Understanding and Working with Clients

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What is a Client?

- Client
  - The party for which professional services are rendered
  - A customer or patron: clients of a hotel
  - A person using the services of an agency
  - One that depends on the protection of another
What Else is a Client?

• Source of future business?
• Someone who may recommend you to others (or not recommend you)?
• A partner?
• A friend?
Who Has Clients?

- Attorneys
- Engineers
- Financial partners
- Fast food employees
- Hotel staff
- Parents
- All of us
Client Expectations

• Expectations about service
• Expectations about schedule
• Expectations about results
• Expectations about costs
• Expectations about communication
• Expectations about always being there
Working with Clients

• Have a clear understanding of your clients’ requirements/expectations and confirm in writing. Your services should follow the agreed upon scope, schedule and pricing.

• Have a clear understanding of what your client is to provide, interim approvals and the time needed for such approvals.
Working with Clients

• Keep your clients fully informed
  – Regularly update your clients to maintain a mutual understanding and progress of the services being provided.
  – Return phone calls and emails promptly- even if you can’t completely answer questions immediately, acknowledge receipt
Working with Clients

• Use proper mode of communication
  – Face to face
  – Telephone
  – Emails
  – Texting
Working with Clients

• Listen, Listen, and Listen some more.
  – Listen carefully to what your client tells you
  – Listen carefully to what your client doesn’t tell you
  – Understand what is important to your client
  – Repeatedly ascertain what your client wants and doesn’t want
Working with Clients

- Establish a positive working relationship—poorly managed interpersonal relations may cloud crucial discussions with clients. Also, a positive relationship fosters an environment where you and your client are mutually responsible to each other.
Demanding and Difficult Clients
Demanding and Difficult Clients

• Type in “Clients” in Google and one of the top search choices is “Clients from Hell”
• Type in “Working with Clients” and your top choices include “working with clients with borderline personality disorder” and “working with clients that are intoxicated”
Demanding and Difficult Clients

• Me: If we could get a copy of your logo we are finished here and can begin our work.
• Client: Sure, it’s on this USB stick.
• Me: What file format is it- eps or ai?
• Client: No I told you it’s on the USB stick.
• It was at this point I noticed their logo, about 8mm wide, printed on the stick.
Demanding and Difficult Clients

• Client: I don’t see that link.
• Me: What page are you on right now?
• Client: I’m not on a page. I’m on the internet.

From: www.clientsfromhell.net
Who Has Demanding Clients?

- Attorneys
- Engineers
- Financial partners
- Fast food employees
- Hotel staff
- Parents
- All of us
Categories of Difficult Clients

• Angry/hostile
• Vengeful/with a mission
• Over-involved/obsessive
• Dependent
• Secretive/deceitful/dishonest
Categories of Difficult Clients

• Depressed
• Mentally ill
• The difficult client with the difficult project
• The client who is unwilling to accept/follow/believe any of your advice

(List comes from “Dealing with difficult clients” by Carole Curtis, BA, LLB)
Characteristics of **Demanding Clients**

- Unrealistic expectations - expectations that cannot be met by ANYONE
- Clients who would have been dissatisfied regardless of the product and service delivered
- Aggressive scheduling/last minute requests
Characteristics of Demanding Clients

- Clients who continually change direction
- Clients that communicate poorly
- Clients that are overly critical
Understanding a Demanding Client

- Perception versus Reality
- Demands that your clients are facing
- What motivates demanding clients
- Past projects/experiences (with other providers)
- Personalities
How to Work with Demanding Clients

- Plotting revenge
- Screaming and crying
- Fleeing the country
- Joining the intoxicated client at the bar
How to Work with Demanding Clients

• Maintain your professionalism
• Be patient, calm, and courteous
• Clarify issues- “I am unclear why you are saying that; tell me more.”
• Be explicit and clear in your communications
How to Work with Demanding Clients

• Obtain assistance when requested or needed
• Be sure the client knows who to contact
• Look at the situation from the client’s point of view
• Document and file client communications
How to Work with Demanding Clients

- Protect/enhance your image- don’t let a false image be created.
- Encourage realistic expectations.
- Don’t hide issues
- Be honest and straightforward
How to Work with Demanding Clients

• Alleviate their stress and concern- what are their hot button issues?
• Listen to your staff. They may know more about the client’s issues or mood.
• Alleviate your stress
• You can’t always please everyone. So who can you please instead?
What if the Client Wants Something that is wrong?

• Does this affect the safety of the public?
• What is the risk? To the client? To you?
• Is it really wrong?
• Disclaimers
• Documentation
Delighting Your Clients

• Commit explicitly to delighting clients as your goal, not just satisfying or serving, or just delivering services
• Work in an iterative fashion; delight clients early and often.
• Give your client the **UNEXPECTED**.
Delighting Your Clients

• Understand what they want- beyond just the current project. What are their goals? What drives them?
• Make them look good to their boss!!
• Follow-up during and after projects. Find solutions for things that didn’t go as planned.
Delighting Your Clients

- Delighted Clients will be repeat Clients and will recommend you to your future Clients.
Thank You!