



I once had a difficult phone call with a client who, in hindsight, was a clear example of a bad fit. She was demanding, highly critical of my staff, and deeply unhappy whenever pricing increased. No matter how much effort we put in, it never seemed to be enough.

This wasn't an isolated experience — I'd had many similar conversations with her over the years. Each one left me feeling drained and unsettled long after the call ended. Eventually, it became clear that nothing we did would ever make her satisfied, and that realization left me unsure of what the right next step should be.

Here's what I did and how I did it:

1. I looked at my client list with honest eyes and wrote down who the difficult clients were.

As I began listing out the difficult clients, I caught myself rationalizing: "This one isn't so bad — they pay us \$___ a month, and the work really isn't that hard." Each time, I had to gently bring myself back to one simple question: Does interacting with this client consistently leave me stressed or depleted?

If the answer was yes, they went on the list — regardless of how much they paid. Letting go of the money-based justifications was difficult, but it helped me see more clearly which client relationships were truly sustainable.

2. After writing down the ‘difficult client’ names, I then examined whether the money they were paying us was worth the stress they were causing to me and my staff.

Have you ever heard the term **golden handcuffs**? That’s exactly what a well-paying but difficult client can feel like. I had to really look at what peace in my business was worth to me – and once I did, it became clear that keeping truly difficult clients came at too high a cost.

I also realized something important: I wanted to be fully committed to a client base made up entirely of people I genuinely enjoyed caring for and working with. Letting go of clients who didn’t align with that goal wasn’t easy, but it was necessary for building a business that felt sustainable and rewarding.

3. Once I decided that having a peaceful business and harmonious client relationships was worth more to me than all the money in the world I was ready to take action.

Over time, I realized I was spending money on self-care simply to recover from the emotional toll of working with certain clients. I was using the income they provided to manage the stress they caused – and that realization was eye-opening.

When I let those clients know we were no longer a good fit, I kept the explanation simple. Some reacted emotionally, but staying grounded in my commitment to a peaceful business made it easier to stand firm. Knowing those interactions had an end helped me move through them with clarity.

4. Realizing the truth of ‘one door closing is another one opening’.

As I weeded out my Bad Clients an amazing thing happened: I began to make even more money than when I’d had the Bad Clients and with less stress.

Within a couple of weeks of letting the Bad Clients go, new Good Clients ‘magically’ started calling and because I had more energy to deal with them (since I wasn’t depleted from 95% of my energy going to ‘bad clients’) I was quick to respond to new client calls, happy to be on the phone with those clients, and eager to take care of their pet care needs.

5. Being vigilant about not taking on any new Bad Clients.

Over time, I developed what I can only describe as an intuitive ear for identifying difficult clients before taking them on. I can hear it in the tone of their voice, in the frustration they carry, and in statements like having gone through multiple pet sitters without ever being satisfied. Those are clear signals that the relationship likely won’t be a good fit – and it’s not one I want to repeat.

I also recognize that being committed to avoiding truly difficult clients means I may occasionally turn away someone who could have been a good client. I’m comfortable with that tradeoff. I would rather risk missing out on a potential opportunity than knowingly take on a client who will drain my energy and disrupt the balance of my business.

I wish you the courage to let go of clients who aren’t the right fit, and the clarity to use your time and energy fully on the clients who value your work. Building a business filled with clients you genuinely enjoy serving is not only possible – it’s worth protecting.