Design Proposal

You've met with a client. They've shown you a small printed piece to be redesigned—a small brochure, a poster, their stationary system, or similar. Why have they come to you? Maybe it's an annual piece that has to be updated for the new year; maybe they've moved, the old address and phone number are out of date and they've decided to make some other changes while they're at it; maybe their sales staff has complained that the old piece isn't very effective. You are one of several designers they are interviewing, but only one will win the business. You can boost the odds that it will be you with an effective proposal or brief. A typical brief will have these components:

1. **A short letter** in which you tell the client what they'll find in your proposal ("enclosed please find..."), sum up what qualifies you to take on the job ("With 10 years experience branding companies in the pharmaceutical industry...") And thanks them for seeing you and giving you an opportunity to bid. ("Thanks for meeting with us last Thursday. I greatly enjoyed discussing your project and think our firm would be a good match to your needs.") Spare them a long sales pitch though. By now they should know you and your work.

2. **The proposal** which has these sections/hits these points:

   a. **Introduction.** Briefly state and summarize the project and the problem to be solved. ("The new identity system will be cleaner, more professional, and applicable to the company's broadening focus in information delivery systems...")

   b. **Discuss how you intend to solve the problem.** ("The current set of sales brochures were designed on an ad-hoc basis, As such they do not always work well together--there is information overlap and the the type and color schemes vary. The new brochure will be the first in an integrated system of collateral...") Note that your proposed solution may go beyond what they've asked for—clients sometimes underestimate or misstate the problem they are trying to solve. If you tell them they need more than they think they do, tell them why.

   c. **Explain the benefit** of your approach. Why is their ugly logo or poorly designed brochure a problem? After all, they've done ok up to now. If you can't describe a plausible benefit, the work may go to someone who can (or nobody). ("While the new identity system may not lead to an immediate uptick in business, over time the company will benefit from increased awareness.")
   If you do make a claim and can *honestly* do so, back it up, ideally with your own example. ("Our client, Dymetrics, went from $500,000 to $2,200,000 in gross revenue in the six years since their new identity was put into place.")

   d. **Cost.** Do a realistic appraisal of what it will take to complete the job in terms of hours. (If you're not used to quoting, one approach is to consider the hourly salary you'd need from a job, building in 1/3 extra to cover employer taxes and FICA). Add a ten or 20 percent cushion to the hours (things always take longer than they should) and a provision for extra time. For example, you might include two rounds of client corrections in your quote, but charge hourly for page corrections after that. Also, you may insert one or more "escape valves" in case things don't go swimmingly. ("In the event that all three included roughs are rejected, the client can, at his option, request an additional concept for $$ or terminate the relationship upon payment of 50% of the final agreed-upon price. If the 4th concept is rejected, the designer will turn all four printed roughs over to the client upon payment of $$ and this relationship will be terminated. All digital resources remain the property of the designer.") Also consider expenses. What supplies and outside services would you need? A photographer? an Illustrator? See Graphic Artist's Guild Handbook: Pricing and Ethical Guidelines for examples of briefs and quotes. Your cost estimate must also include a real quote from a printer, and all amounts totalled.

   f. **Include** a photocopy of the original printer's quote, which must be from a real local offset printer, not Kinko's, campus services, a web site, or other "quick printer."