

# Protracted parsimony

I had an e-mail the other day from a journalistic friend. Did I have any recent experiences that I'd like to share about clients needing to reduce project budgets in these straitened times (© John Bullock, 2009) and did I have any tips on how to achieve said things?

I stared at the screen. There was something wrong here, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. I didn't reply and decided to go away for a bit of mulling. The Dodger and I strolled over hill and dale in search of the key to this message that, with every step, was taking on greater and greater significance for me. Then it came to me. I dashed back to the computer, sought out the message and pressed Delete.

Because the message inside the message – the subtle subliminal subtext, if you will – lay in the suggestion implicit in the question: that the client had always had more money to spend than I'd ever given them credit for and that, as a consequence, I've been producing lower-priced schemes than I could have got away with. Damn, damn, damn.



Oh, what fun we had when the walls had to be chased out again after the decorating was all complete”

Many a time and oft, I've looked at photographs in this very organ and thought, “blimey, I wish I had clients with that kind of budget”. Of course, now I realise that they had that kind of money all along, and it's only now in these straitened times (© John Bullock, 2009) that they really need to look to their bottom line.

And now I'm in a greater bind because I've assumed that lighting designers have always been there to give value for money and that all those little tricks and feints and sleights-of-hand that we know to keep specification costs down have been part of the day-to-day business of consultancy. Oh, what a fool I've been!

But when I think back over some client decisions, it all starts to make sense.

The client who bubbled at the price of a special lantern, then took umbrage with me and went off and got it made himself – at three times the price I quoted him.

Querying the cost of a dimmer switch, then spending silly money to get a rocker switch painted in a special decorator finish, better to match the wall finish, apparently.

Not trusting the lighting designer to source a decorative fitting, preferring to entrust the interior designer with the job – with hilarious consequence.

And how about leaving the electrical design to the contractors rather than spend money on a consulting engineer – oh, what fun we had when the walls had to be chased out again after the decorating was all complete.

Yes, the money was always there. It's just been me being daft enough not to see the signs.

**John Bullock**

