



Simple. Direct. Magic.

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You Charge How Much?

Here is an interesting story I heard not too very long ago: a fellow magician was relating a phone call he received from a potential client. This particular person was looking for a magician to entertain in the lobby of a newly opened business as part of a grand opening celebration. The job would have required over one hour of travel time (one way), a few hours of entertaining walk-in customers, and then another one hour of travel time home.

The magician quoted his fee. The potential client was surprised that he would not just take the job “for free.” When he made his case for assessing a charge for his time the client asked if he knew of any high school kids interested in magic who would be willing to take on the job at no charge. He politely ended the conversation. I cannot say that I blame him.

Every once in a while we magicians find ourselves speaking with someone who believes that all it takes to become a magician is a deck of cards and a book on card magic from the local *Barnes and Noble*. If it were it only that easy. That is roughly akin to teaching someone to play the flute by simply saying “you just blow on this end and press your fingers on these little key thingys.”

I am thankful that I have never had an experience like the one recounted above. But I am aware that because magic (as an entertainment option) is most often thought of as a childish indulgence such as the birthday party it can be difficult to convince a corporate client (or the occasional parent planning a kid birthday party) that we are worth the fees that we charge.

If a potential client were to question the fees I charge I would be hard pressed to not bring them up to speed on the endless hours of practice, the research and

development, all the reading and studying that goes into preparing oneself to stand before a crowd of strangers and perform magic. Unlike the stand-up comic who only has to deliver lines, the magician must deliver the lines, keep track of props and their location, remember the names of audience members, be thinking several steps ahead at all times, and about another million things all at the same time. And we love it. It is what makes performing magic challenging and exciting. And when it is done well it appears fluid and relaxed and entertaining and fun. How could anyone actually be paid for something like that? After all, it looks so easy. Anyone could do it! Well, anyone can do it. With the requisite amount of practice and study of course. And oh yes...money. Oh right, I forgot to mention the monetary investment we make in pursuing our craft.

If my fee falls outside of someone's budget constraints I understand. No problem. But I do have a problem with someone questioning and diminishing the value of my service because they have a diminished view of what it is that I do. Even if they eventually agree to my fee I believe that it would be a mistake to work for them simply because they have made it clear that they do not place a value on the service provided.

Magic, when presented well, becomes more than a puzzle in need of a solution. It can become an emotional experience, one that will be remembered and quite possibly cherished for a long time afterward. How much is that worth?