

# HOW TO PRODUCE THE ULTIMATE TECH BRIEF



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As an experienced tech marketer, you know that producing effective content on your products and services is critical to a successful demand generation campaign. You also know that producing content isn't easy. You've probably produced white papers and are well aware of how difficult they can be to get approved and published.

## There is a short cut: the tech brief.

Lighter and more focused, tech briefs are ideally suited for generating demand. They can be produced quickly, and in a satisfying, digestible format for busy engineers.

But not all tech briefs perform alike. Disjointed, marketing-driven content often does more harm than good.

What follows are the critical things to consider when producing tech briefs to keep your engineering prospects coming back for more.



## What is a tech brief?

A tech brief is essentially a shorter, less institutionalized version of a white paper that covers a subject that interests technical professionals, i.e., your prospects. It is often inspired by a company's latest innovation or design approach but it's intentionally devoid of marketing hyperbole. It provides readers with insight they can digest and apply quickly. A tech brief is also a way to share your team's knowledge on how to solve a key problem. When you publish it effectively, you can use it in a variety of ways in a demand generation campaign to generate leads and build brand recognition within your target markets.

# It starts with an engaging topic and a clear game plan

(and buy-in from engineering).

If you've ever tackled a technical content project (white paper, tech brief, technical feature article, or blog post), you know there are two places a tech brief can get stymied.

**1. Topics can be difficult to find.** True, but you have a treasure trove of ideas at the front lines of your own organization. What challenges are prospects discussing with sales? What problems are customers looking to solve with your support team? Beyond that, SEO tools like Google Webmaster and KeywordTool.io can not only help you develop strong keywords for SEO, they can also help you develop content ideas based on the products and technologies people are searching for.

**2. Your engineers already have a job.** Let's face it, your project is dead from the start if your engineers aren't fully on board. They will be key contributors to the project so it's critical to engage them early in the ideation process and develop a detailed outline that they can approve before you invest time in writing a first draft.

## PRO TIP: Nail your topic.

Enter a subject into [KeywordTool.io](https://keywordtool.io) and use the results as a starting point for your topic brainstorming session.



# How to structure a tech brief like a pro

Like any good story, a tech brief needs a story arc. It begins with a lead-in (introduction), establishes characters (readers and others in their application environment), describes the technical challenge in a way readers can quickly identify with, presents a body of how-to information (the takeaway), and concludes with a revisit of the introduction and a summary of the solution.

## Sections of a tech brief

1. Cover
2. Table of Contents
3. Introduction
4. Body of Information
5. Conclusion
6. Next Steps (CTAs)



## Your cover's not just a cover; it's an invitation.

At its most basic level, your cover should clearly communicate the value of the tech brief. While imagery plays an important role—and should directly relate to your topic—the headline is going to do the bulk of the work. It should explicitly and concisely communicate what your potential readers will learn. The cover has another job to do: it must sell the tech brief itself. Potential readers will decide to download your brief based mainly on seeing the cover. It needs a well-crafted, engaging headline (see the PRO TIP on page 8) and a clean professional design.

While you're considering the cover layout, remember that your potential readers will first see it in a CTA (call to action), in an email, or maybe as a PR image. It will be small. And on a phone, really small. Your headline must be larger than you may imagine. As you're designing your cover, save it as a PDF, open it in Adobe Acrobat, and view it at 15%. If you can't read your headline, it's likely that your potential readers won't be able to either.

### PRO TIP: Create a flexible cover.

When promoting your tech brief, it may appear small in many places. Design a cover that will allow your headline to always be readable.



## Set the stage.

Even in a short brief of four to six pages, you should include a table of contents to help readers familiarize themselves with what's ahead. It's natural to look for one, and it's also an exercise that helps you stay on track with the approved outline.

Use your introduction to clearly state the technical challenge and how it can manifest itself. Provide a hint on what's to come regarding the solution, but don't be explicit. Make sure to state who will benefit from reading your brief, in other words: be clear about who is your intended audience. Introduce the problem at hand and provide a summary of the promised takeaway. The introduction is generally one paragraph but may slide into a short second and typically totals no more than 150-200 words.

### Writer TIP: Write an effective title.

**The cover title entices the reader to engage. It should quickly and easily communicate what they will learn. It must:**

- **Be Concise.** Limit the title to around 8-10 words.
- **Be clear and focused.** Leave no doubt about what the tech brief is about. Let readers know what they'll take away if they commit to downloading it.
- **Include SEO-related keywords.** Choose words that are likely to be included in a keyword search and name the PDF file [title].pdf.

#### Common lead-ins to try:

How/when to...  
Why ...  
What are... ?  
Designing with A to resolve B in...  
Best practices for...  
Simplifying...  
Top X ways to ...  
Learn the...  
Learn when... and when not to...  
Advantages of X over Y for...  
Comparing A to B in ...  
Achieving...  
X Keys to...

