

better manage his time and more accurately scope out projects.

Moving up

Perhaps the most significant benefit Steve experienced was that he was gradually moving upmarket, dealing with bigger clients who had more exciting projects. He attributed this upward move to a few key factors.

One, the value-based approach weeded out low-quality prospects, forcing him to find better prospects.

Two, the better clients turned out to be referral engines to other similar prospects. This created a virtuous cycle, instead of the vicious cycle he was trapped in before when low-quality clients led him to more low-quality clients.

Three, his better clients had more exciting projects, which were fantastic opportunities to learn, improve his skills and gain experience—all of which made him more valuable in the marketplace. He ended up developing a lot of expertise in copywriting for the web. Remembering the story of Tara, he made this a point of difference to set himself apart from other designers, including Karen.