



# Marketing Curve

SPECIAL REPORT

Personable vs. Professional

# Introduction

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No matter what you're doing in your day to day business life, you're coming into contact with people. I know it sounds obvious, but most people go through the day not thinking about the others they come into contact with.

The relationships you form with the day to day people in your life could mean you find a new job, or are able to start a new business. This means you need to present yourself as a professional for marketing purposes and to retain clients once relationships have been formed. Being a professional means different things to different business owners. For one person, being professional may mean dressing in a certain way or setting certain business practices. For someone else, being professional may mean being more focused on providing a high quality work product than dressing or acting in a specific manner. Whatever your definition of being professional, being personal with clients always plays a role in business relationships.

Many people like to get involved in their clients' businesses and become a resource for information and suggestions. Others like to get to know their clients on an even more personal level, sharing information about birthdays, pets, and family members. The key to getting to know your clients on a personal level and maintaining your professionalism is finding your ideal clients and balancing your professionalism with your personal interest in their lives. The line between professionally personable and way too personal can get blurry, especially when you've been working with clients for some time and you get interested in learning more about their businesses and personal lives.

This report will show you why it's important to be yourself when dealing with clients, how to find your ideal client, and when you may need to fire a client to save your sanity. Setting the balance between professionalism and personal involvement will help you build better business relationships and improve the fulfillment you experience from all of your professional relationships.

# Fake it 'Till You Make It? The Pitfalls of Pretending to Be Bigger Than You Are

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You may have heard the phrase “fake it ‘till you make it” when doing research on starting or running a business. This phrase encourages small business owners to bulk up their image to make it look like clients will be dealing with a larger company when conducting business transactions.

There are many methods you can use to accomplish the goal of making your business look bigger than it really is. One is by using the term “we” instead of “I” on your Web site and in your marketing materials. Another method that is similar to using the word “we” when you’re a one-person company is creating a number of e-mail addresses to make it look like you have several departments within your company. Technology is also used as a way to enhance the image of many small businesses. Voicemail systems that allow you to set up multiple boxes for different “departments” in your company, Web sites that have multiple pages to enhance the appearance of your service offerings, and project management systems that allow you to create systems that make your company look bigger all contribute to the ability to create a more “professional” image.

The problem with faking it ‘till you make it is threefold. The first pitfall is that people like to buy from other people and you may be hurting your business by trying to change its image from a small business with personal attention to clients to a large company with many departments that may not give clients the attention they deserve. Although image is important for the success of a business, trying to be something you’re not can make potential

clients who are looking for a personal connection with their service providers shy away from choosing your business to meet their needs. Instead of enhancing your business, you may be losing out on opportunities for new client relationships and additional profits.

The second pitfall of trying to fake it 'till you make it is that you may fake it successfully for weeks, months, or even years. But eventually, those who try to fake skills or knowledge that they do not really have will be found out. Imagine what it would feel like to build a relationship with a client and then have him or her find out that you exaggerated your skills or knowledge in a particular area all in the name of enhancing the image of your business. You will most likely lose the business of that client, not to mention losing referral business. Most people might let one or two people know about a great service provider, but many studies have shown that people will tell others about a negative experience three or more times more than they will share a positive experience. When you own your own business, your reputation is one of your most important credentials. Risking your reputation just to make your business look bigger is a professional mistake you may not be able to overcome.

The third pitfall of trying to fake your business image is that you'll end of suppressing your natural personality and work style. If you like to have a personal relationship with each of your clients and have a distinctive personality, you may need to change the way you do business in order to make your business look better and more professional in the eyes of potential clients. While you may experience good results for a short period of time, you'll eventually grow tired of not being able to show your true

personality and build your business the way you really want to. Not being able to run your business in the best way for you defeats the purpose of striking out on your own and starting your own company.

**The Takeaway:**

Trying to make your business look bigger than it is can shortchange your clients and reduce the satisfaction you feel as the owner of a professional company. Be true to yourself and let your real personality shine through.

