HOW TO FIND THE WORK

There's a lot of sales people out there, there's a lot of resources that help you sell as well. These are all great things, but you'll never get what you want from them all, including this lesson. No matter what I say, or what you watch…experience is the key.

The most important thing with sales, is knowing people. You can always refine how you sell, look back at the embarrassing moments in those coffee shops and make changes, but you can't do it when you don't know anyone. Having a long list of people to call and ask favours from is vital to owning a business. Marketing and advertising only come in when you've run out of people to meet, and in today's day and age (covid19 and all), people are ok with a phone call or a zoom coffee in order to get to know you.

This is the *experience* I'm talking about. I couldn't tell you the amount of hours, days or even months I've wasted blind emailing people. Refresh - "Why aren't they emailing back?" …you get nowhere. But if you connect on a personal level and make a huge effort, things will happen.

Being in sales isn't just one sided, it actually has a creative side to it. If you're any good, people will come to you. They come through others that have worked with you, that boast about your awsomeness. So yes, the work can speak for itself…but you can't gain that reputation without knowing a good amount of people…so get out there and start chatting.

So that's easy when you're not slammed, but It's very hard to put the time into meeting new people while keeping your head down working all day. If you're digging into relationships vs surface clients, you'll be very happy in the long run. Taking time out of your day full of designing seems hard, or a waste of time…but it's worth it. After years of having my head down designing, I started building my network. It was the turning point in my business, I finally had new people to call when the old clients were out of money or bored with me.

So what kind of things can you do in order to start a network, or maintain one? Here's a few of my ideas.

Build a network

1. Call every family member you know, and tell them what you're doing. That's it, don't ask for favours yet.
2. Call places you would like to work; design studios, agencies, media or print production houses and simply ask if they need any help. It could be free, or half of your hourly rate. Just see if they are up for it…they know lot's of clients.
3. Get in with your competition, I know every single person around me that is in the creative field. I make an effort to know who is selling to the same people I'd like to sell to. Sometimes it starts as cool creative ventures, sometimes it gets you clients.
4. On instagram, tell people you are starting a cool, creative event (then stress, cause now you have to plan one) and see if you can pull a few people together for a night of drinks or zoom calls in order to get to know each other.
5. Lastly, advertise. If you like the look of your feeds, promote them. You never know who will find you. As an example, one of my best clients *(who is now a business partner in China)* found me via wallpapers I designed and gave out for free *(when that was a cool thing 1000 years ago).* Put effort into free things people might want, then they look you up and boom. Its on. Or, spend a few bucks on yourself and get some attention!

Maintain a network

1. You have clients, maybe 5-15 and you manage them weekly. But don't lose sight of the other people out there. Ask your clients if they would refer you or share a contact or two of people they know. Let them know you will take 15% off their quote if they do that. Do this when they are about to pay you money, not after. It motivates the client to work an extra day before sending the dollars to you.
2. Always, and I mean always update your stuff. Website, Social, Portfolio etc. When I was needing clients, or not needing clients, I put as much effort into my stuff that I did theirs.
3. Ask for favours! Favours when you're starting out is a little lame, but when you have a business going already it doesn't seem so desperate. Just ask things like *"If you knew someone who needed branding or identity, would you have me at the top of mind? Cause I'd love it if you did."* Or *"Hey Uncle Bill, do you think you could introduce me to your boss?".*
4. Do free work. Once again, worst idea when you're starting out. But while you're making money offer to a few new clients *(maybe at a dinner party or networking event)* that you will try something out for free for them, if they like it….hire you.
5. Shock the heck out of them. I like to pitch to new clients with finished work, it's insane but has worked 1 out of every 3 times I've done it. Don't forget you'll lose a bunch of money on the other two…but it's worth it in the end!

Lastly, be a good person and people will want to work with you. I've won work over other agencies because I was simply pleasant to work with. I didn't know I was that nice, but it turns out it matters!

PRICING

Ok, I screwed this up so many times it was comical. Today, I'm very confident with how I price and I hardly get a complaint. The odd client always ends up hating your guts…but 1 out of 100 ain't bad. I used to price out of fear, and be scared to send a quote…these days it is what it is.

This is literally my favourite lesson. I struggled in the beginning, stole other people's ideas, googled it, asked other agencies, you name it. Turns out, the best way to price it, is right in front of you. **You.** You, and what you do. Question always is *(for me and a bunch of people I mentor)* is "How do I do that". Let's solve that problem now.

First off, have you valued your time? What I mean is broken down the qualities of yourself on a piece of paper *(Designer, Admin, Accountant, Strategy, Photographer, Editor, Model Etc.)* and how long those usually take you. ie Full website design concept - 10hrs or Editing 100 images - 4hrs. We assume, but we never write it down. This exercise is valuable because we now have a full estimate on our time per project. The second part is how much money we would like an hour for each job. ie. if you were a web designer, you'd want to make $80 an hour, if you were editing images maybe $30 an hour, and so on and so forth.

It seems we account for our hours at one rate across the board. But let me tell you, If you're multi-facetted then guess what...you're multi hourly. Each job you do is a different skill, so why charge the same?

