



HOW YOU'RE GETTING  
FIRED THIS TIME

# HOW YOU'RE GETTING FIRED THIS TIME

1. You're Lazy
2. You're Difficult
3. You're Work Sucks
4. You're an Asshole

The good news is you're none of those things. I'm sure you all work very hard, and quicker than most and none of you are assholes. We need to make sure the client knows those things. I'm going to talk to you today about how to let your clients know how proactive and quick and, gosh darn cool you all are.

# PERCEIVED VALUE

I'm going to talk to you today about how you market yourself to clients once you've begun working with them. I'm going to go over the general tactics you should employ to ensure that your clients are happy with your work, you're happy with your work and that you're first in line for the next contract.

# PERCEIVED VALUE

$$\text{Value} = \text{Quality} / \text{Expectations}$$

When I'm talking about perceived value I'm referring to how valuable your client thinks you are. How valuable you appear to the organization that employs you. Perceived value isn't about how valuable your contributions are it's about how to let your clients know how valuable your contributions are.

# DELIVERING QUALITY

The first step, and this should be well worn territory for you all, is managing the basic. This includes doing the proper research, doing the work and showing off your work. It's worth repeating because of how often I see people neglecting the simplest aspects of their job.

# DELIVERING QUALITY

- Do the Research

Before you even meet with the client for the first time, do your research. Know their target audience, know their business model and know their products. You need this for two reason:

# DELIVERING QUALITY

- Do the Research

▶ Avoid working with assholes

First, is this someone you want to be working for? If their current webpage is crap, then they're going to expect you to make crap. If they're taking advantage of their customers, they're going to try to take advantage of you. Look through their source code if you're a front-end designer, visit their webpage and their competitors webpages to see how their design compares. These will provide you hints on how to deal with the client as well as how to present yourself. You need to know where they've been if you're going to help get them to where they're going.

# DELIVERING QUALITY

- Do the Research

- ▶ Avoid working with assholes

- ▶ Be aware of your surroundings

Secondly, you want to appear engaged and informed when you meet with your client. They want to know that you're aware of your surroundings. They want you to appear confident. You don't want to be surprised or caught off guard, it makes you appear unconfident or worse -- clueless

This doesn't mean, of course, that you shouldn't ask questions. Clients love to hear themselves talk. Even if you're familiar with what they're explaining to you just be polite, hold eye contact and nod accordingly.

And that's why you should do research.

# DELIVERING QUALITY

- Do the Research
- Do the Work

You also need to do the work. You need to make sure you have a place you can work comfortably, have plenty of time to complete their project as well as any other the work of any clients. This is so much easier when you're doing work you enjoy and can be proud of, which we'll talk about later.

Don't take a job unless you want to do the work.

# DELIVERING QUALITY

- Do the Research
- Do the Work
- QA and How to Obsess

This does more than ensures you're not handing over something broken to your client, it gives you the confidence to go into meetings fearlessly and project a professional, friendly image. Remember, you're every bit as responsible for setting the tone of a meeting. If you come in timid and unsure of your product, everyone will know. Do what you need to do to be strong, be confident and be in control when you meet with your client to show off your work.

# DELIVERING QUALITY

- Do the Research
- Do the Work
- QA and How to Obsess

▶ For your sanity as much as theirs

This does more than ensures you're not handing over something broken to your client, it gives you the confidence to go into meetings fearlessly and project a professional, friendly image. Remember, you're every bit as responsible for setting the tone of a meeting. If you come in timid and unsure of your product, everyone will know. Do what you need to do to be strong, be confident and be in control when you meet with your client to show off your work.

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

More tricky, is setting deadlines. While you think setting aggressive deadlines make you look fast, not meeting those deadlines make you look slow. You need to work closely with the client to set deadlines, don't be afraid to ask questions plan liberally for changes.

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front

A fantastic way to prevent communication breakdowns is to make sure you're on the same page as the client. You need to make their goals your goals. Are they looking to reach new customers? Is this for existing customers? Who else in the organization is going to see this? You need to make sure you know the answers to these questions. You need to care about the answers to these questions -- or at least appear to care.

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front

▶ You need to care

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front

▶ You need to appear to care

I'm always shocked at how often clients talk to freelancers like they're ordering at a restaurant. *I want a blue webpage with a side of javascript.* It doesn't do anyone any favors for you to blindly follow their requests. You need to dig deeper if you want to discover all aspects of the design.

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front
- Discover All Aspects of a Design

This is a critical part in any project. Any miscommunication that happens while the client is explaining the project to you won't be discovered until far into the project and will be a much more difficult to fix than if you just ask for more clarification early on. Any documents you can request, you should. Don't make assumptions -- if you feel the urge to assume, ask instead.

