

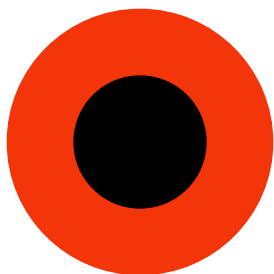
Free Chapter

BeforeDesign One

Trust



Step closer to design mastery





Trust

Zoom ended. We just had another argument. My heart is racing hard. The creeping voice telling me that this wasn't going to work. Moment of pause. Silent voice denied. I walked for twenty minutes, had a coffee, and thought about a cute elderly couple who were talking in the corner of a café. Came home, kissed my wife. Watched an episode of *Lupin*¹. Sat down at the computer and wrote an email.

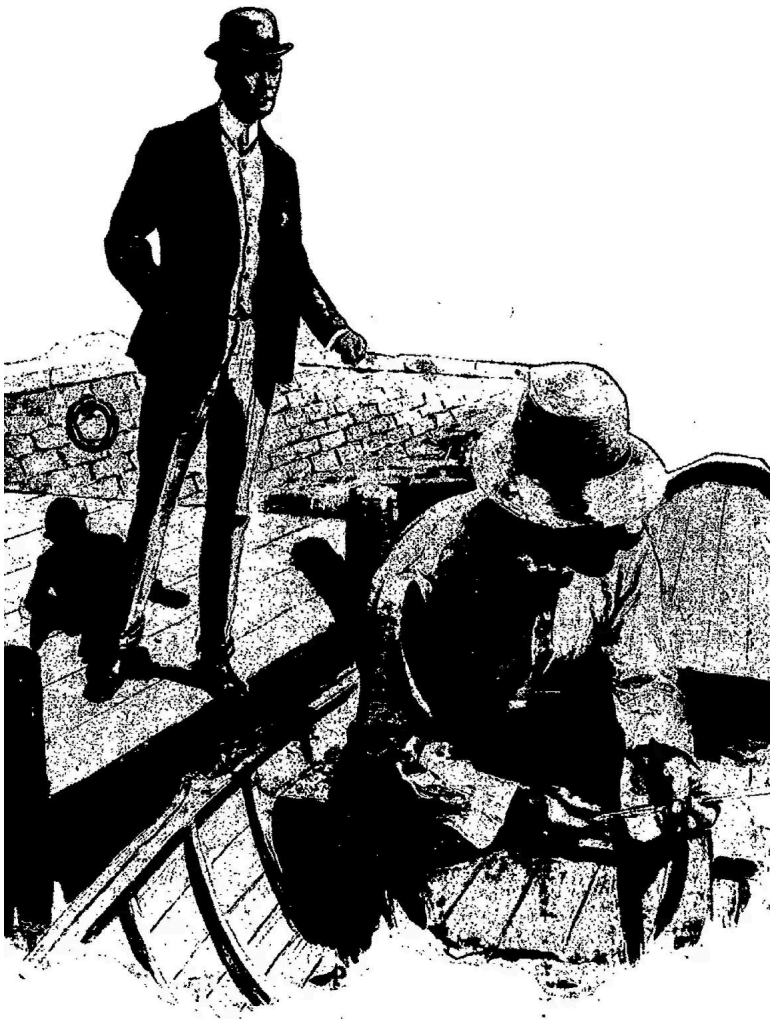
Dear client, our expectations for this project weren't aligned. Yet, it is mostly our fault for not setting them early in the project. If I can interest you in this expectation list, and we align, we could do so much better. Let me know if this sounds like a good next step for you?

Best,

Meaning. It's an easy thing to lose a client who you don't have a common point of view with. But it's a tragedy to lose a client because a few assumptions messed up the whole partnership.

1. *Lupin*, by Gaumont & Netflix. Watch it if you haven't already.





Maurice Leblanc — Illustration from *Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmès* (*La Dame blonde*, followed by *La Lampe juive*), published in *Je sais tout*, 1906–1907.

In most cases, trust in partnerships and relationships fails due to wrong expectations, even the ones you have with yourself. Unclear expectations are where worlds come crashing down.

On the following pages you'll be able to find an example of 'expectations list' that I used with some of my mentees, which you can simply 'steal' and use yourself. Next to it, there's also one for my clients. Make your own soon.

