



The Advantage of Doing Something for Nothing

By Dana Kader Robb

“It’s better to do something for nothing, then to do it for less than it’s worth.”

Ray Lemmermann, owner of Smudge Printing and a long-time Mind Your Business client, said that to me a while back. I wrote it down and I’ve been thinking about it ever since. Here’s my take on the “pro’s” of pro bono work...

When you discount your services, you’re essentially saying that they are worth less than what you normally charge. This makes it very difficult to get your regular fee at a later date. “Hey,” your customer might say, “you gave it to me cheaper last time. Why should I pay more now?” We all know of a store where almost everything is on sale at one point or another. Would we ever pay full price at that store without thinking that we had been cheated?

When you do pro bono work for a deserving client, you give a different message. You say that you care about the cause or program that they are promoting. You say that you are committed as a business owner to making things better for others. You say that you are giving them a specific product or service – with a specific value – to help their efforts.

Treat pro bono projects the same way you’d treat those you take on for a fee. Provide the same level of quality, make sure you meet deadlines, back it up with same customer service as the rest of your clients receive. Hopefully, that donated project will lead to paid contracts later, and you want to make sure that you leave the customer with the best possible impression of your company. Even a pro bono client should leave the experience feeling they got more than they paid for!