

week::three

How to Get Work

“Without promotion something terrible happens ... Nothing!” — PT Barnum

Promotion Realities

You will have to be patient.

- Most of the time, your name will be tucked away for future use by a client.
- If you are lucky, your promotional material will be visible to them at just the moment they need you.

Most clients don't actually buy creativity—they buy *solutions* to their business problems.



Putting Yourself Out There

To promote yourself, you'll have to get your name out into the wild, both digitally and IRL.

- Be clear (and enthusiastic) about what you do
- Write (says the writer)
- Network
- Maintain relationships

Primary Promotion Type: *Referrals*

After you are established, most work will come through referrals from people you have worked with in the past.

- Most people do not purchase design services very often.
- They often trust the word of a friend/colleague over a random promotion on the Internet.
- Advertising can bring in new clients, but often not the right kind.

How to get referrals:

- Be pleasant to work with.
- Don't avoid conflict
- Do good work.
- Reflect well on people who recommend you

Other Ways to Get Work

Remember that the goal of all promotions is to get an appointment to show your portfolio—not to close the deal immediately.

Websites

- A required part of business (though maybe not?)
- Buy your name as a domain name *today!*
- When designing the site, remember *what* you are promoting.
 - If you are a designer/illustrator/photographer, focus on presenting your design skills, not your Web skills.
- Consider blogging/posting/social media-ing about current projects (both work and for-fun projects) to establish a presence and personality on the Web.

Social Networking

- It’s good to have at least some presence on **LinkedIn**. Some have found it to be a critical business networking tool
- **Facebook** is good if you have an existing network you can plug into, and for sharing/coordinating event information.
- **Instagram** is a more-mellow and visual way to keep people informed (limited reading!)
- Promote using **TikTok** if you like to entertain and have interesting content (but this audience skews much younger and they might not buy graphic design very often, if ever).
- **Others?** Pinterest? SnapChat? Dribbble? TheNextBigThing?
- All of these can be difficult to keep up — you always have to “feed the beast”.
- It can also be tricky to maintain the right tone and voice, and to also not mess it up.

Respond to RFPs

- Request For Proposal (RFP) — Documents organizations send out to solicit bids for work.
- Can be problematic:
 - Often the authors are frustrated that they had to *write* the RFP in the first place.
 - RFPs are often overly prescriptive, describing solutions to the problems *you* are supposed to solve.

Do Free/Spec/Volunteer Work

- Maybe... Let’s talk.

Outbound Contact

- Direct Mail & Direct E-mail
 - Have a mailing list of business contacts; go through it once a year, contacting each one.
- Letters
 - Universally-appropriate way to contact a potential client; be sure to sign and personalize.
- Cold Calls / Cold Visits
 - Don’t sell over the phone—work to make an appointment.
 - If you choose to do cold calls, make them highly targeted, doing research first to make sure there is some meaningful connection between you and the business you are contacting.

Networking

- Attended local events & local interest groups, and attend conferences
- Join the local Chamber of Commerce

Advertising: Display Ads / Billboards / Bus Ads

- Not as common for design agencies as you might think.
- Generally reach too broad of a market—your marketing should be much more targeted.
- If you do run ads, run smaller ads more frequently (not big, expensive ads infrequently)

Jessica Hische — 18 Ways to promote your work (from *Dark Art of Creative Business Workshop*)

1. Have a portfolio website	7. Be an active part of your local community	13. Send out promos or gifts
2. Have a socially-networked portfolio (like Behance)	8. Make friends (“Network”)	14. Create public art
3. Actively engage on social media	9. Create pro-bono work for charities	15. Attend conferences, talks, and workshops
4. Share information and resources with others	10. Barter services with local businesses	16. Speak about your own work publicly
5. Create for-fun side projects	11. Help promote / lift up others	17. Publish books
6. Participate in creative-adjacent communities	12. Enter award competitions	18. Host workshops!

Choosing the Right Clients

Not all clients are right for your business.

- You don't have to work with every client that is interested in hiring you. You must remember you can say no.
- The clients you choose to take on define you.

Things to consider with selecting clients

- Can you do good work for this client?
- Do they understand what you bring to the table?
- Beware of reluctant buyers.
- Always work for money.

Client Screener

- Questions to ask a potential client from Mike Monteiro's *Design is a Job (first edition)*.

The Questions:

- What is the primary business and structure of your business/organization?
- Summarize the project
 - Is this a redesign of something that exists or designing something new?
 - What are your major goals for this project?
 - Where do you see us adding the most value/complementing your existing team?
 - Who will be working on this project from your end? Will any additional outside partners or agencies be involved and how?
 - What is motivating you or enabling you to do this project now?
 - When does our work need to be finished? What is your target total completion date? What is driving that?
 - What is most important about this project?
- How important is each of these?
 - Change in company strategy
 - Rebranding/New image/Look and feel
 - Engineering/Backend development
 - Improving key metrics/Quantifying success or results/Conversion
 - Content strategy/writing
 - Understanding your audience or organization
 - Getting it done as fast as possible
 - Getting it done as inexpensively as possible
 - Differentiating from competition
 - Reach new audience
 - Better demonstrate value or correct misconceptions
 - Working relationship/communication with your design partner
 - Who is/are your audience/your target users/your customers?
- What does success look like? How will you know this project has succeeded?
- What are you worried about? What do you imagine going wrong?
- Is there anything about your organization that might make this project easier or harder in any specific ways?
- What is your budget range?
- What does the selection process look like on your end? How many people are you talking to and when do you expect to be making a decision?