

How I deal with BAD clients and WIN every time

The project is done, and the files are sent to the client, but there is no response. The client is gone in the wind with your hard work, and you haven't been paid.

What should you do, and how should you prepare for this kind of situation?

There isn't a universal way to detect bad clients upfront, but I hope these tips can help you spot them early on.

First, I'll show you several types of bad clients and, later, how I deal with them.

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Anyone who has been a freelancer for any length of time has had a client who is more difficult than most, me included.

I'm the number-one freelancer on the world's biggest freelancing platform, Freelancer.com. I own a successful tech agency, and I've worked with clients from all over the world.

The clients could be inconsistent, too critical, demanding, or just impossible to please. All of this is normal, and you need to get used to it if you want to excel in freelancing.

I'll show you later how I find clients and contractors, but for now, let's see what kinds of clients you could encounter and how to deal with them.

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First on my list are explorers or so-called "window shoppers." They have been enquiring about jobs for weeks and constantly trying to lower prices.

They are probably talking with other freelancers and looking for someone to offer them something at a discount or maybe even for free.

To handle them, set higher initial rates for wiggle room or clarify that your prices are firm.

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The unrealistic and super-demanding client overloads you with assignments quickly and expects a constant, high-quality level of work.

These clients can make you feel exhausted, make you late with assignments, and eventually regret taking on that job. This leads to frustration, bad reviews, and contract termination.

You can spot this type of client early on because they expect you to be available 24/7, constantly adding extra tasks outside your contract and shortening the time you need to complete those tasks.

The key is to manage their expectations realistically and refuse work that cannot be completed to high standards. Gather detailed information upfront and set clear limits on the number of revisions.

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For a project to succeed, you must have an open line of communication with the client. We usually update our clients weekly or bi-weekly. This is essential when working on complicated projects, verifying new designs, etc.

So, if we are stuck and don't know how to proceed, the project will drag on and disrupt our schedule. Luckily, you can spot non-communicators or slow-communicators early on because their communication is slow right from the start.

Don't get me wrong; they don't want to take advantage of you; they are just unorganized, too involved in other projects, or lazy.

Whatever the cause of their poor communication is, try to avoid them in any way you can.

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At first, they seem helpful, and constructive feedback helps you with the job. But later on, you will notice that they are managing you and becoming a boss you don't want to have. After all, you became self-employed because you wanted to be your own boss, right? I call them controlling and overcomplicating clients.

This could lead to a suffocating and toxic relationship that will lead to constant peering over your shoulder.

Look out for these red flags: constantly questioning your tasks, overcomplicating even the most straightforward projects, and constant and excessive requests for updates.

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Not getting paid for work feels very personal to me. I've invested my time, experience, and personal touch, and for that, I expect to be paid. Unfortunately, the freeloaders or non-payers are everywhere around us.

The first and biggest red flag is that they refuse to sign contracts. They keep asking you to lower your rates or work for free and want to determine how many hours you should work.

But the most obvious sign is threatening not to pay you if you don't do something or you are late with your tasks.

This obviously won't work for them on freelancing platforms where they must put the money in Escrow. But if somebody approaches you on, let's say, Freelancer with a message containing phones or emails that you should contact in order to get a job, that is a big red flag. Never do that; you could get yourself in a lot of trouble.

Another red flag is refusing to discuss the budget and requiring a free trial work that will take days to complete.

Insisting on a contract, no matter how easy the job seems, and proposing to share the finished job with a watermark or in low resolution until you get paid will immediately flush out the non-payers.

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In this case of non-reliable payers, you will get paid, but after reminding them several times that it is time to pay. This is exhausting and stressful, so it's best to avoid these types of clients altogether as soon as you encounter one.

You can also hear excuses that they don't have the money to pay you now but will have it soon or try to guilt trip you by saying that the contractor hasn't paid them either.

That doesn't concern you; you have your own bills to pay, and they should approach you with an established budget.

If your client is late with their payment, the first step is to stop working for them.

That might sound like a bold step, but if you're facing a potentially non-paying client, it could prevent you from losing even more time and even more money.

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Let's talk about five steps that help me successfully avoid these traps and win every time.

1.

The first and most important step is to create a detailed contract. Hopefully, you'll never have to take legal action, but if you need to hire a lawyer or a collection agency, the contract will be extremely helpful.

2.

Establishing communication goals before you begin your work can prevent you from losing touch with the client and make yourself high on their list of priorities if they are working with many freelancers simultaneously.

I advise allowing the client to choose their preferred check-in communication method and follow up as planned.

3.

One of the best ways to keep everything in check is to invite your client to a project management app, where all the tasks are listed and where the client can follow up on completed tasks and the hours logged in.

If a client agrees to this, everything will almost go smoother.

4.

If you take on large projects, requesting a deposit is often a good idea, especially from first-time clients. Don't be afraid of doing that because it can mitigate any losses you face from an unpaid invoice. Of course, if clients don't know you, this might raise concerns about being scammed.

One way to put clients at ease is to provide testimonials, references, and a portfolio of previous work that shows your integrity and skill.

If a client still feels uncomfortable paying a deposit, you can also offer them the option of milestone payments.

This not only helps you avoid large losses from unpaid invoices but also creates better cash flow.

5.

Step number five is to make payment easy with professional invoices. If clients can quickly pay your invoice, there's less chance it will fall to the bottom of their to-do list.

Also, automated, templated reminders for an unpaid invoice will notify your client that they need to pay without the personal element of writing the "you still haven't paid me yet" email.

Instead of giving clients generous terms, set shorter payment terms. If your invoice states that clients have a week to pay, they'll be more motivated to complete the payment than if the terms are a month.

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What should you do if the client is gone with your work and you haven't been paid?

First of all, It is hard to do anything if you don't have a contract or any proof of work.

If you get to the point where your own efforts aren't bearing fruit and you don't want to go to court with a client or bring a collection agency into the equation, walking away can be a smart decision.

It's important to balance your efforts to get paid with your time and emotional well-being. It is better to try and find another client rather than stress yourself out with inconsiderate people.

Sometimes, people are just rude without reason - and the best way to deal with those kinds of people is to move on and be a better person.

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Here is a video that will help you find good clients. I explain in detail how I got a global superstar Rita Ora to be my client.

If you need help scaling up your freelancing business and finding a workforce, check out my video about dropservicing.

See you in the next one.