

Sacking A Client
by Shannon Warren for The Journal Record,
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Painful to the pocketbook as it may be, there are times when it becomes necessary to fire a client. Before doing so, ask a few questions:

- **Are you ticked off?** If yes, then take a deep breath (or two). Write down what's bugging you and consult an objective, confidential advisor to ensure this impulse is not just an ego trip.
- **Still mad?** There are some sound reasons to sack a client:
 - **Unethical demands.** Don't get dragged down the tubes by someone who asks you to cheat. No amount of money is worth the sacrifice of one's honor or reputation. Besides, successful companies play by the rules and tend to be profitable over the long haul. They're the keepers.
 - **Unresponsiveness.** These are the clients who consistently fail to provide reliable information within deadlines, putting your project on indefinite hold and, consequently, delay paying the fees due. Or, their last-minute decisions cause too many stressful overnights to meet commitments. Likewise, they consistently ignore your advice and head for troubled waters anyway.
 - **Unrealistic expectations.** If the client is sucking your creative juices dry, depleting profit margins or causing an inordinate amount of resources to keep them happy, then it is probably time to consider investing in other patrons who are more collaborative and ultimately rewarding.
 - **Abuse.** While not always recognizable from the get-go, seriously unstable individuals need to be cut loose immediately. Ditto for those who abuse you or your team with sexual come-ons, ethnic slurs or old-fashioned bullying.

While it may cost a bit in fees, consulting with an attorney in these situations is strongly advised in order to avoid winding up on the wrong end of a breach of contract lawsuit. At the same time, don't match their misbehavior by reacting like a jerk:

- **Be honest, but not brutal.** If you didn't like working with them, suggest that you've been unable to find a way to work together that is mutually beneficial, so it is best to discontinue the relationship.
- **Don't leave them in the lurch.** Except in the case of abuse, try to refer the client to a resource that better fits their needs and personality. In doing so, maintain a firm but reasonable time frame for your departure.

Of course, the best strategy is to thoroughly define expectations and get better acquainted with the client from the start.

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