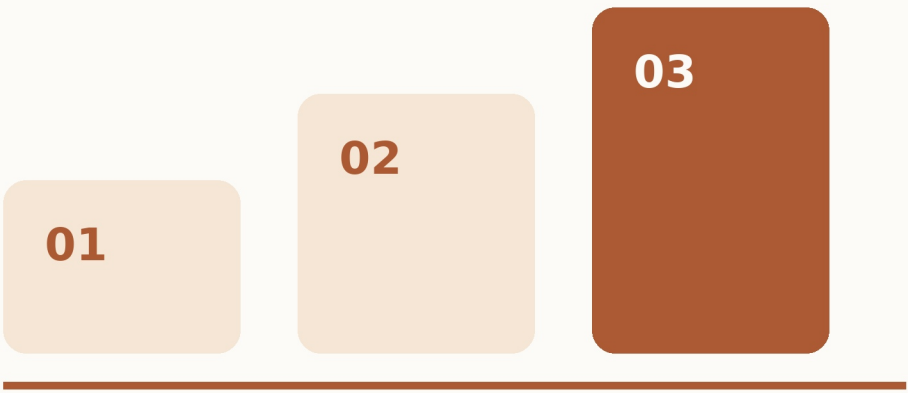
The Pricing and Negotiation Playbook

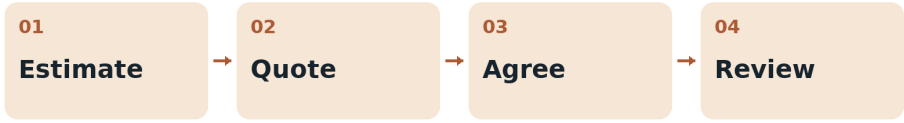
Price your first service, protect your time and negotiate clear agreements



Know your costs.
Explain your price.
Protect your scope.

The Pricing and Negotiation Playbook

Price your first service, protect your time and negotiate clear agreements



Compare the finished project with the original estimate.

First edition | November 2026

All names, client conversations and business figures in the examples are fictional unless a source is explicitly named. They illustrate decisions, not typical earnings or promised results.

Use the editable companion files for your own notes and client work. The EPUB edition provides adjustable text for smaller screens. Links and tool policies were reviewed on 13 November 2026; confirm current terms before opening an account or paying for a service.

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Contents

Start with a service you can deliver 4

Chapter 1 Turn a skill into a priceable service 6

Chapter 2 Count the time that a project actually uses 9

Chapter 3 Build a cost model without counting twice 12

Chapter 4 Understand revenue profit margin and markup 15

Chapter 5 Set a floor and choose how to charge 18

Chapter 6 Present a quote that can be accepted 21

Chapter 7 Prepare for negotiation before you feel pressure 24

Chapter 8 Handle discounts and cheaper alternatives 27

Chapter 9 Price changes to the work before doing them 29

Chapter 10 Plan payment and cash without confusing them with profit 31

Chapter 11 Learn from a completed project 33

Chapter 12 Use the calculator and AI with judgment 36

Your first offer in seven working sessions 39

Reference notes and verification 40

Start with a service you can deliver

Your first price does not need to prove what you are worth as a person. It needs to make a specific exchange understandable: this work, under these conditions, for this amount. That is a skill you can learn before you have a company, a large portfolio, or a confident sales voice.

By the end of this book, you can prepare a costed first offer, distinguish a useful concession from an expensive habit, discuss scope without apologizing, and compare a completed project with your estimate. You will also have a repeatable way to decide when to accept, revise, or decline an opportunity. The method does not promise customers or a particular income. It helps you make better decisions about opportunities you find.

You can use it for a small design project, a short video edit, an article, a spreadsheet cleanup, or another service you are capable of providing. Some examples involve a local service business to show how the same questions transfer. Regulated work, work requiring specialist insurance, and tasks involving health, legal, financial, or safety judgments require appropriate qualifications and local checks. Being able to describe a service is not the same as being ready to deliver it.

What you need

A notebook, a basic calculator, and a way to write a clear offer are enough. The accompanying Excel calculator makes the arithmetic reusable, but you can follow every calculation by hand. If you use another spreadsheet application, check that formulas and input validation behave correctly after import. Paid AI is optional. The examples use plain text prompts that can be adapted to an eligible tool or replaced by the manual questions beside them.

Work through one real or practice service as you read. Keep its scope small enough to estimate: for example, one 45-second video made from client-supplied footage, not an entire marketing operation. Give yourself time to learn the underlying craft. A pricing method cannot compensate for work you are not yet able to complete reliably.

A note for younger readers

You can practice estimating, build honest sample work, and rehearse conversations without opening a marketplace account or accepting a paid contract. Before taking payment, check the business, contract, payment-service, and working-age requirements where you live. A platform's permission to create an account does not automatically give you legal capacity to agree to every kind of work. If you are under the local age of adulthood, involve a parent or guardian in those checks. Never enter a false age or use someone else's identity to bypass restrictions.