I've been in so many meetings where the client is asking for something very simple but can't express him or herself clearly and it snowballs into a much larger problem than it is, which is what you're trying to avoid. Working on incorrect features or towards unnecessary design goals wastes both your time and your client's time. and the best way to avoid this is to...

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front
- Discover All Aspects of a Design
- Get to the Root of the Client's Request

find out why your client is making the request she's making. When you feel like you've hit a brick wall or you can tell the client is unhappy with your proposals, get them talking. Ask why. Ask them what their perfect scenario would be. Get them talking and take a moment to think about what they're saying. Stop trying to solve problems and focus on the end product. If you feel yourself getting off track or see the conversation going down the wrong track, halt the conversation and get everyone aligned.

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front
- Discover All Aspects of a Design
- Get to the Root of the Client's Request

▶ This *\*should\** be the client's job

This should be the client's job, since they're running the meeting, but don't let their poor management jeopardize the project. You have as much of an investment as they do and will be glad to see you take initiative. Don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions that will get everyone back on track and focusing on the same goal.

# FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

- Ask Questions Up Front
- Discover All Aspects of a Design
- Get to the Root of the Client's Request
- Plan for QA, Testing and Revisions

People change their minds. People make decisions based on irrelevant criteria. People make mistakes. Unfortunately, you need to plan for these things. Always plan for features changes, spec changes or design changes. A client might have a bright idea a month into the project that changes the spec significantly and you need to be able to respond confidently and calmly to their requests. The calmer and more accepting you appear the more likely that client is to keep working with you. No one wants to be surrounded by stressed out people. Give yourself extra time for the project, you'll end up using it.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Ok, you've asked all your questions, know all the features and know why they want what they want. You have a good idea of what you're building and now your task is not only to deliver the product but to deliver the product they're expecting. This is when people decide if you're good at what you do or not. It doesn't matter if you're the best programmer or the best designer. If you can't deliver what your client was expecting they will think your work sucks.

And since we're all gifted designers and talented programmers the problem we're going to run into here is that -- surely -- the clients are wrong. What we gave them is awesome and I'm going to show you how to change their minds.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions

The more questions you ask, the better idea they will have of what they want. Managers, entrepreneurs and marketers have a tendency to motivated self starters who act before they think. Which is great, for them, but also means they don't always think through every scenario before moving forward with something. Something as simple as sending over an email that includes a brief summery of the project 'just to make sure we're on the same page' can go a long way for making sure that not only you know what you're doing, but they they know what they're doing too.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
- Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids

Humans are very visual creatures and are pattern recognition machines so any visual feedback you can give a client will clue you in on early problems and also let them know what to expect from your finished project. This is old hat for the graphic designers in the room but it's important for the more technically minded people too. Remember, the people who you're working with may not always speak the same language as you and pictures and diagrams transcend buzz words and tech-speak.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
- Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids
  - Balsamiq <http://www.balsamiq.com/>
  - Gliffy <http://www.gliffy.com/>
  - MockFlow <http://www.mockflow.com/>

How you'll accomplish this will vary greatly from client to client and also from project to project. I'm a big fan of the whiteboard and using it to draw out flowcharts and to quickly sketch up user experience examples. Software like Balsamiq, Gliffy or MockFlow are great for larger projects while even something as simple as sketching out ideas on paper will give your client a better idea of what to expect from the finished result, as well as to consider if what they're telling you is really what they want to see.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
- Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids
- Justify Your Work in Business Terms

Any decisions you do end up making are liable to being scrutinized and, since they're hiring you for your expertise on the matters, you'll want those decisions to remain in the end product. This is a way to avoid doing crap work and should be looked at as an internal quality control. Despite our clients best efforts, we really do want to make the best product we can.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
  - Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids
  - Justify Your Work in Business Terms
- ▶ *What is obvious to you is not obvious*

What may seem obvious to you could be completely foreign to the person it ends up approving your design. And decisions you make today could you reviewed by someone you've never met months down the road and your client will have to defend them.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
- Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids
- Justify Your Work in Business Terms
  - ▶ What is obvious to you is not obvious
  - ▶ Your client is your audience

The way to ensure that your decisions live through the first round of revisions is to justify the business logic using business terminology. Imagine you're speaking to your client and they're asking "Why" for every feature.

"I added white space above the purchase button. *Why?* To draw more attention to the button *Why?* Because we want people to view the purchase page. *Why?* To sell more widgets."

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
- Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids
- Justify Your Work in Business Terms
  - ▶ What is obvious to you is not obvious
  - ▶ Your client is your audience
  - ▶ Split testing is great.

