

at the local level, contact association or club program chairs. They often set schedules a year in advance as well.

At the presentation, bring along plenty of business cards, your brochure, or other handouts that the audience can take with them to keep your name in front of them. This is completely proper, unless the organization has a policy against it.

If you are afraid of making a presentation—and this is feared by a great number of people—work up to giving a presentation by speaking to smaller groups. Volunteer to give a presentation or critique at interior design program classes. Chair an association committee so that you have to speak before groups. Take a public-speaking class—a good idea for students and also for professionals. The class can help you polish your presentation techniques and build confidence. Joining a group such as Toastmasters® is another way to learn to speak before a group. This type of group is a mixed group of professionals who use the meetings to learn how to speak to groups.

If you do not want to actually give the seminar, host one. Playing the host will force you to speak before a group. This will, again, help you gain confidence so that someday you will be ready to take the podium yourself! There are many books on how to prepare presentations. Check the references for suggestions.

PREMIUMS

Have you been to a trade show or conference and received something like a ballpoint pen with a company name on it? Or perhaps you received a bag with a company logo when you registered for the trade show. Maybe it was a stack of memo pads with a company name. Interior designers are used to receiving these types of premiums from vendors and suppliers. A *premium* is a product that has a logo, slogan, or other words or graphics printed on an object. Other examples are coffee mugs, letter openers, architectural scales, small calculators, and numerous other items with the firm's name and logo. A premium can also be something that the company sells, such as the classic logo T-shirt. Giving a premium is an easy way for the firm to get its name recognized by a reasonably wide audience. Just think of how much recognition Mouseketeer ears have brought Walt Disney Corporation!

Premiums can be reasonably priced or quite costly. They come in all types, colors, and price ranges. Even the small firm can offer a premium by having its logo and name printed on something small and useful, such as memo pads or pencils. Remember that the premium itself says a lot about the firm, just as the message you have printed does. If you want your firm to be known for quality, do not send out cheap pens that break after a few uses or a scale that is not in scale!

PROPOSALS

It is not unusual for a residential client to interview at least three interior designers before deciding on a firm for a project. In fact, three seems to be the minimum number of designers that associations provide to clients through association referral programs. In commercial interior design, a client might want to research and interview many more interior design firms than three before making a decision on hiring a firm. As competition has increased, clients have had their pick of design firms.

The proposal process has been around for many years. The term "proposal" has been used to mean a contract proposal or an overview of how the designer intends to proceed with a project. In this context, however, the *proposal* is a response to a request for a proposal—often abbreviated into the acronym RFP—issued by a client. It is not a contract in this context.

excerpt from:

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by Christine M Piotrowski



When a client decides to use the proposal process to obtain an interior design firm, the process might start with a *request for qualifications* (RFQ). The request for qualifications—sometimes called a *letter of interest* (LOI)—is a way that clients can prescreen a number of firms, focusing on the experience and qualifications of firms. Generally, the RFQ asks for staff resumé's, brochures, references, and other experience documentations. After a client reviews these RFQs, he or she will use this prequalified group as the primary group to receive RFP responses. It is most commonly used on very large projects and might be something that only the largest interior design firms ever encounter. A sample RFP letter that a client would send to numerous design firms has been included on the CD. Look for Item 20-3.

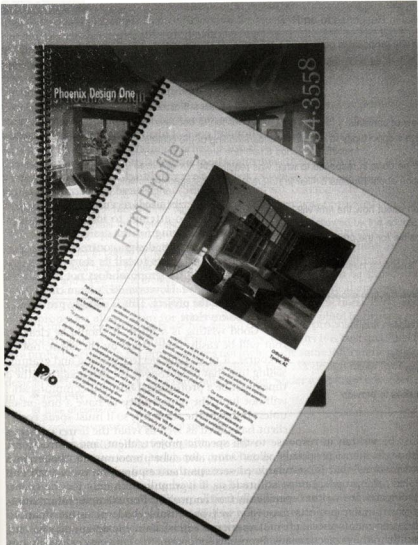
The RFP, on the other hand, is something that many interior designers are very familiar with for a variety of projects, especially in commercial interior specialties. It is an efficient way for clients to obtain information and, to some extent, ideas on how to solve their project issues. A client issues an RFP to design firms whom it might like to consider to have execute a project. An RFP can also be issued to search the design market for a design firm that has the qualifications the client feels are important for the project. Proposals have thus become an important, even critical, marketing tool for many interior design firms (see Figure 20-2).

