



[Your firm name]

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**NOTE:** This letter is intended to be a resource for you when preparing communication with clients who may be requesting speculative work. You should modify it based on the needs of your particular situation.

Dear [name of potential client/graphic design buyer]:

[Name of your firm] would like to work with you to produce communications materials for your organization, but we are concerned that your request for proposal includes a solicitation of design concepts to be produced on a speculative basis by the professionals you are considering.

The approach you are pursuing is one that compromises the quality of work you are entitled to and also violates a tacit, long-standing ethical standard in the communication design profession worldwide.

AIGA, the nation's largest and oldest professional association for design, 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 two main reasons for this position:

**1. To assure the client receives the most appropriate and responsive work.** Successful design work results from a collaborative process between a client and the designer with the intention of developing a clear sense of the client's objectives, competitive situation and needs. Speculative design competitions or processes result in a superficial assessment of the project at hand that is not grounded in a client's business dynamics. Design creates value for clients as a result of the strategic approach designers take in addressing the problems or needs of the client and only at the end of that process is a "design" created. Speculative or open competitions for work based on a perfunctory problem statement will not result in the best design solution for the client.

**2. Requesting work for free demonstrates a lack of respect for the designer and the design process.** 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. This approach, therefore, reflects on your personal practices and standards and may be harmful to the professional reputation of both you and your business.

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There are few professions where all possible candidates are asked to do the work first, allowing the buyer to choose which one to compensate for their efforts. (Just consider the response if you were to ask a dozen lawyers to write a brief for you, from which you would then choose which one to pay!) We realize that there are some creative professions with a different set of standards, such as advertising and architecture, for which billings are substantial and continuous after you select a firm of record. In those cases, you are not receiving the final outcome (the advertising campaign or the building) for free upfront as you would be in receiving a communication design solution.

**There is an appropriate way to explore the work of various designers.** A more effective and ethical approach to requesting speculative work is to ask designers to submit examples of their work from previous assignments as well as a statement of how they would approach your project. You can then judge the quality of the designer's previous work and his or her way of thinking about your business. The designer you select can then begin to work on your project by designing strategic solutions to your criteria while under contract to you, without having to work on speculation up front.

If you would like to work with our firm in developing a process that will benefit you most and maintain the high business standards we expect of **[name of soliciting company or organization]**, please do not hesitate to give me a call. There are many local and national designers who can provide you with solutions that will far exceed your expectations, with respect for an appropriate budget and schedule. In the end, this approach ensures a more effective, professional and profitable process for everyone involved.

Your consideration of these professional design issues is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, [Member Name], AIGA

### **About AIGA**

AIGA, the professional association for design, advances design as a professional craft, strategic advantage, and vital cultural force. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, AIGA brings together practitioners, enthusiasts, and patrons to amplify the voice of design and create the vision for a collective future. AIGA defines global standards and ethical practices, guides design education, inspires designers and the public, enhances professional development, and makes powerful tools and resources accessible to all. For more information about AIGA and our community of design advocates, visit [www.aiga.org](http://www.aiga.org).