

Choosing the Right Client

Marketing is an ongoing task when you are running a law office. You are constantly looking for ways to attract new clients and keep existing ones. But there is another factor that deserves just as much consideration.

Do you want to work with every potential client who walks through the door? Now, I understand that your first response is probably in the affirmative, especially for a new attorney starting out with your legal practice.

However, there are factors you need to consider when deciding to take on a matter.

Your feelings about the case

This is where the consultation comes into play. Under the Constitution, everyone is entitled to an adequate defense, but this does not mean that everyone is entitled to have you defend them. Use the consultation to gather preliminary information about the case. Then, seriously consider your ability to provide this individual with zealous representation.

If it's a matter that you don't feel equipped to properly handle or a situation where you can't separate your personal feelings, you may want to consider walking away.

The client's ability to pay

I've said it numerous times before. Your law practice is also a business and you must get paid in order to keep the doors open. Again, the consultation becomes vitally important. Let the potential client know up front how much your representation will cost and talk openly about his or her ability to pay your fees. If you sense some hesitation or doubt, strongly consider the possibility that you will not be fully paid for your time and service. If you still

agree to take the case, do so with the understanding that you may provide adequate representation and never get paid.

A few hundred dollars on the table may look enticing now, but will it be enough when you expend 20 hours of work on the case?

The difficult client

A client who argues with you from the start will likely become a problem down the line. There is a difference between contributing their opinion and attempting to do your job. You went to law school and passed the bar exam. Your clients need to respect your role as an attorney and trust you to act in their best interests.

If your client is telling you how to do your job at the consultation, imagine how that client will act when it is time for settlement discussions, or worse, inside of the courtroom. You may want to do yourself a favor and let the “know-it-all” look for another attorney.

You may have noticed that, throughout this article, I continuously mentioned the consultation. This is because the time to make these decisions is before agreeing to representation. Once you get into a case, it can be difficult to get out. So, do yourself and your firm a favor by practicing some discretion when potential clients walk through the door.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.