The optional ChatGPT examples are subject to OpenAI's terms. As checked on 13 November 2026, users must be at least 13 or the minimum age required in their country, and users under 18 need permission from a parent or legal guardian. Separate terms apply to the EEA, Switzerland, and UK. Check the current terms and supported-country list before use. [S5, S6]

How to read the numbers

All people, projects, prices, fees, conversations, and results in the worked examples are fictional teaching scenarios. They are not market-rate recommendations or evidence of earnings. We use currency units, abbreviated CU, so you can substitute your own currency without implying that 25 CU buys the same amount in every country. Keep all figures in one currency within a calculation.

Unless an example says otherwise, prices exclude any sales tax that you collect on behalf of a tax authority. Personal income tax, financing costs, and jurisdiction-specific employer obligations are outside the calculator. The model includes a value for the owner's working time. That makes it a decision tool for economic operating profit, not a statutory profit-and-loss statement. A sole trader's own time may be treated differently in formal accounts. Ask an appropriate local adviser about registration, tax, invoicing, consumer rights, and enforceability of terms.

The companion toolkit provides blank worksheets, message templates, and a project review form. The other books in this series cover attracting potential customers and managing client conversations. You can use this book independently: you do not need either of them to prepare and discuss a price.

Chapter 1 Turn a skill into a priceable service

"I can edit videos" describes an ability. "I will edit one 45-second vertical video from up to 15 minutes of footage that you provide" describes the start of a service. A price attaches more safely to the second statement because both parties can see what is being exchanged.

Start with a small result that matters to someone. A local tutor might need a readable one-page lesson handout. A gardener might need a tidy list of service packages. A creator might need captions checked and added to a short clip. You do not need to invent a grand transformation. You need a useful deliverable that you can make to an agreed standard.

Define the edges before the amount

Write down what you will receive, what you will do, and what you will hand over. Then name the conditions that affect effort. For a video, these include the amount and quality of footage, the desired length, the number of formats, the language, whether a script exists, and how feedback will arrive. A request for a second format may be simple if it only needs a new export. It may be substantial if the framing, captions, and timing all need rebuilding.

Avoid a scope that relies on words such as "basic," "professional," or "unlimited" without explanation. A client may reasonably interpret them differently from you. "One consolidated revision round within the agreed scope" is more useful than "revisions included." Explain what a round means: the client collects feedback, sends one list, and you make the agreed changes once. Errors you introduce are corrected separately; they do not consume the client's revision allowance.

An acceptance condition is an observable way to decide whether the agreed work has been supplied. It can cover file format, length, spelling, required elements, and working links. It should not promise a result outside your control, such as a particular number of sales from a video. The client can approve a correctly delivered video while its marketing performance remains uncertain.

Worked example from vague request to bounded offer

Fictional beginner Mina receives: "Can you make some social content for our bakery? We need it soon." Her first instinct is to quote 100 CU and figure out the details later. That amount has no reliable meaning. It could refer to one image or a month of filming, editing, and posting.

Mina asks what the bakery wants customers to know, what materials already exist, where the content will appear, and which date matters. The bakery wants to announce a new breakfast menu, already has photographs, and needs one image for a phone-first social channel. Mina proposes one square graphic plus one vertical adaptation, using supplied text and photographs. She includes one feedback round and final JPG files. Copywriting, new photography, paid advertising, and ongoing posting are excluded.

The work is now small enough to estimate. If the bakery later asks for six additional posts, Mina can identify a new request rather than argue about what "some content" meant. Clear edges protect the client too: the bakery can compare the offer with its actual need before committing.

Separate practice from client delivery

You may spend five hours learning an effect that an experienced editor completes in 20 minutes. That learning matters, but charging every learning hour to an unsuspecting client is not automatically reasonable. Estimate the work you can responsibly promise, then decide how much personal practice you are willing to fund. Keep learning time visible in your private record so a cheap first project does not become your permanent business model.

A paid pilot can be appropriate when both sides understand its limited scope and your level of experience. Describe it honestly. Do not imply established client results you do not have. A practice project using invented business details belongs in a portfolio only when clearly labeled as a concept or self-initiated sample.

Your first scope exercise

Complete this sentence: "For [type of customer], I will produce [specific deliverable] from [inputs], with [included review], by [delivery condition]." Add two exclusions and two questions you still need answered.

For a spreadsheet cleanup, a possible answer is: "I will standardize headings and remove exact duplicate rows in one supplied file of up to 500 rows, return the cleaned file and a change log, and include one review of the agreed cleanup." It excludes financial advice and repairing unknown formulas. The unanswered questions are whether personal information is present and which columns define a duplicate. Those questions can change whether the project is suitable at all.

Your output from this chapter is a bounded service statement. Keep it beside every calculation that follows. If the scope changes, the price calculation may need to change with it.