

# SOLVING YOUR BIGGEST CREATIVE PROBLEM: THE CLIENT

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We've all seen them in action: questioning fees, setting insane deadlines, grabbing the creative reins, turning whims into edicts. If they aren't the original clients from Hell, they certainly live on the outskirts. But while they test our patience and even our confidence, often *they're* the ones who are insecure – about wasting money, losing their jobs or just appearing weak. So how do we deal with them? Here are a few lessons learned (the hard way) on how to tough it out, whether people can change – and when to head for the exit.

## WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CLUE?

Warning signs that a client may be bad news. And how to bail before it's too late.

## WHO'S BAD?

Recognizing a genuinely bad client, as opposed to someone who's just incredibly annoying.

## HOW CAN WE LEARN TO SPOT THE BAD ONES?

It helps to organize them into subspecies, each with its own identifying traits...



## A FIELD GUIDE TO BAD CLIENTS

### The Coin Counter

"Before I explain the project to you, how much is it going to cost?"

### The Carrot Dangler

"I don't have any budget for this, but if it goes well you'll get lots more work."

### The Buck Passer

"I'm as frustrated as you are. But it's not me – the people upstairs call the shots."

### The Foot Dragger

"We're tracking down all the content and images. But can't you start, at least?"

### The Game Changer

"It's not a substantive shift. Just half the number of pages and no photography."

### The Absolute Beginner

"We studied a business case on this, and the agency had to repay its full fee."

### The Marriage Counsellor

"I shared the latest layouts with my wife and, to be honest, she wasn't too keen."

### The Doomsayer

"I'm just concerned about how you'll make our deadline if an asteroid hits."

### The Mouse Grabber

"I found a font online that's similar but much cooler – here, I'll show you."

### The Blackmailer

"If you don't have the bandwidth, someone on our in-house team could finish it."

### The Web Searcher

"I just Googled *creative people North America*, and there you were."

### The Transformer

Can a bad client ever turn into a good client? Maybe. Sometimes. Well, once.

### Empathy + Confidence

The magic cure? Not really. But here are two final thoughts that may add up to an antidote.