

# FREELANCING 2

CLIENTS



post production management

# Getting the Job

- To be paid as a successful freelancer you need to do three things:
  - You need to find job leads
  - You need to actually close the deal
  - And you need to do the work on time and on budget.
- These skills are hard-earned ones, but there's advice out there on how to do it.



# Generating Clients

- Job Boards / Craig's List
- Word of mouth
- E-mail everyone in your address book, what can you offer
- Ask satisfied clients for referrals
- Offer free consultation
- Consider offering a referral fee to existing clients



# Generating Clients

- Get in touch with past and current clients when you have a new service to offer them
- Get in touch with past and current clients when you have completed a flagship project
- Take advantage of every outgoing email by using your email signature as a marketing tool
- Send promotions for services with your invoices

# Generating Clients

- Ask your clients to place a credit on your work in web, video or print
- Make a calendar featuring your work for clients to put up in their offices to serve as a constant reminder
- Make a poster for your client to hang up on their office wall
- “Leave behind” items for interviews



# Generating Clients

- Go to industry events - conferences, association meetings, seminars
- Go to events in your client's industry
- Sponsor a client event
- Socialize and always have your card ready
- Do some pro-bono work for a charitable organization with industry links



# Generating Clients

- Get involved in social groups you're connected to (church, school, university)
- Join an industry organization and get listed
- Contact people you used to work or go to school with and ask them to send you any run-off work they might have



# Generating Clients

- Practice an elevator speech about what you do and have it ready to go wherever you are
- Participate on online forums (using the forum signature line)
- Comment on blogs to draw people back to your freelance site



# Generating Clients

- Get car signage
- Get t-shirts made with your URL
- Advertise in a niche magazine or trade publication
- List yourself in business directories or the Yellow Pages
- Research sites your clients are visiting and buy advertising there



# Generating Clients

- Advertise in online directories
- Take out an ad in a local newspaper
- Participate in a trade show
- Send a clever holiday greeting to clients showing your work
- Have a gimmick that makes you stand out
- Give something away for free



# Generating Clients

- Pitch an article to an industry publication
- Pitch a story to a blog or resource website
- Offer to speak at industry and networking events
- Submit tutorials or how-to's to websites
- Get on the radio or TV
- Enter your work into competitions and win



# Generating Clients

- Mail promo postcards or fun promotional items to potential clients (calendars, toys, posters etc)
- Establish contacts in post houses that can refer their run-off work
- Keep in touch with freelancers that will offer clients a complementary service to yours and throw each other work
- Rent office space shared with other businesses or freelancers

# Generating Clients

- Create stock imagery that gets your name out there
- Create new work that gives you an excuse to get your new reel into the hands of employers
- Get published
- Make an attention getting short (film)



# Case Study: The Museum Job

- Sometime work comes to you
- That's what happened to me with what I like to call "The Museum Job."
- Develop a name for yourself. Here at school I'm the "Video Guy." Somebody needs video, oh hey, that's Michael's thing. He's The Video Guy.
- I have also developed a name for myself as the guy who says "yes" to everything.  
(sometimes, that's a bad reputation to get!)

# Dealing With Clients: The Brief

- The description you get of an impending job is called the “Creative Brief”
- This is the only recourse you have when the ship changes course and overages are incurred -- get the brief in writing
- What does the client want and when
- The more exact the better
- In my experience, either no one really knows what they want, or they are incapable of communicating what they want

# Case Study: the Museum Job

- The creative brief for the Museum Job sounded pretty easy:
- “video screen that displays POV video of snowboarding down a mountain transitioning to surfing on the ocean.”
- Museum would supply footage
- Artist will tint the footage blue to match the installation, provide transitions and motion graphic opening countdown
- SO:

# Case Study: the Museum Job

- Motion graphics countdown
- Edit snowboard footage to 1 min, tint blue
- Provide a transition
- Edit surf footage (“2 source clips to work from and may require a simple transition”)
- Attach “Simple” motion graphic supplied by Museum
- *How long would this take you?*
- *How much would you charge?*

# Dealing With Clients: The Bid

- It all boils down to “what am I going to do for you, and what are you going to pay me to do it.”
- Bidding is an art that you get better at with experience.



# Dealing With Clients: The Bid

- It's a question of semantics:
- not “I am going to charge you \$100 for these shoes,”
- but “*these shoes cost \$100.*”
- Put the *emphasis on the product*
- *Products* are what people like paying for, not hourly rates (think auto repair)



# Dealing With Clients: The Bid

- Ultimately, you aren't selling time, but brain power, artistry, and skill
- You're also selling peace of mind: this work is going to get done by someone who knows what they're doing



# Dealing With Clients: The Bid

- If you're good at estimates, consider sticking with flat fees
- A good argument against hourly rates: you get better at producing good work, and doing it faster. Are you going to charge less because what used to take you ten hours now takes you two?



# Advice from the Trenches

- The client may even tell you that they can't afford your rate just to see how low you are willing to go.
- Often a client will appear to walk away, before reconsidering and agreeing to your rates. This can be a test to weed out who's serious and who's not. The ones who are prepared to negotiate down to nothing are usually not going to provide quality work.