## Here's where you show your true expertise.

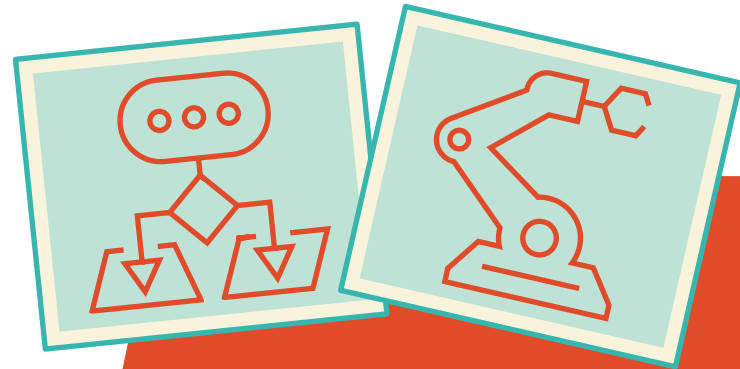
Use the body of the tech brief to create sequential blocks of content that build up to create the total solution. Communicate the solution and its variables, their benefits and drawbacks, in a series of paragraphs. Ensure that each paragraph covers just one idea. Don't roam. Stay focused.

Ensure that you follow strong standards for technical journalism. What does that mean? It means that you must weave the human element into the technical while keeping your focus on the promised takeaway throughout the arc of your story.

### Basic elements of writing for a technical audience:

- Know the persona you're writing for.
- Know the solution and how to show it.
- Write in the second person.
- Use active voice; avoid passive constructions.
- Use the present tense.
- Stay focused on the takeaway promised by the headline.
- Include links in your body to web pages for a better user experience and for SEO.

As you near the end, it's OK to mention your company's solutions that are designed to help. But avoid a sales pitch.



### Writer TIP: Suggest relevant images.

#### Cover Image

You'll be collaborating with a graphic designer, but as a writer, part of your job is to provide technical context for the cover image.

#### Support Images

Although you as the writer are not designing the look and feel of the tech brief, you are an integral part of the communication. As such, you're in charge of adding insight into the presentation and flow of the information. Recommend support images to be used in your tech brief from cover to conclusion.



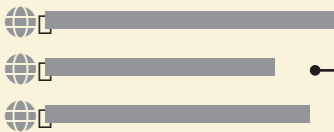
# Wrap it up and point the way.

Your conclusion is short, just like your introduction. It summarizes what you've explained above and gently recommends a solution. In some ways, you could say it mirrors the introduction and in addition, wraps up the problem/solution discussion. A good conclusion leaves readers with a sense of direction. They have a hunger for more and know what to do, which is to engage.

**Give your readers a place to go.** If you've delivered on the promise proposed in the title of your tech brief, you can be confident your readers will be ready for more. A "Next Steps" section after the conclusion offers suggestions on how to find additional content on your website that might be helpful. Include links to your technical support page and other tech briefs and blogs they may find useful.



Offer additional tech briefs that relate to the topic you have just covered.



Links to blog posts or pages on your website are also great ways to keep readers connected to your content.

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## PRO TIP: End with "Next Steps".

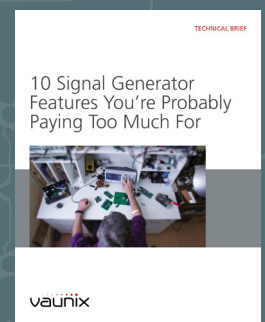
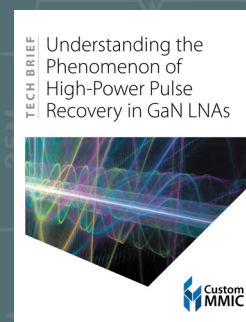
Your tech brief should end with clear and conspicuous paths for readers to follow. Each path should be related to or offer additional insights into the content you have just presented. It is important to resist the temptation to use this space for a sales pitch.

# Here's what you've learned today:

Tech briefs are powerful tools; use discipline and routine to produce them successfully.

- 1. Develop an outline** well in advance and use it to structure the arc of your story and to gain buy-in from contributors in engineering.
- 2. Tell a story.** Keep the organization of your article linear and focused using an active voice and simple sentence construction. Avoid marketing speak.
- 3. Be clear and concise** with the lesson at hand. Engage your client's technical brain fast by ensuring the cover communicates an immediate and clear reason to download the brief.
- 4. Create a versatile cover.** Font size matters if your digital campaign uses thumbnail-sized versions of the cover.
- 5. Provide solid support imagery.**
- 6. Wrap up succinctly** and summarize your key takeaways.
- 7. Provide a path forward.** Keep readers in your sphere by suggesting next steps.

## Next Steps:



- ➔ Download these exemplary tech briefs and use them as reference guides.
- ➔ Learn more B-to-B marketing best practices in our [blog](#).
- ➔ Get further inspiration from our [creative work](#).
- ➔ [Get in touch](#) to request a proposal for your next tech brief or demand generation campaign.