

The Earley Examiner

A Letter from Massachusetts Personal Injury Attorney Chris Earley

May 2023



I find most clients to be relatively reasonable and easy to work with. But some clients can of course be difficult, and some can be even downright problematic and even verbally abusive. We've all had those clients that no matter what we do or how hard we try, they are still never satisfied. As in any customer service business, we can't make everyone happy all of the time. Problem clients though can be a major burden on all law firms. They provide headaches, stress, loss of productivity, and occasional loss of sleep to all of us. They drain precious time and energy from ourselves and our staff.

I believe the only thing more important than taking on the right clients for a law practice is avoiding the wrong clients. Here are some ways to help avoid the problem clients from becoming clients in the first place, and how to deal with them if they do in fact become clients.

Avoiding these problem clients begins with your case screening and intake process. Before agreeing to represent any client make sure you or your intake department listens very carefully to the potential client and never, ever rushes to formally engage any client, no matter how attractive the case. It is so important during this moment to look for 'tells' that may portend trouble. This is a golden opportunity to avoid trouble clients from entering your world.

Has he had numerous attorneys on a case, and now is looking for yet another? Does he insist on obtaining a result that is simply not possible? Is the potential client rude and unwilling to play by your firm's screening and intake rules and processes right out of the gate? Be really honest with yourself and ask yourself if you and your staff really want to be involved with this person and his case for many months, and possibly even years?

If the client was at first easy to get along with and later becomes unreasonably difficult, it is time for a brutally honest conversation with the client. This provides a good opportunity to rehabilitate the client. Explain to him in no uncertain terms what the rules of engagement are of working

with your office (or remind him of them if they've already been articulated to him). Never forget, you are the professional and you are in charge.

After that, if he's still not willing to play fair and be reasonable, and continues to persist in being difficult, then, assuming you have not already filed a notice of appearance in the case, cut bait as soon as possible and discharge the client. Your support staff will be so happy you did. They are after all probably shouldering the majority of the aggravation brought on by difficult clients.

The practice of law can be very rewarding, but very hard and stressful, too. Working with clients that appreciate us, and avoiding those that are unreasonable and difficult, is something we should all strive for, and be very sensitive to, in order to have more a more rewarding and satisfying practice for ourselves, our team members, and our families.

Thank You for Your Personal Injury Referrals!

Your trust in us to handle your car accident, slip and fall, and workers' compensation, and Social Security referrals is incredibly appreciated not only by myself, but by my entire team. Anyone you refer to us receives our signature 5-star client service called *The Earley Experience* which has led us to amass 538 Google reviews.

Let's Connect

I would love to grab coffee or jump on a Zoom with you. We can chat about practicing law, marketing, managing and scaling a practice, hiring/firing, referrals, etc. Call my cell at 617 956 2501 or email me at cearley@chrisearley.com so we can talk and help one another!

Check Out My Most Recent ABA Article Attached

This month's topic is all about delegating the right way.

Quote of the Month

“If you set your goals ridiculously high and it's a failure, you will fail above everyone else's success.” - James Cameron