

What to say when they tell you you're too expensive

Five different objections wearing the same three words, and only one of them is about money.

Nobody enjoys this part. You send a number you've thought carefully about, and back comes *"that's more than I was hoping"*, or *"I've had cheaper"*, or nothing at all for four days.

The instinct is to fix it with the price, because the price is the thing being talked about. That's almost always the wrong move, and not because holding firm is somehow noble. It's because *you're too expensive* is five different sentences wearing the same three words, and only one of them is about money.

Tell them apart and most of them have an answer that costs you nothing.

PART ONE — WHAT THEY ACTUALLY MEAN

01 “I don't know what I'm getting”

The most common one by a distance, and the easiest to fix.

A price on its own has nothing to sit against. If your quote is a number and one line of description, the only thing anybody can compare is the number. They're not weighing your work against somebody else's work. They're weighing your number against somebody else's number, because a number is all either of you gave them.

WHAT TO SAY

- Walk them through what's in it, in the order the job actually happens. Not a list of materials, a description of the work.
- Name the parts that aren't obvious from outside: the prep, the disposal, the second visit, the guarantee, the fact that the person who quoted is the person who turns up.
- Ask what the other quote covered. Half the time they don't know, and the question does the work for you without you having to say a word about anybody else.
- Put all of that in writing before they ask. A quote that explains itself never has to be defended.

Most too expensive is really unexplained. A number nobody can see inside of looks like a guess.

02 “I can't afford it right now”

A completely different problem, and discounting is the wrong answer to it. They don't think you're overpriced. They think you're out of reach this month, which is a question about timing.

WHAT TO SAY

- Ask. *“Is it the price, or the timing?”* is one question and it separates two conversations that need opposite answers.
- Offer a date instead of a discount. Work booked for two months away costs you nothing and solves their actual problem.
- Split the job if it splits. The urgent half now, the rest when they're ready. Real work, in stages, at your real price.
- Take a deposit and agree a payment date, rather than shaving the number to make this month easier.

A customer who pays your price in March is worth more than one who pays a resented price this week.

03 “I found someone cheaper”

Sometimes true. Usually not for the same job, and they can't tell, because they aren't in your trade. That's not them being difficult. It's the reason they're hiring somebody in the first place.

WHAT TO SAY

- Ask what's in the other quote, genuinely rather than as a trap. You'll often find it's a smaller job than the one you priced.
- Name the difference without naming the person. *“That sounds like it's priced for X. Mine includes Y, which is what stops Z happening”* is a comparison. *“He'll cut corners”* is a complaint, and people hear it as one.
- Be willing to lose it. Some jobs should go to the cheaper outfit, and the ones that come back to you afterwards arrive already convinced.
- Don't match. Matching tells them your first number was invented, and every price you give them after that is an opening offer.

You can't win a race to the bottom. The prize for winning it is a year of work at a price you can't live on.

04 “I'm just asking”

Some people push on every price they are ever given, for a car, a sofa or a roof. It's a reflex rather than a verdict, and it is the cheapest test in the world to run on somebody.

WHAT TO SAY

- Say the number again, calmly, and then stop talking. Most of the time that is the whole conversation.
- Don't explain twice. A second justification nobody asked for tells them the first one wasn't quite true.
- Don't apologize for it. *"That's what the job costs"* is a complete sentence and it doesn't need softening.

If your price moves the moment it's pushed, it was never your price. It was your opening offer, and now they know that about every number you'll ever give them.

05 “You're right”

Occasionally you are too expensive, for this job or this customer. That's information, not failure, and it's only useful if you can tell the difference between being expensive and being wrong.

WHAT TO SAY

- Check it against your floor first. Not what feels fair, the number your overheads and your actually-billed hours produce. Without it you're guessing about your own business.
- Watch for patterns. One person saying it is noise. Everybody saying it about one particular kind of job is a signal about that job, not about your prices.
- Be straight about who you're for. Being the wrong fit for somebody is allowed, and saying so early is faster and kinder than a quote neither of you wanted.

Losing a job on price costs you that job. Taking one below your floor is a cost you keep paying after it's finished.

WHERE TO START

Two habits, and neither costs anything.

Ask which one it is before you answer. *"Is it the price, or the timing?" "What did the other quote include?"* You cannot answer an objection until you know which objection it is, and one question almost always tells you. Most people skip this and answer all five at once, which is how a conversation about value turns into a conversation about discounts.

Know your floor before the conversation starts. Not what feels about right. The number that comes out of a year of overheads divided by the hours you genuinely billed. That's leak three in the leaks guide, and it's the difference between deciding and flinching.

And if you do decide to move on a price, move something other than the number, or name it and date it so it goes back up. The slow season playbook covers why that matters most in the quiet months, when a cheap job looks most like a good one.

Ask which one it is. Answer that one. Keep your price.

The first objection on this list is the one a website answers before you're in the room. Send me yours and I'll tell you what a stranger can and can't work out about what you do, along with what I'd fix. Free, within two business days, and it obliges you to nothing.

Written by JT Creeden at RedHorseWebDev, who builds websites for small businesses in the Hudson Valley. The whole guide is free to read at redhorsewebdev.com/learn — this PDF is just easier to keep.