The Designer’s Compass

A Masterclass in Client Requirements

Your guide to turning a client’s vision into a successful reality.

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Every Great Project Starts with a Clear Mission.

A client brief isn’t just a document; it’s your map to success. It tells you what to build, who it’s for, and how you’ll know you’ve succeeded.

It explains what the client wants the product to do, who it is for and how it should look, sound and feel.

Mastering the brief is the first and most critical step. Get it right, and you’re on the path to success. Get it wrong, and the entire project is at risk.

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The Two Sides of Every Requirement.

Functional: What must the product *do*?

"The website must have a contact form."

Aesthetic: How should the product *look and feel*?

"The design should be minimalist and modern."

These principles link directly to the product's **Purpose** and **Audience**.

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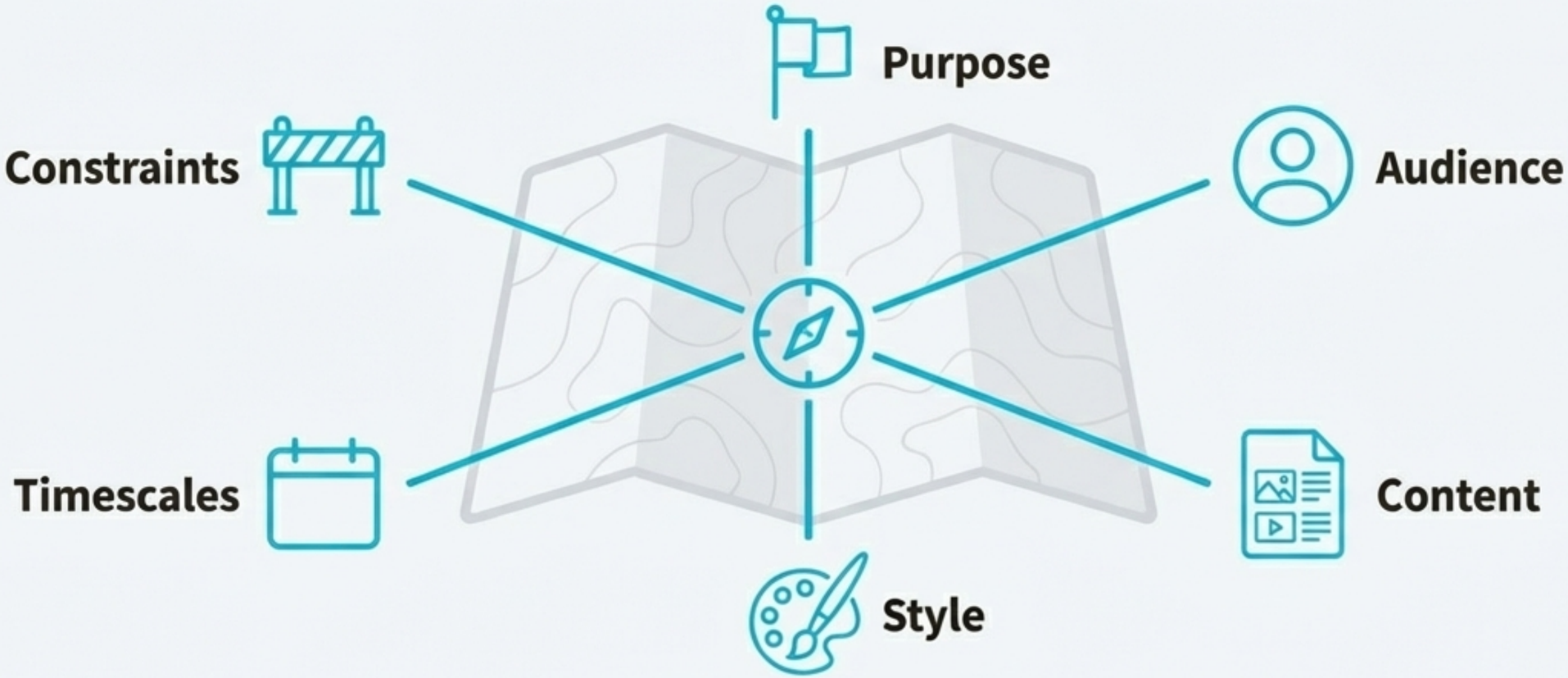
Your Map Has Six Key Landmarks.