Please do understand that this is a tricky field. Think of it like: you just had a nice chat with the client, the communication and sale went really smoothly — slapping them with a list of items afterwards, without warning, may really be off putting and weird. It can kill the good vibes you had. Therefore, I'd suggest you casually mention to a client that you usually follow up with a short list of expectations just to double confirm your expectations are aligned. This light mention will save you from many weird situations. And it's something they now can expect. Don't make these expectations part of the contract, just send them as a very light bullet in the email, or one page PDF, and ask a client to comment on it.

Caveat is that you are still early in your career to write great expectation list, so try to make sure you know at least 3 things that are non-negotiable for you, and put them down for beginning. Later you can polish the list as you gain more experience. On the fun side. These expectation lists, later can help you see if your client checks them out, and if you wish to continue working with them or not. Even though expectations are set, it's important to treat yourself or your employee with care and understanding.

Expectations builds trust, following through with those builds best relationships. However, we are humans and humans mistake. Evaluate, forgive and give yourself another go. Always. How many gos? 77x7, and another more.

Expectation lists



Expectation list for my client

+ Payment on time

We require payment to be on time for each phase. Otherwise work doesn't start.

+ Feedback on time

We ask you that feedback is given in the agreed turnaround. Otherwise the set roadmap for the project will not be honored.

+ Be direct

We ask you to tell us directly and freely what you don't like and why. This will allow us to make the best solution for your project.

+ Articulate what you need

If brief is not sufficient we'll be asking a lot of questions. Let's make sure we learn from you, what is the best way to learn things we don't know. In writing, live, through email, directly on visuals, etc.

+ Open to hear our opinion

Regardless if correct, we do provide opinions. That's core of what we do. Would love for you to be open hearing the 'bad' ones as well as good ones. If we know why 'bad' ones are 'bad', we'll know how to make everything work.

+ Curious for decisions

Not just the visuals, we want to tell you why something is done the way it was. There's a story to it. Hear us out.

+ Have high bar for quality

We ask you to raise bar for quality. We want to make an amazing output for you, and we need you to want it too.

Expectation list for my mentee

+ Learning

Learn something new every week.

+ Consistency

Share a small design piece online, daily. (Práxis)

+ Communication

Reply on every message you receive. Even if no action needed. Journal your days and weeks. It can be as simple as one-two sentences for the day, and paragraph for the week. Send it to me.

+ Punctuation

Aim to state, upfront, when your task or project will be done. If there's no deadline, give a realistic estimate that doesn't hurt your personal life.

+ Delays

If you realize something won't be accomplished per the project roadmap let me know.

+ Interest

Ask questions about anything vague, unclear or interesting. I may respond later, but you will always get an answer. (Be Swiss)

+ Seek solutions

When I am unavailable, use all modern resources you have to find for what you may need. Continue working on a project, even if I am temporarily unavailable. (Be Swiss)

+ Iterate

Start with many iterations, not just one. If short deadline, compress as many iterations as you can in that short time.

+ Independent thinking

Don't just execute the brief. Before start identify technical requirements (dimensions, file types, and more). Also, reesearch how other pros have done similar work.

+ Ask for help

If you cannot figure something out, write for help. Balancing this with independence is tricky, yet the most powerful combo of soft skills if done right.

These lists don't mean the recipients will follow them blindly. Or follow them at all. It's your responsibility to communicate expectations as clearly as you can. Then, it's again your responsibility to guide a client or an employee through it subtly, with kindness and care. You shouldn't wave these lists as contracts above their heads. They are an upfront and honest guide of how you'd like them to work with you, yet just a guide. Oh, and you can use these lists on yourself too. Not to learn if you'd like to work with you, but to keep yourself accountable.

This is really important to know. If you started today, it is still early for an 'expectation list.' It also depends on how often business opportunities are available to you. Meaning: if you don't have gigs, don't push these. Get the gig, get a few. Then start sending these lists.

1 trust

2 trust

3 trust

4 trust

5 trust

I do care for my collaborations to not fall through the cracks due to misalignment on expectations, therefore I try to do things that depend on me. That's why asking clients what they expect of you is also important. Another 'expectation list' that you can make at the beginning of a new collaboration.

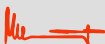
Thank You

Before Design I
Your first design steps

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Trust
Free Chapter

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