

Master and Servant: The Artist/Client Relationship

In this exercise, students will explore the difficulties in communicating with clients by taking the roles of artist and client in a creative experiment.

Designate who in the group will perform the function of “client” first, and who will be the “artist.” During the work, the artist and client are separated to ramp up the complexity of the communication. Each of the following steps will be repeated by reversing the roles once the first round has been completed. Students will be graded on the effectiveness of the communication, as evidenced in various parts of the paper trail including the brief, the bid, and the invoice.

The Creative Brief:

1. **Source Material:** The Client selects a piece of 3D Modeling found on TV or the web, or one of their own. This should be a piece that is largely graphical in nature, not requiring elaborate technical prowess to achieve. The piece must be accessible later to compare to the artist’s final product (saved as a quicktime, etc). For the experiment to work, *you must not show the piece to the other person!* Keep it secret, keep it safe.
2. **Long Form Creative Brief:** Client provides a *written* description of the piece. You can only use written or verbal communication for this, just as a real client might be able to do over the phone or email. If you have a specific color in mind, for example, you might say “Blue,” or “Cerulean Blue,” or “Pantone 280 C!” Be as descriptive as you can in the long form brief.
3. **Chaos Factor:** Intentionally put *one error* in the creative brief. This will recreate the chaos inherent in the creative process. It can be misinformation, or you can just leave out one important detail. Just be sure to remember which part of the brief is “the lie!”
4. *Save as “yourLastname_Firstname_creativebrief_long.doc”*
5. **Short Form Creative Brief.** Boil down the brief to a basic first communication. Describe in a sentence or two what kind of work needs to be done.
6. *Save as “yourLastname_Firstname_creativebrief_short.doc”*

Initial Contact:

7. **First Contact:** Client requests a bid from the artist, providing the **short** creative brief as a first communication to establish a basic price. Deliver this to the artist via an agreed-upon email address, probably the school email system.
8. **Paper Trail:** Both parties will save all email and written communications.

The Bid

9. **Leading Questions:** The artist should follow up the short creative brief with a series of pointed questions aimed at soliciting the maximum amount of information. Save this email, it illustrates an important part of the communication process.
10. **Calculating the Bid.** Using the information we generated in class, the artist-student will create a bid. Use your “hourly rate” as determined in Week Two. Estimate how long you think it will take to do the work. Don’t forget to pad the estimate to protect against revisions. Build any verbiage into the bid that you think will protect you from loss. Use one of the Estimate forms supplied or create your own. Deliver to client.
11. **Paper Trail:** Both parties will save all email and written communications.
12. **Second Contact:** Client and Artist can have their first face-to-face meeting here, after first contact. The longer form of the brief can be discussed in person. Keep a poker face when it comes to the “lie” in the brief.

13. **Pulling the Trigger.** Both parties exchange information until they reach an accord on the price. Save all communications for the final postmortem.

The Work

14. **Work smart.** The Artist begins the creative work based on the brief and leading questions. You know there's going to be a change in the brief, so set yourself up for it. Work with adjustment layers and pre-comps, produce editable and non-destructive imagery.
15. **Client Flake Factor:** The client has a secret. When they decide to unveil the lie is up to the individual, but it is suggested they do it after the first client review. "Change your mind" by revealing the single falsehood in the creative brief at the perfect moment. "Oh, can you make that red instead of blue?"
16. **Towards a Final:** The artist must produce a piece that resembles the description in the time allotted (two class periods). The closer you get to the description the more successful the experiment, but your grade will be based on the quality of communication first, and any artistic endeavor second. The "client" can choose to be available for the artist, providing feedback at regular intervals (or even looking over their shoulder telling them what they're doing wrong!), or can be "unavailable to take calls" during the process and steer clear of the artist as they are working.

The Review Process

17. **First Review:** Client can meet directly with the artist for the second time here and see the work-in-progress. This is a good time to "change your mind," and hit the artist with the missing information. Artist should take detailed notes to help track the changes and provide a paper trail for any billing changes. Discuss any changes in cost now, and get an agreement in writing to any new prices.

The Invoice

18. **Billing:** Using one of the supplied forms or one of your own, bill the client for work accomplished. Clearly make note of any changes.
19. **Paper Trail:** Both parties will save all email and written communications.

The Postmortem

20. **Success?** in the dailies session at the end of the designated period, the original motion graphics piece will be compared to the results created by the artist. A close approximation of the original means a communications success! Written communication will be turned in to illustrate the effectiveness of the exercise.

As Client, you are judged on the quality of the Creative Brief (hand in written copy) and communication ability (how accurate is the final to the proposal?), and secrecy, where possible.

As Artist, you are judged on the "quality" of the final product and quality of the written communication (handed in).