Now that sounds great, but some of us don't even know how to figure out our own rate. So let's do that first.
So many people look at this chart below and base it on that. I'm great but slow, so I need to be expensive and charge for my hours I work, otherwise it';s not worth it. But if you're slow…no one is going to pay for your time. Or if you're fast, send the client the work within a day…they wonder why they should pay you so much. This chart sucks, throw it out it's worthless.
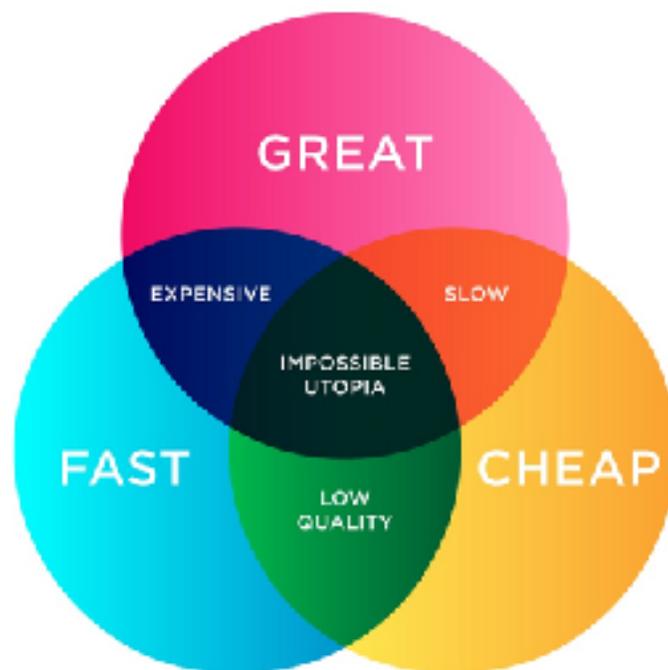
Remember, you're multi-faceted. You don't have staff, but one day you will. So how do you charge a higher amount now seeing it's justified later? Start by explaining to the client what one hour looks like to you.

All creative work in at least three lanes;
Admin - $15
Creative Thinking/Strategy - $60
Design / Content Creation - $35

And we all have costs, so let's put in $10

This is what $120 /hr looks like. Now you my be cheaper than this sometimes, maybe there's no need to be strategic, or maybe they provide assets or just ask you for advice. Great, chop those other items down a bit, but never take out costs or admin… those never go away.

Here's your base for your hourly rate, but we're not done yet. Remember the list of qualities you have? Those have costs associated to them as well, and every time you do work for a client the job seems to be a little different. So let's use that list. Say your list looks like the following.

Logo - 40 hours
Website Design - 30 hours
Photo Editing - 10 hour
Business Card Design - 2 hours

With our model we add our Admin and our Costs first so already your pricing would look like this;

Logo - $1000
Website Design - $750
Photo Editing - $250
Business Card Deign - $50

With your creative time and your experience it would look like this;

Logo - $4800
Website Design - $3600
Photo Editing - $1200
Business Card Deign - $240

Which doesn't look too bad…but are we that cheap? These are your base costs. You should never go below these, not even for Uncle Bill. But you say *"Todd, I can't be this cheap, are you nuts?"* and I say…we have one more thing to add!

The above is based on your hourly rate. If a client calls and asks for one change, or you to call them with some ideas…we charge hourly. The client needs to know these things. But we never base our quotes on hourly, because clients never want to sign something that is open ended. So what do we do? Quotes.

Outside of our value there are real life costs. Pens, paper, outsourcing work, research and development, new computers and software. How about cars, driving, new outfits, your wife saying *"make the business pay for it."* Individual costs can't be put into every quote of your client's work, but it's what we all like to cal*l "overhead"* and its gotta be worked in somewhere. How do we figure that out? I like to double everything, simple. Now I know that if I start all over again…I'm good with it. How about 15 meetings…no problem. If I build a quote with the above model, and I double it; it would look like this.

Logo - $9600
Website Design - $7200
Photo Editing - $2400
Business Card Deign - $480

These are sample numbers, but it's the model you can follow based on your value and it can all be done in an afternoon. Your individual value is tied to everything. If you get an employee, and they are slower than you…you're losing money. This means charge more per hour. If you have a killer staff and they turn things around fast and it's awesome still…keep the same rate. This is how you price things well, and keep clients around.

Take the time, it's worth the money.

I got some great advice from my father-in-law once *(he ran a multi-media company, so it was fitting)*, *"Find one million dollar deals, it takes a ton of time but it's better than being too busy with million smaller jobs."* This has been my biggest take away, I use to have 25 jobs going all at one time, I was busy…but the bank account didn't have much going for it. As creatives we tent to fill our plate with a lot so we feel busy, but honestly it's a downer based on the cashflow.

Work for months trying to find a big ticket contract, then once you land that, get a few smaller guys to keep cash flowing. These three bits of advice I gave you; that you probably read in 8 minutes, was a painful few years of my life. Take it and go.