

RGD Ontario's policy on spec work

The Rules of Professional Conduct, a bylaw of the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario (RGD Ontario), prohibits its members from engaging in speculative (spec) work.

Spec work and why it is a harmful practice

Doing work on spec amounts to providing design work for free (or for a nominal fee) as part of a pitch for new business. Uninformed clients mistakenly believe that requiring spec work as part of their search and selection process for a graphic designer or design firm is a good business practice. Spec work is universally condemned as an unethical business practice by responsible designers and design organizations around the world - see www.no-spec.com . Spec work:

- is exploitative and unethical, a demand for free design work without guarantee of compensation,
- offers no future economic potential,
- can lead to infringement of intellectual property rights (copyright and moral rights),
- devalues the profession of graphic design and leads to negative competitive practices,
- is also discouraged by allied professions such as the advertising industry, and
- is unlikely to meet a client's marketing and communication objectives.

Spec work threatens the integrity and work ethic of the graphic design profession. Neither the designer nor the client benefit from spec work. Designers who work on spec cannot do justice to the design brief and are unlikely to conduct the research and analysis needed to produce their best work because they have no guarantee of remuneration. Their abilities to act as professional consultants, partners or members of a client's strategic communications team are not used.

How to select a graphic designer or design firm

- Develop and advertise a Request for Proposal (RFP) to include information about the project background, your objectives, the scope of the work, time requirements, proposal requirements (tasks, deliverables, designated team members, timing, budget, relevant experience and client references).
- If you are certain you require a presentation of creative ideas from more than one graphic designer or design firm, we recommend that you pay a fee to each competitor. The amount should be equivalent to what a reasonable design fee and expenses would be for a similar project under normal circumstances.
- If such a payment cannot be justified for your project, or if you require the work to be done pro bono, then choose a graphic designer or design firm by obtaining referrals from colleagues, reviewing portfolios and checking client references.
- These selection guidelines apply to both for-profit and non-profit business entities, and for both paid and pro bono projects.

More information

Web www.rgdontario.com

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