many contributors, it is important that your researchers, copywriters, editors and proofreaders work to a uniform style of writing so that all text reads as though written by one person (unless there are elements designated for personal contributions).

Develop and use a house style guide for writers to set out policy for use of:

- Brands, names, titles and how they should be written
- Punctuation, eg whether to use "" or ''
- Commonly used industry or company terms
- Preferred spellings of specific words

A house style can be as brief as a single page of A4 or run to many pages. You can develop one yourself by starting a list of items or commission a writer or editor to develop one for you.

A house style should help to ensure consistent writing tone and style, and reduce the amount of editing of many shorter contributions into one long document.

### 8. Ensure consistent design with corporate identity guidelines

If your organisation has corporate identity guidelines, ensure that designers have a copy of them. Corporate identity guidelines cover:

- Logo sizes, colours and positioning
- Typefaces
- Use of visual elements
- Spacing and margins
- Preferred materials, binding, finishing, packaging, etc

### 9. Develop a clear brief covering content and format

Ensure you know precisely what content you want and in what format you need it. If necessary, consult with contributors and suppliers to develop a specific brief so that everyone knows what you require them to produce. Briefing should include instructions for:

- Copywriters on subject matter, length of text and style (give them a copy of your house style guide)
- Designers on the format of pages or screen layout and any corporate identity requirements (give them a copy of your corporate identity guidelines)
- Web programmers on specifications and functionality of interactive systems
- Printers on formats, materials, quantities and finishing

### 10. Brief everyone and keep them updated

With so many contributors primed to carry out work, ensure everyone receives a copy of the detailed brief and keep them informed of:

- Progress – whether on schedule or delayed
- Changes to the brief

Sometimes you will need to discuss a minor point with one colleague or supplier, but make sure that anyone else who needs to know about it is informed.

### 11. Editing a long document

As research, copywriting, design and production get under way, your role as editor or manager is to keep everything moving and on schedule.

Even with style guides and extensive briefing, written material will still require editing, designs will need amending and web pages will need testing. Ensure you have enough time built into your schedule for all these.

Editorial meetings, where you bring contributors together, can be useful for monitoring progress and ironing out any problems while still minor. They also give contributors and suppliers the opportunity to ask questions so that anything that is unclear can be clarified.

### 12. Proofreading and checking large publications

Although these activities happen at a late stage of production, they are very important.

Detailed planning, clear briefs and ongoing management should produce the long document or large web site you require, but proofreading and checking will pick up any mistakes or errors, and highlight any areas where editing or amendments are required.

After spending days or weeks and thousands of pounds on producing a document, the relatively small cost of proofreading can prevent errors from reducing the effectiveness of your publication.

### 13. Ensure the finished product matches your brief

However well you plan, there is often a need for more time and mistakes can often occur at the production stage when time runs short.

Ensure printers and other production suppliers are fully briefed and have a detailed specification so that the finished item matches your requirements.

### 14. Benefit by good management and editing

Every large publication is unique, so adapt these guidelines to the specific long document or large web site you are producing.

Planning, scheduling, editing and checking should help you manage a large publication so that it achieves your purposes. They should also save you time by preventing problems from arising and keep your costs under control.