

Working for Free!

DON'T DO IT!!!!!!

Illustration has a value, that's why it's commissioned – to draw in consumers, to generate interest, to illuminate text. Someone asking for an illustration for nothing is exploitative and undermines our profession. This explores how to respond to requests to work for free, and the rare occasions you might consider it.

There is a difference between creating artwork oneself with the intention of approaching potential clients with it (e.g. for licensing cards or merchandise; publishing your graphic novel), and making work speculatively when requested by a client who is applying it to benefit their own business.

Some advertising and design clients will approach illustrators regarding work when they are pitching for an account. In this circumstance they should have a budget for creating illustrations which are for 'presentation use only' to put in front of their potential client. There should still be an acceptance of commission paperwork applied here so that the client is fully aware that the artwork licence usage is for 'presentation use only'.

If approached by any company or organisation asking you to produce work for no payment (maybe with the promise of '**great exposure**' for your artwork) always request a fee. The project may be interesting, but if they will not offer any payment consider the points that follow.

CHARITY WORK

Charitable organisations may sometimes ask you to work for free, citing their status as a charity. However, unless you have a genuine personal reason to support them, **charities should be treated like any other business**. Many spend significant sums on promotion and marketing and **most people involved are on a wage or being paid – so you should be too**.

Should you feel that you would like to support them, then ensure that it is clear to the charity that you are supply your services pro bono and detail the value of what you would have charged for the commission had it been a paying job. This can be in the form of an acceptance of commission form (not an invoice) which details the fee and the rights but charges zero, showing the client the actual value of what they are obtaining from you as a freelance business.

PRO BONO

There may be occasions when you have a valid reason for accepting a request for artwork with no fee attached to it. It should be made clear to the client that you are taking the job on in a pro bono capacity (professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment), **not 'for free'**.

Value your work: price up what the fee would have been, and then decide how much of that value you are willing to give to the client (half of it, all of it?). This will ensure that the client recognises the value of what is being done for them. An acceptance of commission form should still be used detailing the rights that are being licenced.

IN KIND OR EXCHANGE PAYMENTS

There may be situations where you will consider exchanging illustration services for those of an equivalent value. This could be exchanging illustration services for legal work or with a printer for production of promotional cards. Any illustration work should still have the rights detailed in paperwork to ensure the other party knows how, and for how long, they can use the artwork.

SELF-INITIATED WORK

Creating your own children's book or graphic novel, or work for potential commercial exploitation on your own initiative is an investment in your own growth and career. This is separate from speculative work requested from a client. You are investing your own time into a project to benefit your own freelance business with the aim of ultimately benefiting from it.