

- *The designer is sure that the job will go to a favored firm.*
- *The prospective client won't permit contact before the interview, and the designer knows nothing about them.*
- *The designer enters the hunt much too late.*

However, there are instances when it is a good marketing decision to go after a project that the firm is likely to lose. When a design professional has targeted a desirable client, and wants to make a good impression, the firm may decide to go after a project even though its chances are slim. That is, design professionals may make a conscious decision to gain visibility and credibility through a well-crafted proposal and interview process. This exercise is very different from chasing something the design professional has no business chasing at all.

---

## COURTSHIP/RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

# When design professionals

When design professionals market clients as opposed to projects, it may take some time before an appropriate project presents itself. Rather than bemoaning this situation, designers should consider it an advantage. The “market clients” approach gives design professionals plenty of time to learn the culture of the organization and establish a relationship. It is much easier to do this now than in the frantic week before the interview.

When it finally comes time for the prospect to make up a list of firms, a design firm that markets clients will be one of the names that comes to mind first if it

- *Works diligently at the relationship.*
- *Telephones on a periodic basis.*
- *Better yet, visits.*
- *Sends interesting articles that pertain to the client or project type, or even to personal interests.*

---

## QUALIFICATION PACKAGES

---

As a result of a long courtship, a referral from a broker, or a stellar reputation, a design professional is asked to submit qualifications for a particular project. The client issues a Request for Information (RFI), Request for Qualifications (RFQ), or Request for Proposal (RFP). The industry uses these terms interchangeably, although the latter (RFP) is more likely to request a scope of services and fee, addressed later in this section.

In an RFQ, the potential client poses specific questions that the design professional answers in a qualification statement, a written exhibit of experience. Always customized, the qualification statement is a sales tool that can put a firm ahead of the competition. The main objectives of a qualification statement are to communicate how well design professionals understand the client's concerns and to show how they will address those concerns. The client determines the elements of qualification statements and proposals. Design professionals should follow the order in which the questions are asked, and answer the questions directly and as briefly as possible. They should adhere to the client's format because clients often compare submissions side by side. If clients cannot find designers' responses easily, those designers will be eliminated.

Even though every RFQ is different, designers are likely to be asked for certain components. One extremely important component of the qualification statement is the cover letter that accompanies the qualification package. The letter may be the only thing a client reads, and it certainly can serve as a refresher after he has waded through a dozen or so weighty submissions. The designer should make the letter a concise summary of key selling points, and make it engaging.

In the first part of the submission, the design professional will introduce your firm. This introduction should be brief, one page at the most. It should be relevant to the project, and emphasize the project type for which the RFQ was issued. Next, the submission should present the project team—the individuals who will work on the project. The designer may want to precede this section with an organization chart or a written preface that clearly states names and project roles, and follow with the individual résumés of the team. Résumés should be kept to one or two pages. The designer should use proj-