From the client's point of view, the RFP involves gathering a lot of information on perhaps dozens of design firms. The proposal prequalifies the firms, because the information required is very specific, and if a firm cannot meet the requirements and supply the information requested, it generally will not even bother to reply. Since developing a proposal takes so much time, it also results in proposals being returned only by firms that are seriously interested in the project. The proposals are reviewed by the client, and he or she can eliminate any other firms that do not meet the qualifications spelled out in the RFP. This actually saves the client time and money, since the client (1) gets responses from firms that he or she might never have thought of for the project; (2) reviews proposals at his or her convenience; (3) does not invest a large amount of time interviewing a large number of design firms, some of which may be unqualified; and (4) may find a group of highly qualified firms (theoretically).

From the interior designer's point of view, an RFP gives firms sufficient information about the project so that they can decide if they wish to take on the project. Since the client prepares the RFP, the design firm may have the opportunity to be considered for some projects the firm might never have known about. In carefully reviewing the RFP, the design firm also can forecast the possibility of obtaining an interview with the client—that is to say, if the design firm has an insufficient amount of experience in executing certain sizes of retail spaces, it is unlikely that it will be granted an interview. In such cases, it would not be reasonable for the design firm to spend the time putting the proposal materials together. Table 20-1 is a standard outline for a proposal.

The decision as to which firms the client will interview rests on the material provided in the proposal. This makes the proposal a very important document. Clients do not make a decision about a design firm purely on the basis of the proposal. After the proposals are reviewed, a list of design firms that the client most wants to interview emerges. This list is usually called a *short list*, because the number of firms is commonly limited to three to six (depending on the size and complexity of the project). Interviews are then set up with each firm on the short list.

It is very important to realize that the client controls the content and format of the proposal. The design firm must respond with the required information in the proposal. Exactly what is required is spelled out in the RFP. This control is

**FIGURE 20-2.**

Proposal materials in response to an RFP. (Reproduced with permission, Fred Messner, Phoenix Design One, Tempe, AZ; photo by Dawson Henderson.)

used by the client so that all proposals will be treated equally. The design firm has an obligation to provide all the information requested and to present it in the order required. Leaving out sections or making the proposal presentation different from what was requested can lead to disqualification.

A typical proposal contains the information outlined in Table 20-1. If a design firm decides to respond to an RFP, it will have to include information pertinent to each of these issues and perhaps others. The instructions in the RFP will inform the design firms as to how much latitude they have in what is to be stated and what additional information can be included. Each part is critical and

TABLE 20-1.

A Typical Outline of a Proposal in Response to an RFP.

Note that the actual content of the proposal is governed by the information requested by the client.

- Cover letter
- Title page
- Table of contents
- Executive summary: Overview of contents
- Problem analysis: Design firm's opportunity to explain its understanding of the client's needs
- Scope of services: What will be done in response to what was required
- Project experience: Information about projects similar in nature to the proposed project
- Project approach: Information about how the firm will provide services and will manage the project
- Staffing: Who will be responsible for the project
- Staff resumés
- Schedule
- List of deliverables: Documents the firm expects to prepare for the project
- Budget and fees
- Financial information on the design firm
- References
- Miscellaneous optional information:
 - Additional project case studies
 - Article reprints
 - Other information the firm wishes to provide

must be written in response to the specific project, client, and instructions. Although many proposals allow room for what amounts to "boilerplate information," that is, standardized sections that can apply to more than one project, the proposal must still read as if it were written only for the client. Other parts are written specifically for the project. For example, information on past similar projects may very well be reusable boilerplate information, while comments about a firm's experience with sustainable design may be very specific to the project's needs. Proposals for commercial projects can easily run about 25 pages for a small project and more than 50 pages for complex projects. So this activity should not be taken lightly.

