Get It Right the First Time

Real “Word for Word” Scripts That You Can Use In Your Design Biz

1. How to ask your client for a referral.
2. What to say when a potential client says, “What is your hourly rate and what is your mark up?”
3. How to respond when a potential client says “Would you come to my house? I want to hear your ideas.”
4. How to respond to clients that ask for last minute Saturday appointments.
5. What you need to be saying on the first on site appointment.
6. How to tell a long time client that you have raised your fees.
7. How to tell a friend that your design services are not free any more.
8. How to disclose a referral fee.
9. How to gracefully respond to a request for additional services that are not in the original Letter of Agreement.
10. How to ask for the sale.

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1. How to ask your client for a referral.

You must ask for referrals in order to get what you want. Referrals don’t magically or automatically happen. Asking for a referral does not mean that you are needy or desperate.

Watch out for your unintentional negative statements that push away referrals.

Your request for a referral can start with a compliment…

“You know, I really enjoy working with you. You are always so much fun…”

If you have friends that are like you I hope that you will refer them to me.”

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2. ) What to say when a potential client says, “What is your hourly rate and what is your mark up?”

Try to avoid directly answering this question. It puts you in the position of being a commodity; like a box of crackers on the shelf in the grocery store.

The goal is to quote your time as a fee for specific scope of design services.

So, you would say…

“I would be happy to talk about the cost of design services. May I ask you about the project that you are planning?”

The point here is to DISCOVER what the job is about, what the problem is and what the end result or expectation is about.

You can say…

“I believe that quoting hourly rates can be a deceiving practice, a kind of a bait and switch situation where the total ends up being way more than you anticipated.”

“This is how I work; after I see your project and we have an in depth conversation about your ideas, personal style, overall budget, goals and expectations, I will quote a set fee for your specific scope of design work so that you know exactly what this cost will be.”

“I don’t mark up product and sell it to you. That can be deceiving too.”

“I do offer a purchasing and procurement service that is completely transparent.”

“I give you my factory wholesale or designer net pricing.”

“I charge a ___% fee to cover the administrative cost of issuing purchase and shipping orders, tracking and expediting purchases, resolving back orders, discontinued items and damage issues, scheduling delivery and managing the final set up and reveal of your new room (home, office)”

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3. ) How to respond when a potential client says…

“Would you come and see my house? I want to hear your ideas.”

This is a RED LIGHT warning. This client may be looking for free advice or might be looking to hire you.

You must be clear about both situations. You can say…

“I would be happy to take a look at your home (office.”)

“Here is how I work;

If you are considering hiring me to work on your upcoming project, I will be happy to come over and meet with you and we will see if we like each other. There is no charge for this meeting.”

“Oh, if you want me to come over and just “download” ideas and answers for you, I would be glad to do so. Get your yellow pad out and start writing down your questions. I can give you a lot of information in an hour. I charge $_____ for this service and payment is due the day of our appointment.”
“Which way would you prefer?”

Note: This amount should be 2 or 3 times your hourly rate.

Make up an invoice to take with you and hand it to her when you walk in.

Before you leave be sure to make an offer for more design services. Perhaps you offer to credit this amount into a Letter of Agreement if she acts with in 30 days.

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4. ) How to respond to clients that ask for last minute Saturday appointments.

This is a boundary issue, you must recognize that you are attracting clients who will try to do this to you. Clients will respect you when you set clear boundaries.

Just kindly say…

“I am sorry, I don’t work on Saturday (I have prior commitments.)”

“I am available after 4:00 pm on Monday or early morning Tuesday if this is something that we need to resolve quickly”

Note: this client will test you several times to see if you are serious before they fall in line.

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5. ) What you need to be saying on the first on site appointment.

Make this appointment about discovery… be curious.

Find out not only what they want but why they want it.

Discover the problem that they cannot solve themselves.

Be the solution!

Open the doors to letting them talk and listen carefully.

“Show me your kitchen (great room, master bathroom) and tell me what you are thinking…” “What do you want to do?”

“And what else?”

“And what else?” Keep digging deeper for more clues.

“Do you have some inspiration pictures that you have saved?”

“Do you have a budget in mind for this project?

If they don’t you can say…

Would you like for me to help you develop a budget? It will only take a few minutes.
Ask permission and get a “yes” answer.

*How to build a budget on the fly is in Design Biz Boot Camp 2011

“What would be the best part of having a new kitchen? (great room, master bedroom)

How will you feel when you come home to your new kitchen where (list all the things that she wants)?

“What has held you back from doing this project in the past?

Anything else?

“Well I have good solutions for problems like that. Would you like to hear about them?

This is polite request and is looking for another “yes” answer.

Explain your process in simple terms and that you need to study this over night to determine how much time it will take to complete the design portion of this job.

“I could be back tomorrow at 10:00 am or 4:30 pm with my Letter of Agreement, which is better for you?

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6. ) How to tell a long time client that you have raised your fees.

If you are working under a Letter of Agreement you must wait until you complete the job and start on another to raise your rate. This conversation is intended for an hourly billing situation.

Start the conversation by reviewing with her all the successful projects that you have done together. Then gently say…

I raised my fees to all my other clients several (6) months ago and I need to bring your project into line with the others. My new hourly rate is $______.

You know how much I value our relationship and your business so I’m not going to just spring this on you. I will not start billing at this price increase rate until next month. (30 days)

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7. ) How to tell a friend that your design services are not free any more.

Often early in our careers we do free design work to get started, gain confidence and have something to photograph. This is OK to get started, but it cannot go on forever.

You are the one who has to set boundaries around this issue.

Next time your friend pulls you aside and asks you to look at that last bathroom that needs updating, you can say…

Barbara (Cindy, Michael) I will take look at it but I need to tell you that I will have to charge you (the good friend rate, of course) for design time to develop the plan. I have too many paying customers that are waiting for their work to be done to take on a pro bono.
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8. ) How to disclose a referral fee.

You must disclose to the client that you may receive a referral fee from some of the vendors and contractors that you use on their job.

It is legal and ethical to receive fees back from vendors and contractors. There is only a problem when you accept money and don’t tell the client.

Here is the very simple thing to do. When you are shopping in Crate and Barrel with the client you say in a very matter of fact way…

“Of course, if we end up purchasing here they give me a little referral fee.”

And that is all you need to do.

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9. ) How to gracefully respond to a request for additional services that are not in the original Letter of Agreement.

This is usually a casual request from the client that is actually an opportunity to expand your services.

Next time they say…

“By the way, would you take a look at the fireplace in the family room? It really needs a facelift.

Instead of just doing it, you are going to say…

Sure, it would only take me, oh… maybe 6 hours to re-design a new look. Is that OK with you?

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10. ) How to ask for the sale.

In order to get the job or the sale you must ask for it.

After you ask, be quiet and wait for the answer.

Here are a few ways to do it…

After presenting a budget; “Are there any final changes we need to make? “Are you ready to get started?”

When presenting a fee on three levels; “Which package would work best for you?”

When presenting a Letter of Agreement; “Have I covered everything we need to do? Are you ready to get started?”

“If this looks good to you we will schedule to start our on-site measures and pick up the retainer check and signed agreement on Monday morning.