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## Top 18 Strategies and Tactics To Get stuff Free or Massive Discounts

by [Chris](#) on [AUGUST 14, 2012](#) in [PRODUCTION](#)

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I was speaking with a filmmaker yesterday who said 'I really need to get you to help me get what I need as you seem to always get a discount...' That launched me into a quick breakdown into how to get stuff free.

### 1. Ask

Most people don't ask for help. Don't assume the answer will be YES or NO. Ask.

### 2. Ask in a different way



Pick up the phone, hand write a letter, do anything to avoid just sending an email. If you do need to send an email, make sure you include all your contact details (phone, email, website etc.). You would be amazed how few people have an email footer with their contact details. Do you? If you don't go and fix this now. Nothing is more enraging than wanting to help but not being able to do so as the person can't even be bothered to communicate professionally.

### 3. Make the offer clear and short

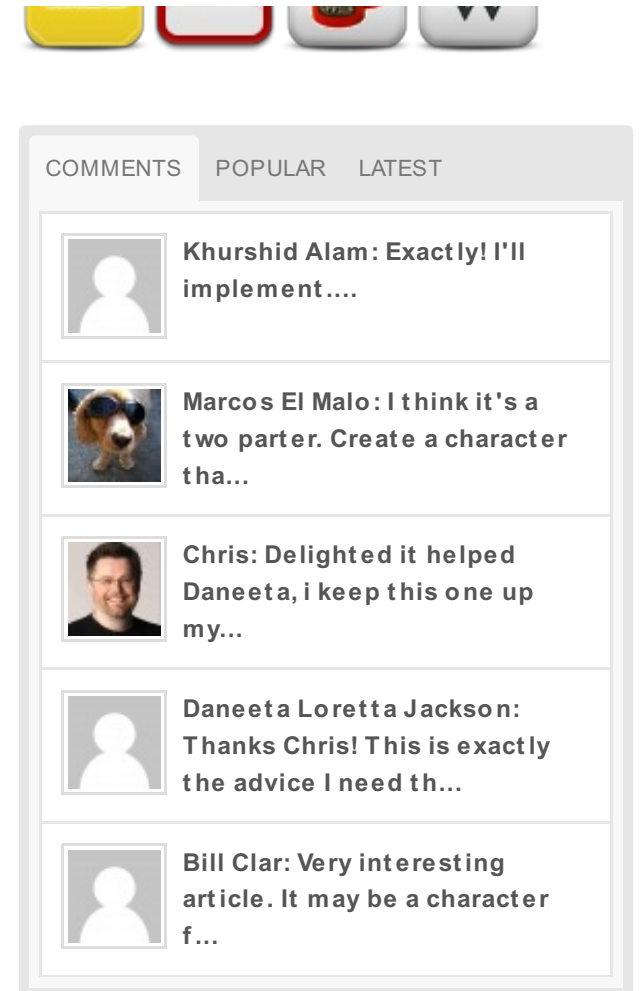
No-one has time to read lengthy communications, watch clips or browse your site. So keep it short and straight. When asking for help, set a little context (who you are and why you need help – and when I say a little, I mean a little, not some self aggrandising or begging opus). Then make the request and explain what you will do in return. Again, short and sweet. Thank them for their time and make it easy for them to come back to you, even if it is to say no. Because when people write back and say no, they are letting you know they care enough to respond – that door is still open for future possibilities, and now you have a relationship.

### 4. Don't be arrogant or 'entitled'

No-one, and I mean no-one owes you. So don't go into any situation with an attitude of entitlement. This above all things turns people off. You'd be amazed at how often I get emails saying 'How do I fund my film? The script is amazing and it will make millions... here is my phone number, call me'. Really? In my busy day when I don't have time to get to my stuff, you think I would respond to that vague and self important email? And often, these kind of newbie emails come from gmail or hotmail accounts, telling me this is an individual who hasn't even setup a domain identity for themselves yet. Pass.

### 5. Nothing in life is free

Understand that no-one will give you anything free. There is always a transaction. Even if that transaction is 'I will give you it free if...you make me feel good...' or 'you owe me a favour'. This is not free. It's a transaction. Once you understand the transaction, you



can adjust your request to match it. Above all, remember that in making your request you are asking the reader or listener TO MAKE AN INVESTMENT OF THEIR VERY VALUABLE TIME. Respect this.

## 6. Remove the emotion

Unless you have a pre-existing relationship, no-one cares about how much pain and suffering you have been through, or will go through. So don't pitch it as such. You can re-tool pitiful begging phrases with inspirational challenging phrases, but on the whole, it's best to keep the offer completely transactional. 'I will do this if you will do that'. No manipulative emotional words, just positive outlook.

