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you give what you get. For me, I make the call on a case by case basis. It depends on the question – can I answer it quickly? It depends on the person asking – are they really just asking that one quick question, or are they coming back with a wall of text?

Stacy Kildal • May. 27, 2014

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"I'd like to pick your brain."

"I just have a quick question."

"Can I buy you lunch? I'm interested in your suggestions."

Anyone that's done consulting work has heard these, probably many, *many* times. It's a tough call to make, and there are many differing opinions on how to handle them.

Some people will tell you to never give away anything for free. Some will tell you that you give what you get. For me, I make the call on a case by case basis. It depends on the question – can I answer it quickly? It depends on the person asking – are they

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I honestly don't mind helping out a small business owner that emails me a question to ask something simple like what the best QuickBooks Online add on for manufacturing inventory would be (ExactOnline, for the record), or what project management add-ons I like (WorkETC and Mavenlink).

But if someone is emailing to ask me how to set up a work around for price levels in QuickBooks Online, this definitely falls under paid consulting. It's not something that I am even remotely able to answer to anyone's satisfaction in one email.

At times, these people take offense when my admin contacts them to let them know that their inquiry requires a paid consulting time. I always wonder if they would spend that much unbillable hours with their customers? Or offer free products?

You'll run into this – we still have small businesses that think when we call them to find out what services they'll need, they're expecting us to tell them exactly how to do all of it, and get angry that we're not. These are people that don't' value our time, our experience, our knowledge, our training, our innovation.

To this I say: let them be angry. These are people that we probably don't want to work with anyway.

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