



Timely Information for Personal Success

Winning Over Tough Clients – Part II

By *Andrew Sobel & Jerold Panas*

You're good at your job, but unfortunately you have some existing or prospective clients who are so hard to deal with that you can't prove the value of your EAP to them. Sound familiar? Here are some types of tough clients that EA professionals should be aware of and the strategies for winning them over. (More different types of tough clients were presented in Part I).

❖ **The know-it-all client.** This client thinks they know more about your job than you do and is constantly telling you how to do it. They give you way too many suggestions in areas that are really outside their realm of expertise.

✓ **The solution.** Reestablish your respective roles. If gentle rebukes don't work ("Through many years of doing this, I've found this is the most effective approach..."), you have to put your foot down. Confront them. Tell them they have hired you because of your expertise and experience, and that they need to give you the proper leeway to exercise it on their behalf.

❖ **The insatiable client.** This client feels the work is never, ever good enough, and they also micromanage you. You never feel like you're succeeding. These people have critical personalities and can't give out compliments.

✓ **The solution.** Carefully review expectations at the beginning of each engagement or transaction.

Maybe you need to dig deeper into the specifics for this type of client. However, don't be too concerned about getting compliments and positive feedback. Remember, this is a client, not your spouse, and as long as you're doing a good job and achieving the agreed-upon goals, you shouldn't worry about getting a constant stream of praise.

❖ **The tyrant.** This client has personality and emotional issues and treats their people — and perhaps you — terribly. Everyone who works for them hates them. Who knows why someone acts like this? The tyrant could be a good-hearted person who happens to have an anger management issue, or they could be genuinely mean.

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Healthy Recipe: Prosciutto Pizza

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound prepared pizza dough, preferably whole-wheat
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup 2 slices prosciutto, cut into thin strips
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup chopped tomato

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 306
- Carbohydrates: 33 g.
- Protein: 13 g.
- Sodium: 600 mg.
- Fat: 11 g.
- Saturated fat: 4 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- ➊ Position oven rack in the lowest position; preheat to 450°F. Coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray.
- ➋ Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to about the size of the baking sheet. Transfer to the baking sheet. Bake until puffed and lightly crisped on the bottom, 8 to 10 minutes.
- ➌ Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion, prosciutto and crushed red pepper and cook, stirring until the onion is beginning to brown, about 3 minutes.
- ➍ Spread the onion mixture evenly over the crust and top with cheese. Bake until crispy and golden and the cheese is melted, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and top with tomato.

LifestyleTIPS®
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 PO Box 322, Waupaca, WI 54981
 Phone: 715-258-2448
 Fax: 715-258-9048
 Website: www.impact-publications.com
 Email: info@impacttrainingcenter.net

Publisher: Scott Kolpien
Health Consultant: Tim Lencki
Managing Editor: Mike Jacquart

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Questions and Answers

Disclosing Mental Illness at Work

Q: *If you have a mental illness, is it a good idea to disclose it at work?*

A: The majority of employees with mental illness exercise their right to remain silent. Why? In spite of growing awareness and anti-discrimination laws, the stigma of mental illness persists.

Most employers, like much of the public, still believe people with mental illness are dangerous, incompetent and untreatable, and become blind to their positive skills and attributes once a diagnosis is made public.

Just as some people feel empowered by keeping their mental health private, others find it liberating to be open with an employer. Another benefit of opening up: If you want to protect your legal right to any accommodations you might need under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must disclose. The ADA requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. By staying silent, you run the risk of poor job performance being attributed to laziness or incompetence rather than a mental illness that can improve with treatment.

Source: PsychCentral.

Winning Over Tough Clients

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✓ **The solution.** If the client is nice to you, but tyrannical with their team, you may be able to influence them to change their behavior. Unless you're specifically in a coaching relationship, however, they may not be open to that kind of personal feedback. If the client is treating you or your colleagues badly, consider moving on. Life is too short to spend time in abusive relationships, be they at work or in our personal lives.

❖ **The do-nothing client.** There are some clients who just never move ahead and get things done. This is more of a frustrating client than a "difficult" one. In fact, you might have a very pleasant relationship with a do-nothing executive.

✓ **The solution.** Explore what's behind your client's inaction. Is it insecurity and fear? Are they hemmed in by a boss or another executive who is keeping them from taking action? Do they work in an organizational culture that is risk averse and prizes survival above all? There are many different reasons why a client doesn't act, and you need to diagnose why so that you know how to address the inactivity. Can you help them manage the stakeholders that may be getting in the way? Can you increase their sense of urgency by illustrating the costs of *not* acting? Or perhaps the client's priorities have shifted. If so, you need to know that so you can help the client accomplish something that *does* provide value. ■

Andrew and Jerold are consultants and authors of "26 Irrefutable Laws for Building Extraordinary Relationships," www.andrewsobel.com. A free planning guide is available for customers who buy their book.