



It has been brought to our attention that you are in the process of choosing a graphic design firm to produce communications materials for your organization. We are concerned that your request for proposals includes a solicitation of design concepts to be produced on a speculative basis by the studios you are considering. As the largest national association representing designers, producers and buyers of graphics, AIGA has developed policies intended to maintain the integrity of our industry and to ensure the highest standards possible in graphic design. As a professional buyer of design, it is important that you are aware of these policies and the rationale behind them. AIGA strongly discourages the practice of requesting that design work be produced and submitted on a speculative basis in order to be considered for acceptance on a project. There are several reasons for this policy:

Choosing a designer or design firm based on the look of speculative, preliminary design concepts reduces a significant decision—one that could well determine one's success in the marketplace—to nothing more substantial than a beauty contest. Successful design buyers realize that the right designer understands the buyer's products and/or services, their market and their goals. These buyers are aware that successful design is not dictated by personal tastes. Instead, it is produced through a clear understanding of the buyer's own communication objectives and a solid working relationship with a professional designer whom they trust and with whom they can work comfortably. Such designers can demonstrate, through the work in their portfolio, their talent as a designer and their ability to respond to the needs and objectives of their clients. The right designer understands and endorses the specific objectives of the buyer. This common understanding between a talented designer and a savvy buyer, combined with a mutual respect for the abilities and efforts of everyone involved in the process constitute the necessary ingredients required in producing well designed, successful communication materials.

Capable designers do not work for free. There is no substitute for quality work and the demand remains strong for those capable of providing it. Buyers who determine contracts based on work provided for free are therefore relegated to choosing between those least capable of producing good, effective design. Requesting work for free reflects a lack of understanding and respect for the value of effective design as well as the time of the professionals who are asked to provide it.

Also, for your information, here is the official policy of the AIGA [from Business and Ethical Expectations for Professional Designers]:

- A designer shall not undertake any work for a client without adequate compensation, except with respect to work for charitable or nonprofit organizations.
- A designer shall not undertake any speculative projects, either alone or in competition with other designers, for which compensation will only be received if a design is accepted or used.
- This applies not only to entire projects but also to preliminary schematic proposals.

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- A designer shall work only for a fee, a royalty, salary, or other agreed-upon form of compensation.
 - A designer shall not retain any kickbacks, hidden discounts, commission, allowances, or payment in kind from contractors or suppliers.