To navigate the project successfully, you must be able to identify and interpret these six key requirements. We will explore each one, showing you how to extract the crucial information from any brief.

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The ‘Why’: What is the Destination?

This is the ultimate goal of the product. Is it to inform, persuade, entertain, or sell? Every design decision must lead back to this core purpose.

The ‘Who’: Who Are We Guiding?

This is who the product is for. Knowing their age, interests, lifestyle and needs determines the language, style, and platform you must choose.

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The ‘What’: What’s in Your Toolkit?

The specific assets, features, and functions that must be included. This covers text, images, audio, video, logos, and navigation elements.

The ‘How’: What is the Vibe?

The required look and feel. This includes brand colours, fonts, tone of voice, and the overall level of formality (e.g., corporate vs. casual).

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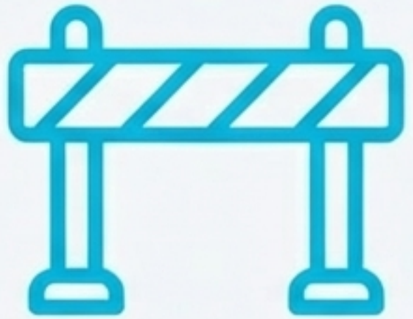
The ‘When’: What is the Pace?

The critical path of the project. This includes key dates, milestone reviews, deadlines, and the final launch date, all of which dictate your production schedule.



The ‘Can’t’: What Are the Boundaries?

The rules of the road. This covers budget limits, legal and ethical issues (e.g., copyright), available resources, and technical limitations (e.g., file sizes, platform rules).

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Defining Victory: How the Client Measures Success.

Success criteria are the client's checklist for an effective product. They describe how the client will judge whether the final outcome has met the brief and achieved its purpose.

Your job is not just to build the product, but to provide clear evidence that you have met each criterion.

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The Three-Step Formula for a Perfect Answer

This is the core structure for almost any exam answer that asks you to justify your choices.

Start your justification with the phrase:
"This meets the client requirement because..."

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Applied Knowledge: Short Answers (4 Marks)

'Explain two constraints that might affect the design of a social media campaign for a small business. (4 marks)'

Constraint 1: Limited Budget.

This directly affects the choices made by the designer. For example, it means they cannot afford professional photography and must use stock images or user-generated content.

Constraint 2: Short Timescale.

This limits the complexity of the campaign, forcing the designer to favour simple, quick-to-produce assets like static image posts over more time-consuming videos.

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The Synthesis: Tackling the High-Mark Question (9 Marks)

'A client has asked for a website to promote a new fitness app. The brief includes purpose, audience, key features, timescale and budget. Discuss how a designer should use this information when planning the website and explain why it is important to follow the client requirements.'

Paragraph 1: Purpose & Audience - Explain how these inform your plan for style, tone, and content choices.

Paragraph 2: Features & Content - Explain how key features decide the page structure, navigation, and required media assets.

Paragraph 3: Timescale & Budget - Explain how these are used to create a realistic production and testing plan.

Conclusion - Summarise why following the requirements is vital (e.g., client satisfaction, fitness for purpose, avoiding wasted time and resources).

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What If the Map is Unclear?

A true professional doesn’t guess. If requirements are vague or constraints seem unrealistic, you must act to avoid mistakes later.

- **Clarify**: Request a follow-up meeting or send a detailed email with specific questions to resolve ambiguity.
- **Visualise:** Create mood boards or sketches to confirm the aesthetic direction and get client sign-off.
- **Negotiate:** If the budget, resources, or timescale are too tight, professionally suggest realistic changes or alternatives.

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Continue Your Training.

The theory is complete. Now, put it into practice. Use these resources from the iMedia Genius Hub to sharpen your skills.

Client Brief Detective Game

Race the clock to find key information in client briefs.

Audience Matcher Game

Match media products to the correct audience segments.

iMedia Genius Quiz

Test yourself with exam-style questions on all R093 topics.

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Access flashcards, mind maps, and quick-fire revision prompts.

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Your Mission Checklist

☑ Can you list the key types of information found in client requirements (purpose, audience, content, style, timescales, constraints)?

☑ Can you explain how requirements link directly to the audience, purpose, and constraints of a product?

☑ Can you use a client brief to justify your design choices and production plans in an exam?

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You Have Your Compass.

Go create something brilliant.

iMedia Genius // R093 Revision Hub

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