



Illustration: Cyprian Koscielniak

Roel is an independent Design Management consultancy specializing in graphic and corporate identity design.

Roel consults closely with their clients to help them achieve their company objectives by maximizing the role of communication and design within their business. Roel acts as an advisor and intermediary for large and complex communication design projects. The consultancy helps both design agencies and business clients to make design-relevant decisions and to manage and monitor the process. Roel developed a special interest in internal communication and decision making.

Roel Stavorinus studied design and communications, communication management and design management. After working in several communication and marketing environments he started in the field of project management, account and strategy for design agencies. In 2003 Roel started his own consultancy and slowly switched from working at the side of agencies to the side of organizations. At present Roel works for a wide variation of public and commercial organizations.

Roel publishes articles for the Association of Dutch Designers (BNO) on design projects, managing design agencies and the collaboration between designers and clients.

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The full price

Working for little or no money –
what can you gain from it?

Roel Stavorinus

Working for little or no money – what can you gain from it? Weigh up the pros and cons, and don't forget to state preconditions.
And, above all, remember: An assignment where the client doesn't pay full price is a real agreement, too.

Sooner or later, every designer is asked to work for little or no money. An organisation is in the starting phase and can't afford the investment (yet). The organisation is completely dependent on subsidies and sponsors, and has no money to spend at all. Or the organisation simply would like to work with a good designer, but can't pay full price.

An exchange | The point of departure, of course, has to be that you're favourably disposed towards the organisation concerned and the request it's making. In addition, your agency has to be capable of doing the work. You must guarantee that you can handle the project and be prepared to make time free for it. In any case, taking on the project should not put the continuity of your own agency at risk.

Assuming there are no impediments in this regard, how do you set out to work?

Start by making good agreements. Realise that this assignment is also a rock-solid agreement between a client and a contractor – with all the associated rights and obligations.

And be aware that the exchange aspect is important here as well for the feeling you have about and during the project. Normally, you make your designing talents available at an hourly rate or for a project price. With 'voluntary' projects, you get something different for your efforts. A good feeling, for instance, because you're helping a good cause. A great case for your portfolio. Or the project gives you the opportunity to expand your network quickly with valuable contacts.

This makes being clear towards each other all the more important. Money as a means of exchange is relatively simple. It's clear to everyone. You develop a logo for 5000 euros. Not too many misunderstandings can arise. Although... But when have your expectations been met with regard to the exchange? What makes this a worthwhile case for you?

Advice | Getting cracking on a project? Here are a couple of tips. State explicitly why you've said 'yes' to such a request. What's your reasoning? Does the rest of your agency support your reasoning? And why does this reasoning justify the work you'll do?

Always draw up a quote that indicates the commercial value of the assignment, and say what the discount is that you're giving. This cuts both ways. The client understands what a project would normally cost. That's essential. And everybody likes to receive gifts.

Make agreements about the time you'll be spending on the project. Will you be doing this during normal hours or during your 'downtime'? What happens if a well-paying client needs to be served? Will it be given precedence?

Assist the client in preparing its instructions properly. The better its briefing, copy and illustrations, as well as its comments on your design proposals, are, the more efficiently you'll be able to work.

Make arrangements with each other on how you'll be dealing with risks. Working for little money is one thing; putting money into a project is something else.

Discuss with each other the expectations regarding the quality of the printed materials and other items you produce. What is quality, anyway? Does the colour have to be exact, for example? Or is meeting the deadline what's most important?

Determine with each other how long the cooperation will last and what you'll be doing during that period. It won't be the first time that a change in management results in the cooperation being assessed anew.

Decide as well how you'll work with each other and, if it comes to this, how you'll terminate the cooperation. How will copyrights be dealt with, for instance? What do your general terms and conditions have to say about this, and do you perhaps need to make supplemental agreements?

Bite the bullet | It's often difficult to raise these issues at the beginning of the cooperation. You're flattered and want to get going. You'd like to show that you're enthusiastic about the project and the cooperation. You don't want to focus too much on the possible obstacles.

Still, you have to bite the bullet. View this as the first test. If you can't talk about the parameters at this stage, then that certainly won't be possible when genuine problems arise.