

If the speakers plan to use a computer during the presentation, they should master it in advance. The intense pressure of an interview is an incredibly poor time to try out any new technology. Speakers should make sure that they do not waste time serving the technology; the technology they use must serve them and their audience. Above all, presenters should remember that they themselves are the most powerful visuals.

Speakers send the strongest message when their words, body language, and tools all support each other. Ultimately it is up to the presenters to make clients feel comfortable with their team's material and style. As presenters, their main task is to engage their audience's attention and keep it focused on their message. The audience will forgive a stumble or two, but it will not forgive a boring performance.

After the presentation, presenters should always get a debriefing, win or lose. They will benefit if they learn why they succeeded or what were their mistakes. Presenters should think of debriefing as research. They will get the most out of the process if they use open-ended (but not leading) questions. Presenters should develop a format for sharing what they have learned with the team, and debrief humanely.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

Usually, design professionals will be asked to make a proposal in conjunction with their presentation, or shortly thereafter. The primary purpose of the proposal is to delineate the designer's services and present the proposed fee for these services. A proposal may become the basis of a formal agreement (contract), or it may serve as the agreement itself. Firms sometimes specify that fees that are over a certain amount require a formal agreement rather than a proposal form of agreement.

Designers should keep in mind that the proposal is distinct from the process leading up to it. The qualifications and presentation were persuasive, promotional exercises, while the proposal is a legal document. While designers are still in a selling mode, they should be fully prepared to actually do everything they say they will do. There are three basic parts of a proposal: the

scope of the project, the scope of services, and professional fees. A proposal may also contain sections relating to schedule, team, and work plan. It is a smart move to initiate this document, rather than to respond to an owner's contract, so that the designer can establish the framework for negotiation.

Identifying Scope of Services

The *scope of services* is the defining element of the proposal, and should be written with great care. It should be preceded by text that clearly describes the scope of the project, so there is a common understanding between owner and designer. The scope of services is usually divided into *basic services*, which are covered under the designer's base fee, and *additional services*, which the client may add as options. If designers are working with an owner's agreement as a base document, they should make sure that the client has not shifted services that they normally consider "additional" into basic services. Sometimes it is advisable to list items that are not covered in the usual scope of services, to reduce the possibility of future misunderstandings, but for the most part, the proposal should be a positive document.

Identifying Compensation

Professional fees are the second key part of the proposal, and perhaps the most agonizing part of its preparation. Designers can make use of definite strategies for presenting their fee. If the owner is considering several firms, the designer will want to present the fee so that the owner can make an apples-to-apples comparison. This comparison is usually easiest when designers keep the basic services simple and in conformance with industry standards. If designers include in their basic services certain services that most other firms do not, their fee is likely to be higher. Fees can be presented on a square-foot or other unit basis, on an hourly basis, as a single lump sum, or as a percentage of the construction cost (although this is more common in architectural proposals). The proposal should clarify the terms of payment, by time period or phase. It should protect the design firm against unreasonable withholding of fees, and give the firm recourse when payment is delayed. Later, in an attachment or in the formal agreement, designers can cover more negative provisions, such as limiting the time to contest invoices, the amount of interest charged on late payments, and adjustments to the fee if the project is delayed or put on hold.