## 7. Try and get a convincer

A convincer is something that tells the reader or listener that you are not crazy. Having an agent for a writer is a convincer. Having a named actor signed to your film is a convincer. Winning a BAFTA, an Oscar, Cannes, Sundance or Berlin are convincers. Getting a named producer to mentor you is a convincer. Don't blag that you have a convincer if you do not (and don't oversell something as a convincer that isn't – 'a top producer read my script and liked it' for instance), always be honest and straight.

## 8. Make the deal clear

When you ask for something free or heavily discounted, the deal is bound by terms and conditions. Some are implied, some are explicit. The broad explicit ones need to be kept clear and simple. I often bullet point my requests. I can do these 3 things for you – 1, 2 and 3 – and in return it would mean so much to us all if you could do this 1 thing. Clear, simple, concise.

## 9. Understand THEIR costs and barriers

If you know something costs £100 to the consumer (that's you) but you can figure out that to the supplier it costs £25 (that's them), offer to pay £25, and pay it upfront. People will help much more easily if all they are giving you is time and a little lost profit. Once it starts to cost them THEIR money, good will evaporates very quickly. Understanding their needs will help you make a clear proposal.



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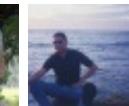
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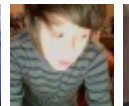
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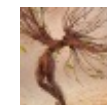
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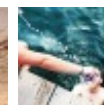
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## 10. Understand they have probably been burned

Everyone and their brother is now making a film, so while you may still come across people who have not had their fingers burned in the past by film folk, you should understand that filmmakers who came before you probably screwed things up for you. Don't screw it up for the filmmakers who may follow you. Deliver on your promises.

## 11. Offer money upfront

I once spoke with a camera hire company who bemoaned – 'you give them a great discount, they then complain, the kit comes back damaged, and then they don't pay their bill and we have to spend months chasing'. Don't do this. You are screwing it up for yourself and those who follow. Pay upfront. You will get an even bigger discount for paying upfront. If you can't pay upfront, you don't have the money in the first place and you should not be entering into an agreement. Raise your money then hire the kit.

## 12. Remove technical barriers

When making a request, you'd be amazed at how many people will say 'watch my film', 'read my script' or 'download this thing here...' These are all additional clicks (not good) AND assume technical competence. Make it easy for people to look at your stuff. So compress that PDF so it's not a massive email attachment. Send a Word.DOC file and not a WORD.DOCX file. Send a PDF of your script and not an FDR Final Draft file. People want one just click and for it to work right away. If it doesn't, you will probably be deleted.

## 13. Don't assume people know you or your project

You'd be amazed how often I get a call or email saying 'Hey it's Bill here, let's chat about my film, it's going to be great'. Sorry Bill I don't know who you are and frankly, I care even less than I did before you left the message now! Be humble and assume people have no idea who you are, even if you have met many times. When you make the other person struggle to remember who you are, the social etiquette means they must apologise for not recalling you. And making a person feel stupid is never a good way to start a conversation about asking for help. Begin each communication with a simple 'Hi it's Jane here, remember we met at XXX, I am the girl who XXX'... And don't

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take it personally if they don't recall you. Ego also kills relationships.

#### **14. Make it easy to say yes**

If you make your proposition easy to say yes to, there is a high likelihood that you will get what you want, and also get it immediately. So consider everything BEFORE you make the request.

#### **15. If they say no**

Be humble and polite and thank them. They have already made a small investment by saying no and not just binning your proposition.

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## 16. If you hear nothing

Understand it's not personal. They are likely busy and inundated with requests. Understand their lack of engagement is also likely to be YOUR FAULT. Your proposition probably failed because it was unclear, too long, too emotional, unprofessional, etc etc. Re-read the above, these will probably be the real reasons you failed. Retool your proposition and try again, but NEVER be a pest. Remember, people have busy lives and often things just fall through the cracks.

## 17. Over deliver

If you are successful in your request, do more than you originally offered. This will create good will and keep that door open for you to return to that relationship in the future.

## 18. Don't blag the blaggers

We have all been there. We have all written those letters, emails and made those calls. We have all tried those cunning lines that you came up with yesterday. If you try and blag someone who has been blagging for twenty years, they will spot you within your first few words. Don't do it. Be straight talking, honest and authentically enthusiastic.

**Onwards and upwards!**

**Chris Jones**

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