



Unpaid Professionals & Unfulfilled Dreams

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I am a very talented creative person. I do not have a job in my field, but “friends” frequently ask me to work for them for free or for very little money to “build my portfolio.”

I love the work, but I resent this. What should I do?

Dusty

Dear Dusty,

I get it. Speaking at conferences is the only marketing I have ever done, and in the beginning I would often do it for no charge, or expenses. It paid off and I established a career, which is a dream come true, so it was worth it. I will still occasionally show up for expenses just

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Written by Susan Murphy
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because I love it so much.

I do, however, now draw the line at completely free, because people don't value "free" the way they do when things are costly. In fact, the more I raise my prices, the more I seem to be valued.

The expectation – in the creative or intangible career world – that publicity is worth what you would be paid, is very often true. Until it is not. You have to decide.

I'd put a time limit on your "apprenticeship" position. If it doesn't lead to a job being paid what you deserve, move on. Seek out the competition to your current clients and let it be known. That could be all you need to get paid properly.

Best,

Aunt Bossy

Star Stuck

Dear Aunt Bossy,

□□□□□□□□ *I am a very talented actress, according to my teachers and friends. I have starred in school plays since kindergarten and am in my Senior year in College. I did not major in Acting, but Literature, because I think I can learn so much about character development from great writing.*

□□□□□□□□ *The problem is that it is almost impossible to get jobs because I don't have what*

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they call professional experience, and, of course, don't belong to the union because of that.

□□□□□□□□ I have volunteered at the Beaufort International Film Festival because it is such high quality and attracts top-notch actors, writers, and directors from all over the world.□□ I'll only be handing out programs and things like this, but want some ideas from you on how I can leverage being in close quarters with the successful people in my business.

Daphne

Dear Daphne,

I love your attitude. You don't come across as entitled and are very smart to volunteer for our incredible Film Festival. And, super smart for majoring in Literature. You will always have a lot to think about and talk about.

I'm not sure what the benefits are for your volunteer role, but see if you can watch some of the films and mingle at the receptions. If that isn't possible in your volunteer job, spend the money and expand your access when you are free.

The Beaufort International Film Festival is a wonderful forum for meeting people in the business. Don't be shy. If you see someone with whom you would like to talk, wiggle into the conversation, if you can't just walk up to them alone, compliment their work with a remark about something specific, and ask an intelligent question about it. If you get a conversation going, just keep probing, listening, and asking. Whatever you do, do not hit them up for an interview or a job.

You will make an impression if you show true and intelligent interest in them and their work, and, if you feel that it wouldn't be awkward, you can end your conversation by handing them your card (get one if you don't have one and put your picture on it) and say, "I loved our conversation. I know how in demand you are and I don't want to monopolize your time or make this about me, but I would love to reach out to you for some advice when you are waiting for a

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plane or sitting at the DMV and have a few spare minutes.” (I don’t believe in memorizing for conversation’s sake, but memorize this, or something like this, so it flows right off your tongue.”)

The person may even respond enthusiastically at that moment, and you can continue your conversation. Watch very carefully to be certain you aren’t keeping them from circulating, and move on by saying that you know other people are dying to talk to them, too.

So, you might say to me, “OMG, this will be in the *Lowcountry Weekly* and everyone will be saying the same thing!” No they won’t. Few people will have the courage, the discipline, and the humility to put this into place. And, you can always use different words to get the same result.

One last suggestion: seek out someone who does not look thrilled about the networking part of his or her career. Many times brilliant and creative people are introverted or shy. Find that person and lighten their load while you establish a useful relationship.

Good luck. See you on the Silver Screen!

Best,

Aunt Bossy