If you're in an opportunity where you can perform a split test, you should absolutely perform a split test. They provide real numbers you can give to your client or manager to justify your cause in very real terms. Google's Website Optimizer is a fantastic tool. Just really wonderfully, mind-bogglingly great. It automates split testing on websites and handles all the analytics for you so you can empirical say *this design is better*.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
- Use Mockups, Demonstrations and Visual Aids
- Justify Your Work in Business Terms
- Bill to Impress

A client's impression of you is also going to be largely set by how much you bill. Billing more gives the appearance of higher quality work which in turns makes you appear more valuable. Remember to display suitable confidence and forward thinking when it comes time to talk payment. While it's tempting to charge less in an attempt to find more clients, you could be undercutting yourself by not only making less money, but also appearing less valuable.

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

- You Should Have Asked More Questions
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- Bill to Impress

▶ Charging less != more clients

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# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

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- Bill to Impress

▶ Charging less != more clients

▶ Cultural. Some organizations expect to pay more than others. And other expect to pay less.

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No

You will have to say no to your boss. You should be saying no more often, and you need to say no if you want to create anything worth looking at. You're client is hiring you for your expertise, they're hiring you because you're smarter than them and you would be doing them a disservice by agreeing with them all the time.

Position your case by presenting them with the ramifications of their request in very real terms. "If you remove this feature customers will not be able to purchase product X from page Y resulting in less over-all sales" or "Adding this feature will increase our budget by thirty hours and has not been proven to increase readability or usability" Remind them that you're working with their best interest in mind and explain how this will still help them solve their root problem.

# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No

▶ Add to the conversation

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No

- ▶ Add to the conversation

- ▶ Use business terms

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No

- ▶ Add to the conversation

- ▶ Use business terms

- ▶ Relate to overarching goals

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No
- How to Turn a No into a Yes

If a client has said no to you, the tactic is very similar. Remind them of the business logic behind your decision, offer another solution and make them feel like they're in control of the situation. Never back them into a corner. Never tell them they're wrong and always position yourself as a solution, not a roadblock.

Remember, it never hurts to step back from the project and make sure that everyone is on the same track and heading to the same goal. Breathe. Present your case in their terms, using their language and don't demand an answer immediately.

# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No
  - How to Turn a No into a Yes
- ▶ Never tell them they're wrong

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No
  - How to Turn a No into a Yes
- ▶ Never tell them they're wrong
  - ▶ Give them time to change their mind

If a client has said no to you, the tactic is very similar. Remind them of the business logic behind your decision, offer another solution and make them feel like they're in control of the situation. Never back them into a corner. Never tell them they're wrong and always position yourself as a solution, not a roadblock.

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No
- How to Turn a No into a Yes
- How to Present Yourself

Every company has a messy, organic, invisible set of rules that dictates how they interact with each other. Corporate Culture. It's very human, and very messy. The quickest way you to ruin your chances for repeat business is to establish yourself as an outsider. Make sure you dress appropriately, speak the same language they do and uphold the same values they do.

Regarding dress, being the best dressed person in the room is just as bad as being the worst dressed. The last thing you want is your client feeling uncomfortable or unprepared. If you're heading into an office for an interview or to meet with a client face to face for the first time, you can call the secretary and ask if the dress is 'business casual.' Don't feel ashamed for asking, it's far better than showing up over or under dressed.

# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No
- How to Turn a No into a Yes
- How to Present Yourself

▶ Show them you share the same values

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# RESPECTING THE CLIENT

- How to Say No
- How to Turn a No into a Yes
- How to Present Yourself
- The Art of Making Excuses

Don't.

If you absolutely must, offer an apology. Take responsibility for your mistakes, don't blame anyone, don't mention anyone, be an adult and take responsibility for your mistakes. Excuses make you look guilty and re-affirms that what you were doing wasn't in the client best interest. You're a professional and they expect you to act a certain way, which is not making excuses.

Offer solutions instead. Explain what went wrong and why you're not going to make the same mistake again.

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1. You're Proactive

# HOW YOU'RE GETTING FIRED THIS TIME

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2. You're Difficult
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1. You're Proactive
2. You're Great to Work With

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1. You're Proactive
2. You're Great to Work With
3. You Do Good Work

# HOW YOU'RE GETTING FIRED THIS TIME

1. You're Lazy
2. You're Difficult
3. You're Work Sucks
4. You're an Asshole

1. You're Proactive
2. You're Great to Work With
3. You Do Good Work
4. You're a Cool Guy

Thanks!

Benton Barnett

<http://www.bentonbarnett.com>



EOF;