



5 Tips to Deal with Graphic Design Clients

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+91-7889-145-190 info@phanomprofessionals.com

It isn't always easy to deal with [graphic design](#) clients. Most have a good idea of what they want, but they don't have the design expertise needed to determine what is realistic for their budget and the timeframe available to complete the project. While some will allow a designer free reign to complete a job in the manner they see best, others want to micromanage. Whether you're dealing with a difficult client or a dream client, the following five tips will help you meet their needs without sacrificing your sanity or your profit.

1. Don't accept a project without discussing what is expected on both sides.

Make sure you understand what your client wants you to do, how much time they are giving you to do it, and to what extent they expect you to include them in the process. If you think their expectations are unrealistic, discuss alternative timelines or adjustments to the project. It's a good idea to give each client a written copy of your process, including milestones where you'll expect payments. This will keep them from calling you to ask about the next step, and it may prevent payment delays.

2. Plan ahead for changes and delays.

There are many reasons that the details of a project may change, so you must plan for that when drafting your contract and discussing your work process. You should cover the steps a client may take when requesting changes to the original design plan, and this includes adjustments to the timeline and budget. Many clients don't realize how much work is involved for changes that they consider simple. When setting milestone dates and deadlines, give yourself some room for unexpected delays.

3. Don't give a price quote until you've thoroughly discussed the needs of the client.

There are some things that justify an increase in your rate, but you may not know that those things apply until you've thoroughly discussed the project. For instance, you may think a project is rather straightforward and easy to complete until they tell you at the very last minute that they want it done in 12 or 24 hours. If they expect you to put other projects aside and rush their order, then they should expect to pay a bit more. They should also expect to pay for added elements or more complex designs, so hear the client out before you give them a number.

4. Offer clients a first and second phase to control unrealistic expectations and nonstop additions.

Clients come to you because they don't have the knowledge needed to take the vision in their heads and turn it into a functional product. They may think that they need fancy features that will wow their customers, but you know that a functional foundation is what matters most. This is why many successful designers create a two-phase project. The first phase will include essential features which make the product functional. Once that phase is completed, the client can begin using your design. The second phase will include features that are more elevated but which aren't necessarily needed. In many cases, the first phase product is exactly what the client needs.

5. Accept that some projects are destined to die and rejection happens.

Stay in the design business long enough, and you'll run into at least a few clients that are on fire for their projects at the beginning but drop out of sight somewhere along the way. These

are often clients with big dreams and a shortage of ambition or funds. As long as you've given the client a timeline for payments and are firm in collecting before you proceed to the next milestone, you won't lose out financially. You just have to accept that there may come a point when your messages go unanswered and you have to set the project aside. Others will outright criticize and reject your work, and there's no way you can win with them.

Notice that many of these tips involve actions that you should take before a project begins. Getting to know your client and preparing them for the process to come will eliminate many of the problems typically experienced during a design project.