

**Bad Client, No Biscuit: Dealing with Difficult Clients**  
By Kristin Morrison ~ San Rafael, California

**One of the biggest business epiphanies I've had happened a few years ago and completely changed my life. Let me share it with you...**

**I'd had a challenging phone interaction with a person who was the poster child for being a Bad Client. She was demanding, nit-picky with my staff, cheap (she had a huge fit each time I raised my prices) and was generally unhappy about the service we provided no matter how much we bent over backward to help her. This challenging phone conversation with her was one of the many I'd had with her over the years of working with her and like all the others, it left me feeling socked in the stomach and depleted for hours afterward. I realized that nothing we could do would make her happy and that left me feeling very confused about what to do next.**

**Before I became a pet sitter and a business coach for pet sitters, I worked in the restaurant business where the old adage is: The Customer is Always Right.**

**This adage has served me well in my pet sitting business because it's helped me cultivate stellar customer service and instilled in me loving kindness toward my clients even when I'm grouchy and don't feel like being loving and kind. My clients' well-being is very important to me as is my commitment to providing them with the best pet sitting and dog walking service that I possibly can.**

**However, after having this phone interaction with this Bad Client, I realized that *5% of my energy was going to 95% of my 'well-behaved' clients and 95% of my energy was going to the 5% handful of really difficult, demanding, and nit-picky Bad Clients that I had.***

**Read that again, please. Let it really sink in and see how that percentage applies to your business...**

**Whew. That epiphany changed the way I looked at my clients from then on.**

**With this lightning bolt of awareness, came the realization that I could actually do something about the quality of my business relationships. Here I was simply accepting that having bad clients was something every business must deal with and even cater to ('the customer is always right' adage) but what if this way of thinking was untrue?**

**Because dealing with the handful of difficult clients was taking up so much of my time and energy (and even causing me to spend less time with the 95% of clients who were easy to work with) I decided to do some Spring cleaning of my client list and let the Bad Clients go.**

**Here's what I did and how I did it:**

**1. I looked at my client list with honest eyes and wrote down who the difficult clients were.** As I wrote down the difficult client names I would find myself rationalizing: 'Well, this one isn't so bad, they pay us \$\_\_\_\_ a month and the work really isn't that hard.' I had to keep bringing myself back to "Does having interactions with this client deplete me and cause me a lot of stress?" If so, they went on the list, despite my money rationalizations.

**2. After writing down the 'difficult client' names, I then examined whether the money they were paying us was worth the stress they were causing to me and my staff.** Have you heard the term 'golden handcuffs'? This term applies to what having a well-paying difficult client is like. I had to look at how much having peace in my business was worth to me and if I was ready to commit to that I had to let the truly difficult clients go. I also realized that I wanted -and was committed to- 100% of my client base to be clients I enjoyed caring for and working with.

**3. Once I decided that having a peaceful business and harmonious client relationships was worth more to me than all the money in the world I was ready to take action.** I began to realize that I was spending a lot of money on 'self care' (massage, etc.) because I was needing to reward myself after feeling emotionally beat up by certain Bad Clients. So here I was actually spending the money that I'd made from them to take care of myself because of my depleting interactions with them! Crazy, I know, and I imagine you know what I'm talking about here if you have any Bad Clients.

I began the process of calling the difficult clients and letting them know that we were no longer able to provide service for them. When they asked why

I'd say that 'I just didn't think our service was a 'fit' for what they were looking for'.

Some clients got angry that we were firing them. I stayed strong in the occasional emotional outburst from these clients because I'd come to the firm resolution that my having a peaceful business was priceless. This made it easier for me to stand behind my "We aren't the right fit for what you are looking for." Also I was aware that the emotional outbursts from these clients were the last ones I'd have with them and that made it much easier for my remaining detached! I can survive anything if I know it has an ending.

**4. Realizing the truth of 'one door closing is another one opening'.** As I weeded out my Bad Clients an amazing thing happened: I began to make even more money than when I'd had the Bad Clients and with less stress.

Within a couple of weeks of letting the Bad Clients go, new Good Clients 'magically' started calling and because I had more energy to deal with them (since I wasn't depleted from 95% of my energy going to 'bad clients') I was quick to respond to new client calls, happy to be on the phone with those clients, and eager to take care of their pet care needs.

**5. Being vigilant about not taking on any new Bad Clients.** I developed an 'intuitive ear' for not taking on any new Bad Clients. I hear them coming from a mile away now! I can hear the whine in their voice and I listen when they say they've gone through 5 pet sitters and haven't been happy with anyone. This is not the kind of new client I want.

I realize that due to my resolve not to take on Bad Clients, I occasionally may let some potential good clients slip through my fingers but I tell you what: I'd rather let that happen than take on another draining Bad Client.

**I wish you courage in letting the bad clients go and having 100% of your energy be used toward caring for your Good Clients.**

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