Now that you’ve pitched the job, gotten the proposal out, worked out pricing, and won the job because you are such a great company, with values and a vision aligned with the work you do, it is time to start the job. This means you need to get the client to sign something.

There are essentially three ways to do this:

1. a SOW, which is a job contract for a specific job
2. a master services agreement (MSA), which is a master document between you and a client in which you agree to general terms for all jobs, so each additional job may be started without a lengthy negotiation of terms and conditions
3. an in-production report (in-pro), also called a change order, which changes the terms of an existing job

Always get something signed for every job, no exceptions. Do this, preferably, before you start. There will be times with trusted clients when you start without getting something signed, but these times should be rare, and you should still get something signed ASAP. Don’t do this for new clients.

**STATEMENTS OF WORK**

Our SOWs had the following sections:

- Project Description: This is a brief, layperson’s description of the project. It is not overly technical, just a brief synopsis of what you’re doing and what the goals are.
- Project Scope: This is where you get detailed. Make sure this is explicit and clear. What are you doing in this job? Are there things you are definitely not doing, or are not included in the cost? This is
not the time to fudge things. If you’re not including photography, but are worried the client still might think you are, even though you’ve said you’re not a million times, make it clear, here, that you are not including photography. If they only get three rounds of revisions on the comps before you need to charge them more, say so. The number of things that can go wrong on a project is infinite, and through the years you will find yourself adding more and more details as you learn where common areas of confusion are for your clients. Our scope section was a hybrid of the specific work being done for this job, and a laundry list of problem areas we’d encountered before.

• Team Organization: This is where you list the staff assigned to the project. Include their names and roles. If required, include the number of hours or percent weekly allocations. We generally bid our projects out on a flat fee, so we didn’t include hours, but often the client required it. We usually did this in terms of full-time equivalents, or FTEs. If a person’s on a job for half the week, that is 1/2 FTE. If you know the specific person, include his or her name and role. If you only know the role, list that. Work out how you’re going to present this with your client beforehand, so it knows what to expect here.

• Technical Considerations: I find that a detailed technical considerations section in an SOW is a necessity for any job that requires coding. It should explicitly address any potential areas of confusion.

• Project Timeline: This lays out the timing of the project and the due date, or duration. Some of our SOWs say that the detailed timeline will come later, by a certain date. This is especially true on larger projects. It is also vital to mention that the timing is contingent upon the timely signing of the SOW. It can be frustrating watching a client not sign the SOW and still expect the project to be done the next week.

• Project Costs: This is the amount of money the project costs and the payment terms. We often include a table of payment due dates and amounts. Also include your company’s accounts receivable information, mailing address, and bank wiring information.

• Terms and Conditions: This is the legalese that defines the contract. We’ll talk about this in a moment.