Table 20-2 provides several tips on preparing a RFP proposal. Many of the references can provide additional help and ideas on preparing a proposal. Chapter 1 provides information concerning the presentation phase of the proposal process.

Design firms that have been successful with the proposal process are exceptionally good at identifying hot-button issues within the RFP. A *hot-button issue* is one of critical concern to the client. For a school district, the hot-button issue might be quality design at an economical price. Other frequent hot-button issues include a concern for sustainable design, a very tight schedule, a concern for value engineering, a desire for innovative design ideas, and a concern for cultural design influences. Clients do not always describe needs succinctly or as obviously. The design firm would then have to attempt to identify the issues. This, obviously, is more difficult and challenging for the design firm.

TABLE 20-2.**Tips in Preparing an RFP**

- Good writing is a must.
- Always be clear and factual, using language that will be easily understood by the client.
- Ensure perfect spelling and grammar.
- Make sure it completely speaks to the issues the client has stated.
- Follow the outline the client has used rather than your own outline.
- Be sure that content has addressed client hot-button issues.
- Ensure that scope of services is not vague and that it contains sufficient descriptions to clarify what you will be doing.
- Create an interesting-looking proposal with the use of photography and color photocopying.
- Present material in two or three columns rather than one column.
- Include testimonials from references using excerpts in quotes followed by the source name.
- Integrate color in bullets or headlines.
- Use loose-leaf pages rather permanent binding to make it easier to insert additional items and move things around.

In this context, proposals are not design contracts. A proposal is a marketing tool by which a design firm gets to tell its story as to why it is best qualified to do a project. Generally, the proposal does not include the same information that a contract must have. However, RFPs from clients may ask design firms for their desired fee for the project. This is usually provided under a separate cover letter in a sealed envelope.

SUMMARY

As the reader can see from this chapter and Chapter 19, there are numerous ways that the interior design firm can use promotion to make its existence known to potential customers. Deciding how to go about promoting the interior design practice is never an easy one. The small firm has a limited amount of resources in both dollars and time to devote to finding new clients. Yet, in some ways, it has the greatest need to market itself. Larger firms can often depend upon its reputation and referrals. Nevertheless, it must budget for many kinds of promotional tools when collateral items are needed for presentations, proposals, and prospective client requests.

Chapters 19 and 20 have presented a great deal of information and ideas on the kinds of promotional tools that are available to interior design firms. Which items are right for any one firm can best be determined by a review of Chapter 18 and the marketing plan. The next two chapters essentially discuss what a design firm should do once a prospective client shows interests in the firm. Chapters 21 and 22 focus on the selling and presentation processes.

REFERENCES

1. Harding, 1994, p. 24.
2. Bly, 1994, p. 42.

work-for-hire arrangement, the independent designer receives no employee benefits and loses the right to claim authorship or to profit from future use of the work forever. Note: Corporate logo designs are ineligible to be done under work-for-hire contracts because they do not fit its legal definition, but all-rights transfers of such work to clients are common. (Additional information on work-for-hire contracts can be found in Chapter 2, Legal Rights & Issues.)

10. No new or additional designer or firm should be hired to work on a project after a commission begins without the original designer's knowledge and consent. The original designer may then choose, without prejudice or loss of fees owed for work completed, to resign from the account or to agree to collaborate with the new design firm.
11. Major revisions or alterations initiated by the client (author alterations, or AAs) are usually billed at the designer's hourly rate. In such cases, the designer will apprise the client of anticipated billing and obtain authorization prior to executing the additional work.
12. Designers are entitled to a minimum of five samples of the final piece.

NOTE: All prices for design in this book are based on independent surveys of the United States and Canada that were reviewed by experienced professionals in the various disciplines in which they work. These figures, reflecting the responses of established professionals, are meant as a point of reference only and do not necessarily reflect such important factors as deadlines; job complexity; reputation and experience of a particular designer; research; technique or unique quality of expression; and extraordinary or extensive use of the finished design. (See related material in other sections of this book, especially in Chapter 5, Essential Business Practices, and Chapter 13, Standard Contracts & Business Tools.)

