



SECRETS TO GETTING PAID FOR YOUR CREATIVE IDEAS AND PROPOSALS

Many creative professionals such as event planners, interior designers, and decorative painters are frustrated when potential clients steal their ideas and take them to cheaper companies. They present their ideas in a proposal or presentation and later find that they didn't get the client and their designs are being used by someone else.

PROTECT YOUR IDEAS

In order to protect your ideas and still get the client, you have to change how you deliver your concepts and specifically what you present. Keep in mind, your creative ideas are the most valuable part of what you do, so stop giving them away for free.

The first thing you need to do to protect yourself is to focus the initial meeting with the prospect on her ideas and her needs, rather than on your ideas and your suggestions. Spend at least 95% of the meeting asking questions rather than presenting solutions and ideas.

Find out what the client wants and what she envisions. Discover why she wants what she wants and uncover what her experiences have been in the past with this type of project. Focus on her, not on you and your services.

Build a relationship with the client and let go of the idea that you have to put on a big show of creative ideas to impress her. Contrary to what most people think, the client would rather talk about what she want then listen to your ideas. Really.

PRESENT THE WHAT BUT NOT THE HOW

Next, present the potential client with a proposal that becomes a contract once the prospect signs it. The proposal should include goals that the client told you she wanted in your first meeting. It should include payment terms. The proposal should include what you will do, just not HOW you will do it.

Let's look at examples of how and what:

Event Planner:

WHAT: "Incorporate an island theme in event decorations, music, catering, and location."

HOW: "Use pineapple centerpieces, bamboo tables, island shaped invitations, coconut flavored cake, and an entry way filled with palm tree leaves and bananas."

Interior Designer:

WHAT: Design a functional and easy-to-tidy space for use as a family room where there is ample storage for children's games, a television, and other entertainment.

HOW: Rubbermaid storage containers will be used in a specially designed 17-piece wood cabinet that can be converted into a television stand, a workspace, and table.

Wedding Consultant:

WHAT: "Create an intimate, upscale, evening reception for approximately 40 guests."

HOW: "Decorate facility with purple flowers and linens, a four-tier chocolate and raspberry wedding cake, and a 6-piece band.

Decorative Painter:

WHAT: Create a jungle-themed mural for child's bedroom.

HOW: Paint walls with "garden room" green, add 25 rainforest trees throughout walls and incorporating ceiling space, paint 5 Colobus monkeys, 7 chimpanzees, a gray parrot, 9 green tree frogs, and a stream running across the door.

WHEN AND HOW TO PRESENT YOUR IDEAS

You can present your ideas in several ways and still protect them.

First, you can present your ideas in detail after the client has signed a simple proposal with you. You should work together with the client to create what he wants through your creative talents.

Another way to present your ideas is through sample boards or renderings, but only after the client has either signed a proposal for the project or paid you for your ideas. If you chose to charge the client for the samples, agree to put the payment towards the amount of the final contract amount should the client agree to hire you to do the project. If the client chooses to use someone else for the project, then at least you were paid for your ideas and your suggestions.

Never present specific ideas, sample boards, or drawings to a client unless you've been paid for that part of the project or the client has signed a contract. By continuing to submit ideas and formal suggestions to potential clients, you are short changing yourself and your creative talents by lowering the value of your concepts in the mind of the buyer.

By learning how to effectively manage the first meeting with a potential customer, how to protect your ideas, and when and how to present your ideas will help you gain better clients, better projects, and have a better income!