

Working with Clients

No matter what marketing techniques you use, you can expect to start getting calls from people interested in using your services. In this section you will find some tips for working with prospective clients and turning them into paying clients.

Responding to Inquiries

Your first contact with some new clients may be over the phone, when they call to ask about your services and prices. Always answer your phone in a **professional, friendly** voice with your company name. Do not allow family members to answer your phone if you are not available, and be sure to have your voice mail pick up if you are running after a screaming child and the family dog. A harried response does **not** make a good first impression of someone who is supposed to stay calm, cool and collected during any crisis.

Have a full packet of your **promotional materials** on your desk near the phone so you can refer to them, and be sure you don't leave anything out. Also, write down the caller's **phone number** and **address**, too, if possible. Then you'll have it and you'll be able to enter it into your database if the caller becomes a customer. And you'll also have it if the caller doesn't immediately become a customer. Enter it into your database with other prospects and e-mail them from time to time. Let them know about special events they might be interested in.

Many of your telephone interviews will be from private citizens searching for information on pricing and services. Many prospective corporate clients already know what an event planner does, so they may be calling to set up an appointment or to send out a Request for Proposal

Smart businesspeople attempt to set up a **face-to-face meeting** to discuss their services more in-depth than what a phone call will allow, and you can use this first contact to set up the meeting.

So how can you keep the person on the phone and convince them to meet with you? By gently **taking control** of the conversation and keeping your answers **concise** and **focused** on what a valuable service event planners provide — a stress-free event. Your conversation could go something like this:



CLIENT: Hello, I'm looking for some information on how much you charge to plan an event.

YOU: Thank you for calling. My name is Polly Planner. May I get your name?

CLIENT: Jane Smith.

YOU: Would you prefer if I called you Jane or Ms. Smith?

CLIENT: Call me Jane.

YOU: Well, Jane, our company has many excellent packages and pricing options available, depending on the number of services you want us to handle. We can also design a package especially for you. We're experts at negotiating and securing fair prices from suppliers, and we pass the savings on to you. Have you had a chance to see our portfolio or any information on our company's services?

CLIENT: No. I just got your number from the phone book and thought I'd call. I'm not even sure I understand everything an event planner does.

YOU: Jane, I'm not sure what another event planner would tell you, but I can tell you my goal is to create exciting, stress-free and unique events for my clients. I offer a free one-hour initial consultation and I'd be pleased to meet with you to take the mystery out of what an event planner does and to discuss options with you. I have Tuesday and Thursday evening or Friday afternoon open. Which day would be good for you?

There are many ways to deliver information on your pricing options and services to clients (e-mail, your website, fax, brochures, etc.), but the absolute best way to deliver your information is with a personal meeting.

If Jane Smith decides she'd rather get the information in the mail, send it **at once**. Make absolutely certain you spell her name correctly and repeat the address back to confirm it. Ask for her phone number for follow-up purposes, mail your materials in an appropriately-sized envelope (don't squish them in), and make sure you use the correct postage. Send a **cover letter** thanking her for her interest in your company and tell her you will follow up within a few days.

Call in a couple of days to ensure she received the materials and ask if she has any questions.

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