Corporate Graphic Design

Corporate graphic designers specialize in business communications, identity programs, signage, internal and promotional publications, and annual reports for companies and institutions such as hospitals, universities, and museums. A team specializing in this area of design may include a principal of the firm, designer(s), production manager, copywriter, and project manager. Or a graphic design department can consist of one person, who handles multiple functions.

Since graphic-design projects often involve long-term strategic research and development, corporate designers are frequently brought in at the earliest planning stages. Many corporate design offices work on retainer and also act as

design consultants in peripheral areas in addition to their main projects.

Project proposals

The project begins once a client accepts the design proposal outlining the scope of the project, its budget, schedule, and the terms under which it will be executed. Design projects are often quoted and billed by phase, with an initial fee representing 10 to 33 percent of total estimated fees and reimbursable expenses. With new clients and web site projects, some designers request as much as a 50 percent initial fee to ensure that they will be paid if the project is canceled in mid-schedule. See Figure 7-2 for corporate graphic design fees.

Phase 1. Planning: This phase is concerned with gathering information and establishing design criteria. It often requires spending a great deal of time with the client to define the needs, objectives, and problems to be solved.

Phase 2. Concept development: After the designer and client have reached an agreement concerning the basic project, visual solutions are pursued that meet the stated objectives. This phase results in a presentation showing only the ideas that the design team feels are viable, appropriate, and meet the prescribed criteria.

Phase 3. Design development: At this stage, the design team refines the accepted design, which may include general format, typography, color, other elements, and the assignment of illustration and/or photography. A final presentation may be made to the client explaining the refined applications. Any changes in budget and/or schedule are agreed upon at this point.

Phase 4. Design implementation: Decisions on all related art direction, including commissioned illustrations and photography, typography, copywriting, layouts or digital files, and all other elements, are final at this point. Designer errors or printer errors (PEs) are not billable after this point, but all AAs are. The client may make changes in files or on press only through the designer. Conversely, the designer may execute design alterations, either in files or on press, only with the client's final approval.

Phase 5. Production: Depending on the end product(s) a design firm or designer has been commissioned to produce, this phase may be a matter of going on press, supervising the fabrication or manufacturing of products, or launching a web site. Supervision is the key to this phase, since achieving the designer's vision depends on the precision and quality attained in this final step. After the end product is approved, the project is considered billable.

ters. Creating complete font families requires multiple rounds of finished drawings or printouts, with minute adjustments between rounds. Setting text in a range of sizes and outputting to a variety of devices to insure legibility takes time and patience. The fee for a typeface commission should reflect the required number and variation of styles, weights, and alternate sets (small caps, lining figures, symbols). Whether the typeface is exclusive for a limited or unlimited period is also a consideration, as the licensing value of a font may be higher after a period of exposure as a corporate exclusive.

Type designers may also offer clients services that were once provided by type foundries: modification of spacing metrics, creation of custom kerning, expansion of existing character sets to include special characters, and coding for specialized language uses. These services are priced according to the client's intended use and vary widely. Type designers should also consider which operating systems will be supported by their typeface.

Retouching & Photo Illustration

Retouchers are graphic artists who alter, enhance, or add to a photograph. This is done either manually, by applying bleach, dyes, gouache, or transparent watercolor to the photograph or transparency/chrome with a paintbrush or airbrush, or electronically, using special software. The resulting image usually appears untouched. This "invisible art" requires a highly skilled hand and eye to be successful. Therefore, the retoucher most often specializes in one area of retouching and concentrates on the skills and technical knowledge of that area.

Today's technology allows manipulation of images, including color correction, distorting or enhancing an image, replacing backgrounds, and creating complex composites. Specialists in the discipline of photo illustration are experts in manipulating and altering photographs and other images to better meet a client's needs. It is a powerful tool that can have dramatic consequences; for example, evidence that published photographs of a 2006 bombing in Lebanon had been digitally manipulated to make the damage seem more severe caused outrage in the United States press.

Pricing

When pricing a traditional retouching project, the artist must take several factors into account.

Complexity: Retouching and photo illustration can run the gamut in changes to the photo from simply adding a few highlights to actually creating

COMPARATIVE FEES FOR PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/ RETOUCHING

All markets	
	HOURLY
National/general consumer	\$65–200
	PERCENT OF FEE ADDED
Rush fee	50%–200%

Figure 7-10

realistic hand-wrought backgrounds, shapes, or figures or stripping two or more photos together to create a montage.

