

## Making Prices Clear

The most sophisticated professionals often experience discomfort talking about and negotiating fees with clients. Even in the twenty-first century, money issues jar our sensibility and feel intrusive.

I worked with an attorney who quoted his prices apologetically and then declared he was giving a discount before the person digested his fee. He told me he didn't want to seem greedy. His prices weren't unreasonable, but he couldn't manage his anxiety long enough to let his new clients consent. He hadn't quite accepted his own value, and he was unclear how to fit finances into his client relations.

And indeed it is a challenge to introduce issues of commerce into the social relationship we need to build with our clients. Professional relationships incorporate aspects of social relationships, yet the professional relationship retains its prerequisite to discuss fees.

In one way or another, fees are a major cause of practice failure and professional stress. I give trainings for organizations that assist professionals struggling with addictions and professional breaches of ethics, and I see evidence that financial stresses caused by poor communication about fees are often contributing factors.

Each of us carries a particular version of money discomfort, but one solution seems helpful for most of us--make pricing policies transparent up front. Clients trust service providers who are clear about costs. They want clarity about fees, but are often as uncomfortable as you are.

Clients, who weren't told about fees upfront and clearly by their attorney, report being shocked that they weren't informed of costly undertakings and activities that occurred behind the scenes. They expected but failed to receive an adequate accounting.

Clients know that their relationship with us has a financial component; we need to give them a comfortable degree of permission to ask questions and declare their specific needs. Unless we are comfortable, we send a message that something is wrong or different than they expected.

A high percentage of my coaching clients have seen revenue benefits and stress reductions from an in-depth review of their policies for setting and communicating their fee policies and invoices. If you ever feel discomfort managing the many aspects of clients and money, it could be time for a guided review.