

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

The Value-Pricing Playbook

Bill by the hour, and AI cuts your invoice the moment it cuts your hours. Here's how to price the outcome instead.

INTRODUCTION

The Hourly Trap

If you bill by the hour and AI helps you finish a project in 6 hours instead of 15, you didn't get a raise. You got a pay cut, for doing the same job better and faster. This is the quiet math freelancers run into the moment AI actually starts working: the more efficient you get, the less an hourly rate pays you, right when your actual value to the client went up, not down.

The fix isn't working slower to protect your invoice, and it isn't feeling guilty for using the tools well. It's changing what you're charging for. A client never actually wanted your hours, they wanted the result those hours produced. Price the result, and speed becomes your margin instead of your penalty.

SECTION 1

Pricing the Outcome, Not the Hours

Value pricing means setting a fee based on what the outcome is worth to the client, not on how long it takes you to produce it. It sounds abstract until you break it into 3 concrete steps.

THREE STEPS TO A VALUE-BASED QUOTE

Name the outcome, specifically. Not "a website" but "a site that converts visitors into booked calls." Not "social posts" but "a content system that keeps a pipeline warm without you writing from scratch every week." The outcome is what you're actually selling.

Ask what that outcome is worth to them. A client who says a redesigned funnel needs to generate 10 more bookings a month has just told you the ceiling of what they'll pay, ask this question directly, in a discovery call, before you quote anything.

Price below that ceiling, above your time-based floor. Your time-based rate is the minimum you'd need regardless, use it as a private floor, never as the quote itself. The client's stated value is your ceiling. Price somewhere that comfortably clears the floor and still reads as a fair deal against the ceiling.

SECTION 2

The 10-80-10 Payment Structure

Value pricing solves what you charge. This solves how you collect it, and it matters more now than before AI, because faster delivery means faster revision requests too, and a payment structure that doesn't account for that quietly erodes the margin you just fought to price in.

THE SPLIT · 10 / 80 / 10

OBJECTIVE 10% deposit before work starts. This isn't about cash flow alone, it filters out clients who aren't serious before you've spent a single AI-accelerated hour on their project.

METRIC 80% at delivery of the agreed outcome. Due on delivery, not on "final approval," which can otherwise stretch indefinitely once revisions are easy to request.

BOUNDARY 10% after one defined revision round, with a hard boundary: the scope and revision count agreed in writing before work starts, not renegotiated once AI has made changes feel free to ask for.

That last 10% is doing real work. It's small enough that a client won't hold the project hostage over it, and it's exactly the leverage you need to keep a fast AI-assisted workflow from quietly turning into unlimited free revisions.

PROMPT · TURN A PAST PROJECT INTO A VALUE QUOTE

Here's a project I recently completed and how long it took me: [describe]. Help me reframe the pitch around the outcome the client actually got, not the hours it took, and draft 2 price points, one anchored to a conservative estimate of that outcome's value, one to an ambitious one.

Use this on your next 3 quotes before you fully trust it, comparing what a value quote would have been against what you actually charged hourly is the fastest way to see the gap for yourself.

*AI didn't shrink your value. It shrank the hours it takes to deliver it.
Keep billing by the hour, and every efficiency gain becomes a pay cut.
Price the outcome, and it becomes a raise you gave yourself.*

**Follow Martina La Porta for more on navigating an AI-era career,
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