Expenses: Typography, photography, props, and other out-of-pocket expenses are generally billed as additional expenses. Artists should also take into consideration the initial cost of hardware and software.

Overtime: Retouching, by its nature, should not be rushed. It is important to know how much retouchers charge for accelerated schedules. Normal timing for an average project is three days, and overtime rates usually go into effect for projects with less than three days' turnaround.

Rights: Unlike other graphic artists, retouchers always work on an existing piece of art and are not usually entitled to copyright or reuse fees. The fee that they charge represents the total income from that project, unlike other artists who may benefit from future uses of a work. On the other hand, photo illustrators are creators who, like other artists, control all the rights to their creations. See Figure 7-10 for digital photo illustration/retouching fees.

Environmental Graphic Design

Environmental graphic designers plan, design, and specify communications in the built and natural environment. The discipline merges the communication skills of a graphic designer with the architect's understanding of space and structure. The profession is approached from either the science of "wayfinding" and/or the art of "placemaking." Design solutions are most often three-dimensional and expressed visually, but many projects integrate dynamic sensory experiences that might include tactile, audio, and motion graphics, etc. This vital field

offers a rich diversity of projects in many environments from offices, campuses, hospitals, airports, cities, parks, transportation and sports facilities, to hotels, museums, zoos, retail stores, theme parks, and cruise ships, to name a few.

Wayfinding is an industry term referring to the design and implementation of directional systems that guide people through complex spaces. Wayfinding can be broken down into several areas: information and interpretation; direction and orientation; identification and regulation. Design elements as sculptural or architectural features and such aids as color-coding and graphic symbols may be used to increase ease in navigation.

Placemaking is about the creation of comprehensive environments that may teach through interpretative graphics, project a corporate identity, or create visually arresting places that elevate moods or inspire action. Art, color, pattern, texture, ornament, identity, and landmarks are just a few elements of placemaking.

Environmental graphic designers come predominantly from the fields of graphic, industrial, architectural, interior, and landscape design. Currently the industry reports that clients are equally represented from the public and private sectors, such as governmental agencies and municipalities, to real estate developers and owners. Environmental graphic designers work closely with architects, engineers, city planners, fabricators, and construction firms.

Projects vary widely in scale and size; consequently, environmental graphic designers need extensive knowledge of building design, project management, codes and regulations, fabrication

shop practices, and construction. Also, knowledge of design possibilities and limitations, such as how materials react to weather or how distance, lighting, and speed affect the legibility of type, is crucial.

An environmental graphic design team is multidisciplinary and often includes a principal of the firm, a senior project designer, assistant designers, and additional artists and consultants who are often hired freelance for specific skills when needed. Since these projects frequently involve long-term research and development, environmental graphic designers are often brought in at the earliest stages. In addition, many environmental graphic design offices work on retainer and act as design consultants in peripheral areas in addition to their main projects.

According to an industry survey, two-thirds of environmental graphic design firms range in size from one to 15 people, with annual design fees ranging from \$100,000 to over \$2 million. Project specifications range on average from \$250,000 to over \$7.5 million. For example, a large, internally illuminated exterior sign may cost \$30,000 or more. See Figure 7-11 for comparative fees for environmental graphic design.

Designers seeking employment in environmental graphic design should try to apprentice either with someone already working in the field or in the graphics department of an architectural firm. They must be able to read working drawings and understand architectural scale. Useful study also includes architectural drafting, 2-D and 3-D design software, corporate identity and information systems design, packaging, psychology, fine art, literature, and cultural anthropology.

COMPARATIVE FEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHIC DESIGN

Based on research and design of all exterior and interior signage systems, excluding tenant signage (if applicable). Includes presentation of three concepts showing format, comprehensive layouts, up to two revisions, and final art. Does not include any reimbursable or out-of-pocket expenses such as service bureau output or production expenses, which may be billed separately.