# Advice from the Trenches

- Along the way you may miss out on a few jobs because your rates are too high. But remember, if you accept a job for too low a rate, you may be missing out on a much more attractive offer just around the corner because you're too busy.



# Case Study: the Museum Job

- Maybe the worst thing: client comes to you with what they want AND what they are going to pay you. Seems to always be the way.
- Try to get in the position of telling THEM what they are going to pay.
- If the brief and the proposed bid seem to match up, when the amount of work and the amount of pay seem to gel, you proceed
- Based on the bid, the Museum was going to pay \$1000 for the work discussed, and needed it in eight weeks.

**GOOD**

**FAST**

**CHEAP**

post production management



# Case Study: the Museum Job

- Motion graphics countdown
- Edit snowboard footage to 1 min
- Provide a transition
- Edit surf footage (“2 source clips to work from and may require a simple transition”)
- Attach “Simple” motion graphic supplied by Museum
- *I thought this amount of work for \$1000 sounded pretty cushy. I guessed one solid day of work. \$1000/day = good enough for me! Remember, I’m a teacher.*

# Museum Job: What Went Wrong?

- Client didn't provide the resources they promised
- Client didn't know exactly what they wanted at beginning and opted to feel their way through the process
- Client added tasks
- Client didn't understand how the work was accomplished
- Client had a long enough deadline to allow for changing their mind

# Didn't provide Resources

- POV snowboarding footage was fantastic. POV surfing footage doesn't exist. , so...
- Client purchased two stock footage shots of surfers (about ten seconds each, side views of surfers with moving camera in slow motion)
- **What's the problem with that?**
- Needed 1 minute of POV
- Now need to get 1 min of video out of ten seconds of inappropriately framed material?
- **What would you propose, with the tools you have?**  
**Remember: job is being done in winter in Minnesota.**

# Solution?

- POV shot of island (matte painting)
- Maya ocean simulation with animated camera
- Transitions to live action shots (they had already paid for the footage)
- Already way more than the bid, right? “there are two source clips to work from and may require a simple transition”
- Suddenly the job has exploded from an editing job to an animation job
- And if you want to rescue their surfing stock footage, you’ve got compositing in there

# Didn't know what they wanted

- Graphics for countdown were deemed “too complicated” and “didn't go with the graphics” despite utilizing exact color scheme and font proposed by designers
- Blue color correction was deemed “too blue,” or “bluer than we thought it was going to be”
- Objects added to the surf scene to provide a sense of forward movement to the POV shots were questioned creatively



# Added Tasks

- The whole CG debacle, naturally
- Museum was to supply music for the piece
- Then they couldn't afford music
- I suggested sound effects and offered to include them (assuming an hour or two to put it together)
- No creative brief on audio meant that they poo-pooed various creative decisions, forcing time-intensive revision

# Didn't Understand Process

- Client was very confused when shown a Maya playblast -- what IS IT?
- “Is it going to look like this?” Computer graphics don't lend themselves to work-in-progress showings
- They knew they wanted ocean spray but didn't have a clue how that was accomplished



# What Can We Learn From That?

- People outside the industry have no idea of what CG is (except that it is done on a computer)
- People outside industry will never grasp the concept of rendering (if you have to explain try this -- “it’s like baking. You mix the cake, that’s hands on, then you have to bake it, that’s hands off and it still takes time, and that is a fixed amount of time that can’t be sped up no matter how bad you want to eat that cake”)

# Changed their minds

- Don't need audio / need audio
- Want blue / Don't want blue
- Wanted sound effects, but didn't specify that none of them should be the sound of human beings (in a scene in which the only thing consistent is that there are human beings involved)



# Museum Job: What Went Right?

- Had realistic turnaround time for the work required (in fact, too much for the initial brief)
- Promptly processed paperwork to allow artist to get paid
- Was readily available at all hours for communication through cell and e-mail
- Dropped off and picked up work themselves



# Final Assessment

- Video Editing: 1 hr includes media transfer and prep, picture editing from DV sources
- Color Correction: .5 hr x 2 includes initial color shading and revisions
- Compositing: 3 hr includes retiming footage, extracting and combining elements
- 3D/Computer Graphics: (Grid effect for transition) 1hr
- Sound effects/Design: 2 hr includes selection of sound effects and synchronization to picture (does not include needle-drop fees for sound effects, not applicable here since it involves the use of a buyout library)
- Audio Mixing: 1 hr
- Compression/Authoring: 1hr includes prep of media for DVD and authoring title into VOB format
- DVD/Media: 2 @ 5.00

# Final Assessment

- Charged:
- \$50/hr editing, color correction, and authoring
- \$75/hr audio editing and mixing
- \$125/hr compositing
- \$150/hr computer graphics
  
- TOTAL: \$985 for my half of the work (that is, none of the surf CGI) -- remarkably close to the original bid!

# Keeping Clients

- Don't tell them what you really think of them when you're all done.
- Ask questions
- Clarify
- You may have only casually considered that this was a communications field! If you are a freelancer you have to be a master of communication.



# In Class Project

- Bill The School!
- What hours have you put in on the class? (attendance)
- What type of work have you done in the class?
- What is your rate for the type of work you've done?
- Create an invoice and turn it in to the instructor
- Be prepared to be nickel-and-dimed by the client