

# The Art of Freelancing: Bridging the Divide between Repeat Business and You

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Monday, 03 July 2006

If you are a freelancing anything, chances are you have had that awkward moment when you wonder whether or not you really understand your employer's objectives. Besides the bottom line (finish the project on budget), how do you figure out what really makes him happy (what will keep him coming back for more)?

Is it timeliness, courteousness, preciseness, friendliness? Should you be very aggressive? Should you wait for instructions? Or perhaps you should be creative.... no, better not be creative, you don't want to deviate from the spec!

What gives? How can you know what this person &ndash; a complete stranger other than one or two brief conversations during which your tasks were outlined &ndash; wants, expects, or requires of contracted help? The obvious answer is to communicate. But we know that what is obvious isn't always easy. How, when, why, about what&hellip; you want to talk but you don't know how; you want to listen but you're not sure which parts are most important.

Here are a few tips to improve your freelance acumen:

1. Approach each freelance opportunity with an open mind; no two projects will be exactly the same. The variables and risks will almost certainly differ with consideration for the passage of time and change of players, so don't presume you understand a project completely just because you've done something similar in the past. A good practice would be: ask lots of questions in the beginning, and take notes; later, ask fewer questions, and refer to your notes for substantiation of the decisions you've made.
2. Consider the personal and emotional reasons the employer is hiring you for the project, even as you develop your plan to complete the task. Does she expect praise for its completion? Does she seem impressed with presentation? Has she mentioned internal pressures related to the completion of the project? Your careful reading of your employer's concerns can payoff with the development of a better rapport &ndash; and increased job opportunities in the future.
3. Don't wait if you have a question. We've all heard the old saying, "The only stupid question is the one that's never asked&rdquo;&hellip; and while we've all also reason to suspect the accuracy of that saying, in the freelance world it is an excellent rule of thumb. If you have a question &ndash; about anything &ndash; ask, because if and when you get something wrong that could have been resolved by simply asking, your employer's confidence in your competence will plummet. And so will your chances of sterling referrals and repeat projects.