

profitable services for your clients, ones that are not as likely to be copied as you think.”

---

Steve nodded and Karen looked at him. “You look a bit apprehensive,” she said. “Are you having doubts about charging for the value you deliver?”

“I’m totally inspired by everything you’ve said,” Steve answered. “I absolutely want to do this. I’m just trying to work through all the scenarios. Let’s say your exploration uncovers the need for a big project. Don’t you often waste a lot of time developing a proposal only to discover the client can’t afford you? Wouldn’t you have been better off talking about price up front?”

“If you ask a client up front what their budget is,” Karen said, “they might give you a number. But that number often has the same lack of relevance that your hourly rate has, because the client might not fully understand what they want or what you can do for them. That’s what that whole exploratory dialogue is for. You need to go through that process to define things. Then you can put the right numbers together. While sometimes a budget is set in stone, I’ve often found that there’s flexibility for the right solution. If the client realizes that their original budget isn’t appropriate, they might