

THE PLAYBOOK MEMBERSHIP

BUSINESS | MODULE FOURTEEN

Client Red Flags & When to Walk Away

CLIENT RED FLAGS YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE

DIFFICULT CLIENT OR JUST A BAD DAY

HOW TO RESPOND TO AWKWARD SCENARIOS

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS (AND MENTAL STATE)

CLIENT RED FLAGS YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE

We've all been there, including me!

SPOTTING THE SIGNS BEFORE YOU SIGN!

I'll be honest, it takes a few discovery calls to spot them so don't worry if you're just starting out and didn't notice them right away...

THE RED FLAG

- "My last three designers were terrible."
- "This should only take you a few hours."
- "Can you do a discount? I'll send you loads of clients."
- "I need this ASAP, ideally tomorrow."
- "I'm very particular, I'll probably need lots of changes."
- "Can you send me some ideas before I commit?"
- "I don't really have a budget."

WHAT IT MIGHT TELL YOU

- A pattern of blaming previous providers
- They may undervalue your expertise
- Promises instead of fair compensation
- Unrealistic expectations around timelines
- Potential scope creep or micromanagement
- Expecting unpaid creative work
- Potential misalignment on investment

GOT A DISCOVERY CALL?

Look out for these too!!!

Red flags on discovery calls

- **They constantly interrupt you.** They don't allow you to explain your process or recommendations.
- **They question every part of your pricing.** Not genuine budget questions, but repeated attempts to undermine your value.
- **They expect unlimited access.** They ask about messaging you on evenings, weekends or whenever an idea pops into their head.
- **They want guarantees you can't reasonably make.** Such as going viral, doubling sales or gaining a certain number of followers.
- **They refuse to follow your process.** They want to skip strategy, avoid contracts or dictate how you'll work.



When you get off of a call...

Ask yourself...

- **Do they respect my expertise, process and pricing?**
- **Are their expectations realistic and aligned with my services?**
- **Would I feel comfortable communicating with this person for the next XYZ months?**

DIFFICULT CLIENT OR JUST A BAD DAY?

Understanding what crosses the line

A client disagreeing with your work doesn't make them difficult.. But the problem starts when feedback becomes disrespect, communication becomes excessive or expectations move beyond what was agreed.

Green flag: Normal client feedback

"I love the overall direction, but could we explore a different font for the secondary logo?"

Constructive, respectful and within the agreed revisions.

Yellow flag: A boundary needs reinforcing

"I've sent you another 15 inspiration images. Can we completely rethink the concept?"

An opportunity to explain the agreed scope, revision limits and any additional fees.

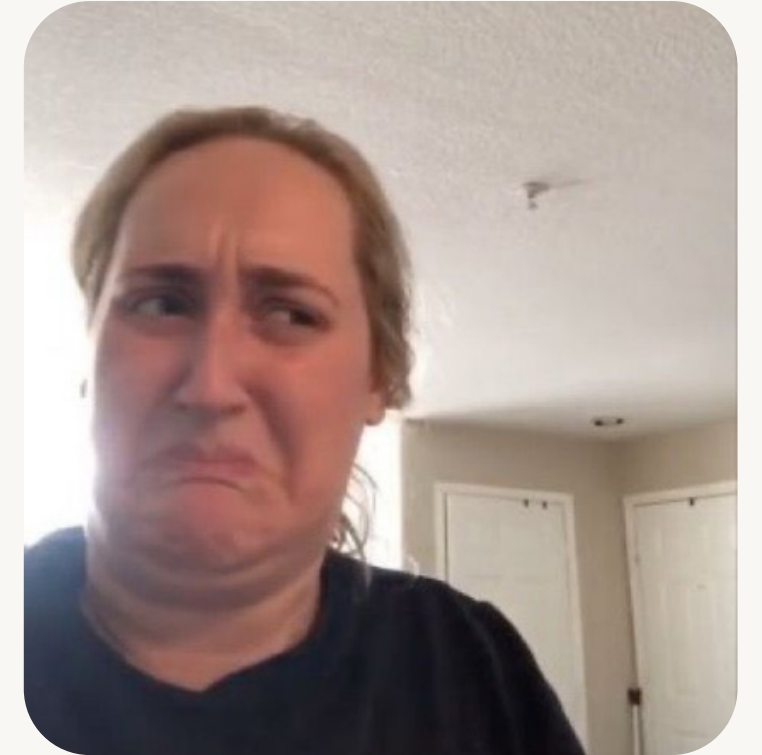
Red flag: Unacceptable behaviour

"I don't know what I'm paying you for. This is ridiculous. I expect you to fix it immediately."

Disrespectful communication that needs addressing, not accommodating.



*There's also a fine line
between collaboration and
micromanagement.*



COLLABORATION LOOKS LIKE:

Providing useful feedback on scheduled content.

Sharing business updates and upcoming promotions.

Trusting the strategy while contributing their industry knowledge.

MICROMANAGEMENT LOOKS LIKE:

Requesting daily changes to already-approved content.

