Cheatography

Signs of a Problem Client Cheat Sheet

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Introduction

It's easy to recognise a problem client once you're working for them, but can you spot one before you start? Here are signs that should set alarms ringing before any contracts are signed…

http://www.sitepoint.com/12-signs-of-problem-clients/

Signs 1-6

1. Their first question: "what do you charge?"

Clients are cost-conscious, but how can you provide a quote without knowing what it involves? Most clients understand this, but the problem client wants a number and they won't be happy if your final estimate exceeds it.

2. Incessant meetings

The problem client will demand constant attention prior to "starting". Although you should help clients understand your services, some will use you as a general IT help-desk. You'll be fixing their laptop before you know it.

3. Horror stories

Problem clients have a selection of stories about inadequacies, issues and struggles they've experienced with other suppliers. Make sure your business isn't their next target.

4. Too many business interests

Entrepreneurs juggle business ideas. That's healthy, but the problem client will have too many. They could lose interest and move on to their next big thing leaving you with their half-finished project and no payment.

5. Vague specifications

Clients should be experts in their field and have some idea about their requirements and budgets. Problem clients won't. Worse are those with "revolutionary" ideas. They cannot reveal their secret details but still need a quote. Be prepared for lengthy legal negotiations and NDAs to discover they want a Twitter clone.

6. Moving targets

Projects evolve naturally but some clients won't just move goalposts — they change the game. If it occurs frequently you know it won't stop.

Problem Clients



Signs 7-12

7. Poor recall

Their version of agreements is always different to yours? Strangely, it's always in their favor?

8. They've got a mate…

A friend of a friend has a mate down the pub. He can complete this project in an afternoon for $150. Wish them luck as you leave!

9. Continual haggling

Be on guard when you hear "but we're only a small company" or "we cannot pay your rates". Their company won't be smaller than yours. Never haggle: it devalues your service and they will just ask for further reductions. It's easy to slash costs — simply cut project features.

10. Unreasonable conditions

The client is happy to pay once they're #1 in Google for "software". Or perhaps they'll pay a percentage of profits? No one offers profit sharing if they believe their business will be a success.

11. It'll be great for your business

The classic comment: "Think about the publicity! It'll be great on your portfolio! I'll tell everyone about you! If anything, you should pay me for the privilege of working on it!"

Your best response: "Great! Give me your <products>. I'll use them every day and tell everyone. Think about the publicity. You should pay me to have them!"

12. They know your job better than you

Web development's easy! You just type and add pictures. Anyone can do that. If that's the case, the client can complete the project themselves. You could even offer a free appraisal of their handiwork — it won't take long.

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