

## Is That Business Right for You?



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Remember when you heard about a prospective customer and could not wait to set-up an appointment and make an effort to add them to your client list. You schedule a time to meet, bring your marketing materials and proceed to sell yourself and your services. You experience the excitement of finalizing the deal and making the sale! You think you have worked out a positive arrangement for the client and your company, and you feel pleased with your accomplishments.

As time goes on, you notice things are not proceeding as you had envisioned. The client becomes demanding, expecting you to be available at any given moment. As you are in the service business, you are willing to perform whatever tasks are asked of you regardless of the extra hours. It does not take long to realize that this client is requiring so much, you are being forced to put your other clients on the back burner. What do you do?

In order to prevent these problems, it is important to be concerned with areas outlined below.

- *Determine your client's goals and objectives and discuss expectations.*

Ask questions. Are the client's expectations realistic based upon your experience? Tell the client how their needs will be addressed.

- *Establish working guidelines and timelines with your client.*

Discuss the guidelines and present a timeline for the client's review and then periodically review it together.

- *Detail all the services you are to provide in the contract.*

Add a clause that states additional projects will be priced as requested.

- *Determine the means of communication that work best.*

Some clients prefer to use e-mail as they think that you sit in front of your computer for a good portion of the day waiting to hear from them and you will be able to respond to them immediately. If you do not, they can become antagonistic.

- *Ask for one overall client contact.*  
If the client organization has more than one person you are dealing with, set the record straight as to whom you are accountable. Do not let their "organization's politics" place you in the middle.

- *Have a plan.*  
Schedule follow-up meetings and reports.

- *Keep a log of your work hours.*  
Are you receiving a fair payment for the work involved? You may find that the demands of a client are preventing you from giving quality performance to other clients and no time to go out and solicit more business.

In the long run, if you find that you have a client that is not right for your company, you need to re-evaluate and determine whether you should continue with them as your business partner.

Remember that success is not based on the number of clients you have. Instead, it is making sure that the business arrangement works for both you and your client.

Finally, letting go of a piece of business that does not fit into your client base can feel as good as making the sale. As the Kenny Rogers song goes, "You gotta know when to hold them and know when to fold them".