



goat and Modest Ossipoff

PLEASE, DON'T BE A DICK

(A client's handbook to working with a designer)

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pleasedontbeadick.com

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We would firstly like to thank Paul Furey — one of our clients — for inspiring the title of this book. He was never a dick, which was advice we gave him before we started working together, and the project moved along smoothly.

To all our other clients who we have had a good working relationship with, allowing us to create something great together.

To previous employers who have taught us what should and should not be done.

To any future clients that will put up with us and our ideas.

And to any client to whom we might have come across as dicks. For this we are sorry, but now we are wiser.



Advice books for designers appear in abundance in your everyday bookstore or Google search. The sheer volume is infinite, with books on design theory, history and trends, advice on working with contractors, tips on how to keep accounts organised and detailed explanations on how to manage day-to-day business. These books are great at dispensing knowledge from one designer to another, unfortunately they aren't really helpful for the clients that have to work with designers.

If design clients endeavoured to read one of the books that instruct designers on how to work with clients, hoping to reverse engineer the solutions, they would probably be left feeling attacked. Many of these books comfort designers, cushion their egos, assuring them that none of the failures that happen from the drawing board to the meeting room are their fault and reassuring them that the victories are purely the result of their hard work.

The clients are then, if they choose to make the effort, left scouring for valuable bits of information on how to tackle problems they may encounter when working with designers. If they are lucky they will find a few tips here and there on how they should trust their designer, how they should explain what they want to communicate clearly and how they should allow the designer to have appropriate space to work. These are valid points that a client should understand, but they fail to paint the entire picture and they do not help a client to feel more confident as part of the design process.

Let's face it, designers are an unforgiving bunch. One request for animated business cards and a client unwittingly becomes the laughing stock of thousands of designers on websites like "[Clients From Hell](#)". This is not their fault though; their business is not design. A client cannot be expected to fully understand what can and cannot be requested from a designer. He or she cannot know how to separate the acceptable from the ridiculous for one reason – it's not their job to know.

This is where this book comes in. A client's job is to elicit a product out of a company or individual equipped with the skill-set to produce it. Therefore, we present a collection of advice, a carefully (at some points) laid out handbook for clients on how to work together with designers. After reading this, you can expect a more efficient collaboration, hopefully resulting in a beautiful piece of work that solves your problem as effectively as possible. More importantly, we will have succeeded in fulfilling our self-important desire to write a book that tells you how to act around us. But seriously, this book should work both ways — to educate design clients on what to expect from a designer, and to encourage designers to understand what clients should expect from them.



If you think you understand the nuances of design and designer-client relationships because you've watched a few episodes of *Mad Men* then this book is not for you, owning the whole box set won't help either.

This is for people who work with designers, regularly or for the first time, and want to make things easier and smoother for both parties. It is for those who want to be able to finish a project without angry phone calls, stressful meetings and back and forth emails that go nowhere.

If nothing else, the main message of this book is that each party has a specific role in a project.

What you, the client, know better than us, design tutors and trending styles on design blogs

We don't know your business, and for your sake, we hope we will never know your business as much as you. For this reason we need you to tell us about your business, how it runs, who your customers are, what your goals are and why it is that you want what you want.

What we, the designers, know better than you, your wife and your neighbour's son who uses Photoshop to design party invitations

You don't know our business, and for your sake, we hope you will leave it to us. You probably don't have the experience we have, you may not know what amount of work goes into what we do and chances are you don't understand the theory as well as us. This will only sound condescending if you believe that you do know as much as us.

What neither of us know before we start working together

Before starting the collaborative process it's hard to know how it will all unfold, what sort of project timeline there will be, what the price will be and, most importantly, if the working relationship will function at all.

What is known is that certain steps need to be taken to enmesh the client's knowledge with that of the designer's for any project to work.