

# Choosing profitable clients part I

---

All clients are not created equal. There's the dream client. The one who's cooperative, follows your guidance, and pays every bill on time. Then there's the other side of the coin... the client who acts as though he went to law school and only needs you to backup everything he wants to do, regardless of ethics and legality. Oh yeah... he also scoffs and debates every single bill. Sound familiar?

I get it. Sometimes, times are tough and you are just happy to have someone walk through your door with a checkbook, but many attorneys fail to realize that the clients you pick can have a direct impact on the profitability of your law practice, and not just in terms of the value of their case. The experience of working with each and every client affects your profit margin, so why wouldn't you put some time and effort into making smart decisions about who you decide to represent?

## How Clients Decrease Your Profitability

You may be wondering how a paying client could ever diminish your profitability. Well, here is some food for thought:

- **Efficiency.** Efficiency is achieving maximum productivity. How efficient are your attorneys if they find themselves in constant battles with stubborn clients who do not respect their knowledge and expertise? Let's call this client John Doe. Mr. Doe wastes precious time, especially if he is under a fixed fee payment arrangement. But even more problematic is the amount of energy Mr. Doe requires. After dealing with Mr. Doe, your attorneys are left feeling mentally and physically drained, which can impact the value they provide to other, more cooperative and profitable clients.
- **Haggling.** This is the client who wants to debate every aspect of every bill, no matter how much detail is included. Let's call her Jane Doe. Like

clockwork, Ms. Doe calls the office every month to complain about her bill and haggle over fees that she already agreed upon. She keeps your administrative staff from handling important tasks and stresses you out with her unreasonable demands. Even if Ms. Roe ultimately pays her bill, she has wasted the firm's time and cost you valuable profits.

- **Maintenance.** While clients hire you to handle their legal matters for them, there are still some tasks that you cannot perform without their cooperation. Dr. Roe is a high maintenance client. You have repeatedly asked him to provide you with materials necessary to complete a production of documents. He also fails to show up for hearings on time and routinely violates the order of the court. You often feel more like Dr. Roe's babysitter than his attorney. Take an objective look at your agreement with Dr. Roe. Financially, is it worth the amount of time and energy you put into his case? If not, you are allowing Dr. Roe to diminish your profitability.

Now that you know how clients can impact your profitability, stay tuned for Part II of this post where we I will provide some methods you can use to identify a profitable client and say goodbye to those profit-drainers.

---

### **About Erika Winston:**

*Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.*