Demanding to approve every tiny decision outside the agreed process.

Constantly messaging for updates despite agreed timelines.

Expecting you to be available around the clock.

HOW TO RESPOND TO AWKWARD SCENARIOS

What to say when things get uncomfortable



Subject: A Quick Note on Our Process

Hi [Name],

I wanted to quickly revisit our agreed working process to ensure we're keeping everything running smoothly.

I completely appreciate your input and feedback. However, the additional changes and frequent requests are beginning to fall outside our agreed scope and approval process.

Moving forward, I'll need us to keep feedback within the scheduled approval stages and agreed revision rounds. Any additional requests can of course be discussed and quoted separately.

Thank you for understanding.

Choose your scenario

- ☒ The micromanaging client
- ☐ The disrespectful client
- ☐ The endless revision requests
- ☐ The polite decline



Subject: Our Working Relationship

Hi [Name],

I wanted to address the tone of our recent communication.

I'm always happy to discuss feedback, concerns or any issues that arise throughout a project. However, it's important that our communication remains professional and respectful on both sides.

I'm more than happy to continue working towards a positive outcome, provided we can maintain that mutual respect moving forward.

Thank you for understanding.

Choose your scenario

- ☐ The micromanaging client
- ☒ The disrespectful client
- ☐ The endless revision requests
- ☐ The polite decline



Subject: Project Revisions

Hi [Name],

Thank you for sending through your additional feedback.

We've now completed the revision rounds included within your agreed package, so any further changes would fall outside the original scope.

I'm happy to put together an additional quote for the requested amendments if you'd like to explore these further.

Please let me know how you'd like to proceed!

Choose your scenario

- ☐ The micromanaging client
- ☐ The disrespectful client
- ☒ The endless revision requests
- ☐ The polite decline



Choose your scenario

- ☐ The micromanaging client
- ☐ The disrespectful client
- ☐ The endless revision requests
- ☒ The polite decline

Subject: Your Project Enquiry

Hi [Name],

Thank you so much for taking the time to discuss your project with me.

After reviewing your requirements, I don't feel that my services and working process are the right fit for what you're looking for at this stage.

I think it's important that you find someone whose approach aligns with your expectations, so I won't be moving forward with a proposal.

Wishing you all the best with your project!

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS (AND MENTAL STATE)

Contracts, boundaries, and exit strategies

FIVE clauses worth considering in your contracts

1. Respectful communication

"Both parties agree to maintain professional and respectful communication. Abusive, threatening, discriminatory or harassing conduct may constitute grounds for immediate termination, subject to applicable law."

2. Communication boundaries

"Client communication will take place through the agreed channels during the service provider's stated business hours. Responses outside these hours are not guaranteed."

3. Revision limitations

"The project includes the revision rounds outlined in the agreed scope of work. Additional revisions or substantial changes in direction may be subject to additional fees and revised timelines."

4. Client responsibilities and delays

"The client agrees to provide required information, materials and feedback within the agreed timeframes. Delays may result in adjusted project timelines or rescheduling, in accordance with the contract."

5. Termination for material breach

"Either party may terminate the agreement where the other commits a material breach and fails to remedy it within the specified notice period, where the breach is capable of remedy. Serious misconduct may justify immediate termination where legally permitted."

So, when is it time to walk away?

- The client repeatedly disrespects clearly communicated boundaries.
- Abusive or threatening communication occurs.
- They consistently demand work outside the agreed scope without accepting the additional costs.
- They repeatedly interfere with your ability to deliver the service professionally.
- The working relationship has broken down despite reasonable attempts to resolve the situation.



Before you terminate...

Step 1: Communicate the issue clearly and professionally.

Step 2: Document conversations and any breaches of your agreement.
(EMAIL!!!! Never just over a call)

Step 3: Review your contract, notice requirements and legal obligations.

Step 4: If termination is justified, communicate it in writing and follow the agreed exit process outlining clear next steps.



Subject: Notice Regarding Our Working Relationship

Hi [Name],

Following our recent discussions, unfortunately, I don't feel that our working relationship can continue in a productive way.

As previously communicated, maintaining a respectful and professional working environment is an important part of my process.

In accordance with the termination provisions of our agreement, I am providing notice that our services will end on [date].

I will follow up with confirmation of any outstanding deliverables, payments and relevant handover arrangements in line with our agreement.

Thank you for your understanding, and I wish you all the best moving forward.

YOUR PLAYBOOK PRACTICE

Action Task

YOUR PLAYBOOK PRACTICE

Take 10–15 minutes to practice:

Think back to a past client experience, or imagine receiving an enquiry from a potential client who is already showing warning signs.

1. Identify three client red flags you would no longer ignore.
2. Write down how you would professionally address one of these behaviours.
3. Review your current contract. Does it protect you against disrespectful behaviour, micromanagement and repeated boundary crossing?



TURN THE PAIGE

and follow The PlayBook

NEXT UP: UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROFIT MARGINS