

# How to Handle Client Sticker Shock

When construction and/or design is your day-to-day business, you know the going rate for labour and materials – and the market factors that impact both. For clients who only do one or two major renovations in their lifetime, those numbers can seem surprisingly high.

We asked Chelsea Coryell, an interior design business consultant, for tips on how to manage cost expectations so you can minimise sticker shock, calm client nerves, and keep the project moving forward.

## TIP 1

### Qualify Your Client

During your very first conversation, ask your prospect about their big picture goals, budget, and timeline. Is what they want to accomplish doable or are their expectations too high? Does the project scope fall within a range you're comfortable with? If there's a big mismatch early on, the project may not be a good fit.

## TIP 2

### Be Upfront About Pricing

To give your prospect a general idea of pricing, share the budget range you usually work with, or what a similar project would typically cost. You can even send project photos with pricing to manage expectations from the beginning, avoiding surprises down the line and building trust through transparency.

## TIP 3

### Don't Discount

Lowering your prices is a slippery slope from which it's hard to recover. If a prospect has pricing concerns, you can reduce the scope to align with their budget, break it into smaller projects, or suggest postponing until they can afford it. You know what it takes to get the project done right, so don't shortchange yourself.

## TIP 4

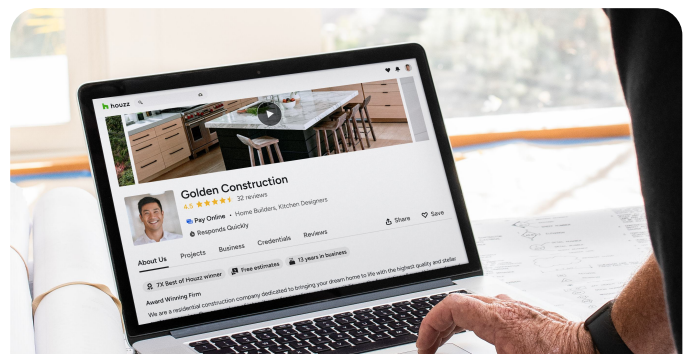
### Focus on Value

Something cost-conscious clients don't always recognise is the value a professional brings, so remind them of benefits like time saved, trusted supplier relationships, peace of mind, etc. It may also help to give them an overview of the process so they understand all the moving pieces – and people – you manage on their behalf.

## TIP 5

### Educate on Quality

If your client keeps gravitating towards lower-priced materials, use the opportunity to explain quality differences. Maybe a more expensive item will last longer, add to their home's value, or offer another benefit. If they're still resistant, suggest cutting back in an area where price makes less of a difference.



#### Pro Tip

On your Houzz profile you can include project photos and list your budget range so prospects can quickly see the level of work you do, essentially qualifying themselves before they reach out!