

Tips on Freelance Jobs

Many of you will cut your teeth on small freelance jobs such as music videos, short narratives, promo videos and commercials. Often your clients won't have much experience as producers, so it's up to you to set up the best scenario that you can.

Once again, the work you do before you begin can save you hours of frustration and labor later.

FIND A BUDGET SHEET on line and use it for your projections. It will help you with your pre-production planning, and also help you plan for a sit downs with the clients and your production team.

PRE-PRODUCTION CLIENT MEETING #1: After working up a preliminary budget, have the sit-down with the clients.

Whether you are the director/Producer or Editor find out what the client/executive producer/director is looking for. Ask pertinent questions for both creative and logistical parts of your job. Ask to see the script, the show timeline, etc.

Get ready to **educate the client** about what it takes to make the video so they understand what they will get and what they will not get. If they are very new to production or have never done one before, you might want to fill them in what certain parts of the process require.

Outline in the project workflow for the client. Make sure you **articulate to the client *how many times they will get to make changes and whether there will be reshoots***. This is crucial because this is frequently where new freelancers lose money: the client doesn't understand how much time it takes for recuts (and sometimes doesn't care) so they will continue to want changes. So you **MUST** create a boundary about how many times you will do recuts. I suggest you show a rough cut, so they can see the story shape up and get their input for larger re-workings (be prepared to handle requests for any huge structural changes that might severely impact budget). Definitely schedule another session for them to look at a second/or fine cut. They may want a third, and want changes after the fine cut. Negotiate that, however you and the client decide to outline the number of cuts, build that recut time into your budget. You don't have to show your client your budget, but it helps your confidence to know *how much it will cost you* for the editing and overhead.

Outline delivery options and how what your obligations will be once you've delivered the final (so clients don't keep asking you for more free work later.) I would suggest delivering highest end and a couple smaller files on more than one dvd, as well as storage in a commonly accessible

location like cloud storage folder. This should be the client's server/folder, not yours. You don't want to pay for their archiving of material.

CREATE the DETAILED BUDGET After that meeting, when you've agreed on the amount of time and number of cuts, work up the detailed budget.

Be as picky as you possibly can- put everything you think it will realistically need to do the job. This does not mean this is a hard number, you may need to negotiate with the client later, but you will know what you'll need to add/take out.

The web is a good resource for finding comparable projects, budgets and contracts.

Use length of final edited piece to help you gauge how much material will need to be shot/days to shoot and days to edit. This depends on many things, obviously. Estimate a shooting ratio that is robust enough to give you the material you need, but won't exhaust your resources (time, drive space, upfront costs).

Search the web for information about what other people have charged for similar projects.

Consider your overhead: wear and tear on equipment, office/supplies, rental space, telephone/communications. Budgets really help you break this down.

Post Costs: many new producers forget about costs of hard drives, cables, dvds etc. Make sure you consider those things when you negotiate.

Make sure there's a signed contract outlining the important things above.

SCREENING for the CLIENT:

I would suggest that you do not show clients assemble edits. They won't be able to see the story shaping up with a cut that includes tons of rough edits and lots of missing footage/audio. Wait until you have something that is generally working, with enough footage (temp audio/music) so they can see where the piece is going. Before you show anything, give a speech about how the piece is a rough cut: timing may be slightly off, there may be temp BRoll etc so you prepare them for something that is unfinished and then, hopefully, they will be pleasantly surprised, or at least confident that you are going in the right direction.

Be prepared for the first screening to be disappointment to you and them. Often what is in the clients' imaginations may be very different than what

they see on screen, and they will need some time to adjust to footage and cut that is actually in front of them. Be patient and listen to their criticism without getting defensive. It's your job to help them see how your piece will work for them in the end.

QUESTIONS I ASK MYSELF when I am asked to do small jobs or pro bono work:

1. Do I like the people I'll be dealing with? Do they seem sane or maybe problematic?

The clients and your crew members can make the experience a win/win or a nightmare. If the clients are reasonable, even if the job isn't great/super-lucrative or wildly successful, you can still groom the relationship for future projects. However, if clients are unreasonable, in any way abusive, slippery, or in any way indicate they will cheat you financially, be very careful to get *everything you've agreed on* in writing, keep your behavior very professional, and finish the job. Then you don't have to work with those folks again, but you will still have that show in your portfolio.

2. I also decide to take the project based on how I feel about it. Do you like or agree with the content/material? Does it seem like a fairly good story? Make sure to see the script before you agree to work on it. Does the acting seem decent (something you can work with). I believe that you will do better work and be happier when the going gets tough, if you like content or message of the show.

Remember that with your first projects you are bound to put in more unpaid time but, as you get more experience, you'll know be more aware of red flags and your areas of super-efficiency and expertise that will impact your time and the profits you can make.

Best of luck and have fun in your work!