Commercial Real Estate

PROJECT SCALE	COMPERHENSIVE SIGNAGE
Corporate campus	\$42,000–120,000
Class "A" office building	40,000– 60,000
Class "B" office building	5,000– 30,000

The pricing ranges in the chart do not constitute specific prices for particular jobs. Depending on the practice of the studio principals, the printing or manufacturing part of the project may be billed directly to the client. The buyer and seller are free to negotiate, with each designer independently deciding how to price the work, after taking all factors into account.

Figure 7-11

In the specific design of signage, often professional and governmental codes regulate and guide the design and where the signage must be located. Consequently, environmental graphic designers are required to know and follow standards established by the Society for Environmental Graphic Design (SEGD), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI), as well as local zoning laws, municipal sign ordinances, state and local building codes, fire codes, and other government regulations. A significant example of such regulations is the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), which affects the interior and exterior signs of all public facilities in the United States. The ADA calls for the removal of all architectural and communications barriers to those with special needs. ADA Accessibility Guidelines are available from the U.S. Department of Justice (800-514-0301; 800-514-0383; and www.usdoj.gov/crt/drssec.htm). SEG D educates and helps define the practice of environmental graphic design. It also monitors and provides members with updates on related ADA regulations.

The Graphic Artists Guild Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts published the "Disability Access Symbols Project," a graphics package that is available digitally and as hard copy. The project collected and standardized a graphic vocabulary of 12 symbols indicating accessibility, such as wheelchair access for mobility-challenged people, audio description services for visually challenged people, and listening devices for the hard of hearing. The symbols may be used in signage, floor plans, and other materials promoting the accessibility of places, events, or programs. SEG D also offers tested symbol sets such as healthcare and safety symbols.

Project proposals

The project begins once a client accepts a design proposal, which outlines the scope of the project, the services to be provided, consultant/client responsibilities, project fees, schedule, and terms and conditions under which it will be executed including ownership, usage, and liability. Most environmental graphic design projects are quoted and billed by phase, with an initial fee representing 10 to 30 percent of total fees and reimbursable expenses.

Phase 1. Programming: Concerned with gathering information and establishing design criteria, this phase often requires spending a great deal of time with the client or on site to define the needs and problems to be solved.

Phase 2. Schematic design: After the designer and client have reached an agreement concerning the basic program, design solutions are pursued that solve the stated problems. Much of this phase

involves concept development and investigation of the functional aspects with consulting fabricators. This results in a presentation showing only those ideas that the design team feels are viable, appropriate, and meet the prescribed criteria. Preliminary expectations for factors such as electrical, lighting, and structural details are coordinated with the other consultants.

Phase 3. Design development: At this stage, the design team refines the accepted design, and a final presentation is made, explaining the applications. Once the client and designer have chosen a definite direction, specific information is sought from the fabricator including preliminary cost and schedule estimates.

Phase 4. Contract documentation: The project is fully documented for implementation, which includes preparing working drawings, specifications, and reproducible artwork, where appropriate. Decisions are final at this point. Any changes made by the client after this point are billable as additional work, although designer errors are not.

Phase 5. Contract administration (including pre-bid qualification and bid assistance): This phase involves quality checking and coordinating product manufacturing. Oversight is key to this phase, since so much depends on the precision and quality achieved in this final step. Fabrication is usually billed on approved phased performance benchmarks. After the end product is approved, the project is paid in full. The designer normally retains the right to execute any design intent corrections in the fabrication process.

Billing

Billing expenses and fees may be handled in a number of ways. Early in the project, the designer should arrange to bill as a lump sum or on an hourly, progressive, or project basis. If clients prefer to be billed on a project basis, the client usually establishes an acceptable cap on the total amount billed, although the designer must make it clear that the client is not entitled to unlimited revisions.

Expenses for work done directly with clients are usually billed with markups, including costs incurred for client-approved travel. Client alterations are usually billed at the firm's predetermined hourly rates.

The fabricator is accountable to the designer and is ethically bound to follow the designer's intent and direction while working on the project. This, of course, becomes a matter of practicality, since the designer orchestrates many elements and must oversee them all to ensure consistency. However, final fabrication and installation of the project is normally handled in a separate contract for direct billing between the client and the fabricator.