

8 Dos and Don'ts for Breaking Up with a Client

By Rae Robinson

We don't talk about breaking up with clients very often.

For those of you that are still in the process of becoming a copywriter or getting your first client, don't let this scare you.

We don't talk about it often because it doesn't have to *happen* often.

The truth is that businesses grow. Your business will evolve from when you start out ... to when you choose a niche ... to when you raise your fees once, twice, and again.

As you grow, you may find that some of your clients don't fit any longer.

If your client ...

- Can't or won't pay your fees (especially if you've just raised them)
- Has a topic you're just not in love with
- Is too "high maintenance"
- Doesn't fit the scope of your business any longer

... then it may be time to break up with your client.

This may seem like a scary process at first, especially if you don't have another client waiting in the wings.

But the truth of the matter is this:

Breaking off a stressful relationship restores your momentum. It gives you energy, and with that energy, you can focus on what truly matters in your business.

It gives you the time to expand your business ... find new clients ... write a new page for your website.

You'll notice that it also breathes new life into your writing.

Breaking up with a client is simple. In fact, it can be as simple as sending one email.

But it's not necessarily easy. That's why I've put together eight dos and don'ts to guide you through what can be a tense, emotionally charged process.

You should keep these eight tips in mind when breaking up with your client.

Are you ready? Here we go!

1. DO give 2 weeks' notice.

This might seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how often freelancers forget this step.

It would be unprofessional to drop your client like a sack of potatoes without any warning. You want to give them notice so they have time to find someone to replace you. This also gives you both plenty of time to tie up loose ends, like finishing projects and getting accounts balanced.

2. DO offer to finish your projects.

If this conflicts with your two weeks' notice, use your best judgment. The client may actually not require you to finish the projects you still have.

3. DO be professional.

You want to make sure that *you* are being professional, even if the client is your best friend. This will ensure that you do not damage the friendship in the process of breaking up.

It's also common for service providers to get overly apologetic. But the moment you start apologizing profusely is the moment you give the control of the situation back to the client.

A simple "I apologize for the inconvenience this may cause" is sufficient.

This is your business and your *writer's life*. You must be the one in control of the situation.

4. DO give something of value.

Make your client more comfortable with the situation by giving something of value before you leave.

Things of value include:

- A list of professionals that may be interested
- Finding your own replacement
- Training your replacement so there is no interruption in service
- Advice from your own expertise
- Continuing to recommend your client's business

5. DON'T back down.

You have already made the decision that this split is what needs to happen for the health of your business.

Don't. Back. Down. Don't let them change your mind. Be confident, and you will be the one in control.

6. DON'T be insensitive ... but DON'T lie either.

Sometimes the truth is hard to tell and hard to hear. If you don't like writing for the client anymore, tell them so in a nice way.

For example, you can say:

As a writer, I have to write what I love; otherwise, my business will be a chore, not a joy. My passion is gluten-free living, and it's all I want to write about.

Don't lie and say you're moving to Bora Bora and will be without an Internet connection for the rest of your life.

7. DON'T burn bridges.

The fastest way to burn bridges is to put your client on the defensive. You never want to point fingers as it opens the door for an argument.

Don't say things like, "You aren't paying me enough," or "Your topic isn't my favorite." A good rule of thumb is to pretend the things you're writing are being written to *you*. How would you feel reading your email if it was directed to you?

Another way to avoid pointing fingers is to be general about *why* you're leaving. Simply say, "The position is no longer the right fit for my business."

8. DON'T make hasty decisions.

You should always give yourself a day or two to decide if you truly need to break up with the client.

If you have been feeling unsure and overly stressed out for a long time, then you're probably already sure this is the right path. But always, always take this process slowly.

The same goes for when you write your initial "breaking up with you" email.

Now that we've clarified what to do and what not to do, let me answer one pressing question that you may have:

What do I do if I'm financially dependent on my client?

It's a very real situation for a lot of copywriters.

The answer is simple: get a second client while you're still writing for the first one. It may mean staying up late, getting up early, or working during your lunch break.

Here's a bonus DO for you: DO remember that this will make your business better.

When you're writing for a client that you *don't* want to be writing for, it makes your work stressful. You didn't become a copywriter to be stressed out! Breaking up with a client that stresses you out *will* make your life easier in the long run.

And when you find a new client that you're absolutely in love with, it's going to make you write faster with more energy, and you'll be far more satisfied with your work. And that makes your business far more lucrative.

To recap:

DO:

- Give 2 weeks' notice
- Offer to finish your projects
- Be professional
- Give something of value

DON'T:

- Back down
- Be insensitive ... but don't lie either
- Burn bridges
- Make hasty decisions

Remember the old saying, "When one door closes, another opens"? That is absolutely true here. You're opening the door to an energized and satisfying work life.

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1 Response to "8 Dos and Don'ts for Breaking Up with a Client"

It requires tact to break up with a client.

You should feel like you are in the driver's seat.

However,it is equally important not to be rude or seem offensive.

So, it is a delicate balancing act.

Perhaps your topic of interest is not in alignment with the needs of your client.

If that is the case, maybe it is time to move on.

There are clients out there who are interested in what you have to offer.

It is only a matter of time before you find your niche.

That depends on self-knowledge.

Archan Mehta – over a year ago

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American Writers & Artists Institute

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924