

LLOYD'S INNOVATIVE TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING

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The interview is the most important aspect of determining whether or not to take a job and how to determine pricing. While you should always be cognizant of your time, you should take as much time as necessary (commensurate with the size of the project as well) to flush out the details and compatibility of a potential client. Accomplish as much as possible on the phone, then meet in person after you are satisfied that that is an appropriate next step. To get you going, here are my top ten favorite questions to ask:

- 1. How did they hear about you?** Naturally, this is the first question you need to ask if they do not offer this automatically. If it is a client referral, then ask what the client said that was of particular interest?
- 2. Why do they want to hire a design professional?** It is important to understand what they perceive your services to be.
- 3. What are their concerns in working with a designer?** Everyone has a misconception or two about the trade and it is critical to ameliorate these concerns right away.
- 4. What are the qualities they are looking for in a designer?** Look for qualitative items that you can reference later in conversation. If money is important to them, then you know how to address your comments.
- 5. What do they dislike the most about their current place?** You are finding out not only what the surface issues are, but what the unspoken problems are. Clutter and lack of organization can be symptomatic of personal issues in their lives that will be surfacing at some point.
- 6. What is the outcome that would make them the happiest?** This is an open-ended question that may highlight the most important qualities that they are looking for. It could be timing, budget, "wow" factor, or a multitude of things that will become your ultimate guidelines.
- 7. Who's approval do they want from this project?** In other words, who's opinion matters to them? Is it family, friends, the media. You need to know who could be influencing the process in an indirect way.
- 8. What is their timeline for making a decision?** You need to know how to prioritize your responses and expectations.
- 9. Have they established a budget already?** Whether or not it is realistic, it's good to know what they have in mind.
- 10. If they were ready to make a decision today, is there any reason why they would not hire you?** This question is best asked after an in-person interview. It is the best way to make sure that you have addressed all of their needs and concerns. If you have not, they will most likely let you know. Make sure that you respond to any concerns in person and then address them again in a followup letter.

Your ultimate goal in interviewing a client is to find out what their "pains" are, the factors that you will make disappear through your efforts. While wonderful design is what you do, it is the "pains" that drive clients and what need to be addressed in order for your project to be considered a success. Completing a project without taking care of the subliminal issues is not a perfect project.