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S E R I E S

Freelancers Behaving Badly

Avoid Bad Behaviors That Drive Clients Away and
You'll Flourish as a Freelancer



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Introduction

Welcome readers, and thank you for taking the time to read about how you can unlock the secrets to freelance success by avoiding missteps in your relationships with your clients. I'm Cyndy Kryder; I've been a medical communicator and freelance business owner for nearly 30 years. In this book I'm going to talk about bad behaviors that can drive clients away and sabotage your freelance business.

A little bit about me: I started freelancing after a 15-year career as a speech-language pathologist. I loved what I did, but when the need for a more flexible schedule arose, I chose a different path—freelance medical communications—and I have to tell you, it was the best move I ever made. Freelancing has enriched my life in so many ways, through the flexibility it offers me, the 6-figure income I earn, and the knowledge I gain with nearly every project.

After nearly 3 decades in the industry, I've learned quite a bit. But perhaps the most important lesson I've learned is what NOT to do in this business. And that's what I'm going to tell you in these pages you're holding in your hands. What do you say? Let's get started.

Customer Satisfaction: The Key to Success



Customer Satisfaction: The Key to Success

Bad behaviors are everywhere. You don't have to go very far to find examples of bad behavior. Just read through your newsfeed on Facebook. And don't even get me started on Twitter!

Better yet, scan the tabloid headlines when you're standing at the check-out line... If it's not actors or politicians wreaking havoc, it's aliens causing trouble.

Even our pets behave badly. Some days all you have to do is walk in your front door to find the evidence that your pet did something it shouldn't have while you were gone.

Those feelings of frustration and anger as you clean up the mess? Clients feel the same way when they hire a freelancer who doesn't do a good job, for whatever reason, and the customer has to clean up the mess. No matter what the industry, bad customer experiences drive customers away.

We can apply the customer satisfaction analogy to any type of freelance business—graphic design, journalism, medical communications, you name it—because clients are customers and we should treat them that way. Freelancers are small business owners. You may not think of yourself as one, but you are. So you should!

Success or failure of any small business depends in no small part on satisfying your customers. To do so you need to recognize the key components of customer satisfaction so that you know what clients expect when they hire a freelance. Along with that, you need to identify those behaviors that negatively impact the customer experience and drive clients away. And, finally, you need to develop strategies that allow you to eliminate these bad behaviors so that you are the first person your clients call when they have a new project.

Now some of the bad behaviors and solutions I'm going to share may seem like basic common sense...and some of it is. No one intentionally sets out to fail as a freelancer. Nevertheless, I'm still amazed when I see both novice and experienced freelancers overlook some of these commonsense strategies and unwittingly sabotage their success. I don't want that to happen to you. Throughout this book you'll find activities that will help you identify situations in which you behaved badly and think about how you can change your behavior the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.



The Key to Success...Customer Satisfaction

From my perspective, the key to success as a freelancer—heck, in any business, for that matter—is customer satisfaction. Every time you take on a project you have a chance to be a superhero. You solve a problem your client is experiencing and for that you earn a fee. When you do your job well, clients are going to call you again and again.

Satisfied customers are money in the bank. Why? Because satisfied customers are repeat customers. I want to emphasize this, so I'll say it again.



Satisfied customers are repeat customers.

Avoid the Hamster Wheel of Client Acquisition

Chasing down new clients is exhausting and time consuming! You never want to be in the position of having to constantly acquire new clients because former clients weren't satisfied with your work. If you ARE in this situation, you know that your earnings drop dramatically because you have to spend an inordinate amount of time finding and marketing your services to new clients. **This is all time you can't bill for.**

From a marketing perspective, it takes less time and fewer resources to market your services to existing clients than it does to acquire new ones. That's why you want to do all you can to ensure that your current clients are satisfied and that they regularly approach you with new projects.



Customer Satisfaction = Q + V + D

Let's dive into customer satisfaction in more detail. I believe customer satisfaction is a combination of 3 components. The first component is **Quality**.

This means that you should always provide clients with high-quality service. So-so quality service is not enough. Clients need to know they can depend on you to consistently deliver projects on time, on target, and on budget.

The second component of customer satisfaction is **Value**. Clients need to feel as though they are receiving tremendous value when they hire you, no matter what you charge for your services. It's important to emphasize here that value is different from getting a bargain. Certainly there are some clients who prefer to hire freelancers who submit the lowest estimates. And that's certainly their choice. Those clients are the bargain hunters and I would advise you to stay away from them whenever you can. In the long-term, these types of clients prevent you from working with clients who truly value your skills and experience.

Good clients—and those are the ones you want to cultivate if you're to be successful—recognize the value you bring to the table. Value is a combination of your experience, your expertise, and your knowledge. And trust me, clients will pay for that value.

The third and final component of customer satisfaction is **Delivery**. Clients expect you to respond to their needs promptly and to deliver projects within the expected timeframe.

So let's review the customer satisfaction equation:



Consistently high quality + outstanding value + on-time delivery = happy and satisfied clients. And satisfied clients give you repeat business.



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