## Attracting Clients: Like Attracts Like

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When it comes to attracting clients, the old adage “like attracts like” holds true. If you want to attract clients that you’ll enjoy working with, you need to be up front about your working style so that you’ll be able to attract clients that match up with what you want to achieve in your business relationships. If you are trying to make your business look bigger than it is by changing the way you work with clients and present yourself, you’re going to shortchange yourself when it comes to finding clients that you will truly enjoy working with. In order to develop a trusting and mutually beneficial business relationship, you need to look beyond image and your bottom line to discover what will truly work for you in terms of your ideal client. If you’re not sure what your ideal client is like, make notes on what you are looking for in client relationships. To do this, you need to consider the following:

- Your work style (relaxed, extremely rigid, etc.)
- The type of work you want to perform
- What level of income you need to earn
- Your personal values and ethics

All of these pieces of information will help you put together the puzzle of what your ideal client should be. Knowing your own work style will help you find clients whose styles are compatible with yours. If you have a very relaxed work style and don't like clients who check in every hour, you're not going to be able to work very well with someone who is a micromanager and feels the need to check your work at all times. Similarly, if you're the type of person who likes to check in with your clients and your clients are the type to give you little direction and leave all of the decisions to you, these relationships probably won't work out for the best. Knowing what kind of work you want to do is important because you'll want your business to be as fulfilling as possible. If you absolutely hate transcription work, taking on this type of project may result in a lot of frustration and effort that don't match up with the rates you're charging. If you love to work on creating databases or designing newsletters, your ideal client will have these kinds of projects available. While it would be ideal to be able to choose clients based on their personalities and work styles without regard for income, the income you earn is a very real factor in choosing clients. Your ideal client will be willing to pay the rates you have set for the work you perform. Personal values and ethics will also come into play when choosing your ideal client because you'll want to work with people who won't put you in situations you're not prepared to deal with. A client may bring you steady income, but if he or she conducts business in an unethical manner, you run the risk of becoming involved in something that could tarnish your reputation and hurt your chances of receiving business from more reputable clients.

### **The Takeaway:**

Develop a profile of your ideal client and, while you're searching for these clients, stay true to your work style so you attract the clients who will truly match your work style and personality.

# Turning Down Clients: Not Everyone Will Like You, and That's Okay

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When it comes to securing new client relationships, business owners have a tendency to feel personally rejected if a potential client rejects the proposed relationship. People may reject working with you for a number of reasons that have nothing to do with the quality of your work or your ability to develop a beneficial business relationship. Some potential clients may choose to work with someone located closer to their offices or go with another professional based on price alone. Some prospects may not like your work style or feel that it will mesh with theirs. Not everyone is going to like you, and anyone in business needs to learn that that's okay. It has nothing to do with your value as a person or a business professional; it simply means that everyone has different things they look for when choosing a service provider.

If the tables are turned and you decide you want to turn down work from a potential client, the way you go about turning the client down can make or break your reputation when it comes to referrals. The key to turning down a client's project is keeping any negative feelings out of the conversation and being as helpful as possible. If you can help the client find another person to handle their project in a professional manner, this can be a way to create goodwill between you and the client even though you have turned down their work offer. Instead of warning colleagues about you, this potential client may let them know about your services if a need exists within their networking group. Turning down clients with tact and courtesy can save your reputation and even generate new business for your practice.

### **The Takeaway:**

Not everyone is going to like your work style, but that's fine. Turn down projects you don't want to work on in a respectful and professional way and you may be able to get referrals, even from people you've turned down in the past.

# Firing a Client to Save Your Sanity

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Everyone's had at least one client that pushes the limits of the working relationship. Whether it's changing project specifications at the last minute, making late payments, trying to negotiate unreasonably low rates, or being rude in your business dealings, these clients test boundaries and can make completing their projects difficult. If this is a rare occurrence, you may be able to chalk it up to the client having a bad day or difficult circumstances in their lives. If this happens on a regular basis, you need to examine the situation and determine if the relationship should continue. There are both benefits and drawbacks to firing a client and all of them must be considered when you are making such an important decision. Consider the following when you're making one of the most important business decisions you will face.

## Benefits:

- Less stress because you will no longer have to deal with the client's issues.
- Less time spent revising client projects when expectations were not clear.
- More time for marketing your services or working with other clients.
- Looking forward to work instead of dreading it.

## Drawbacks:

- Loss of income
- Concerns about getting negative referrals

Ending a relationship with a client can be accomplished without burning bridges and creating a negative mark on your business. Be honest with the client; let them know you feel that working with someone else would be more beneficial for their business. Discuss any concerns you have had throughout the relationship and let them know how another professional would be better suited for their projects. Honesty and respect are important when you're ending a client relationship; if you can communicate your feelings in a way that shows you are concerned with their success, you can use them as a reference without fear of retaliation for ending the relationship.

## The Takeaway:

Losing a client doesn't have to be a disaster. If you're not happy, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of firing a client. If you make the decision to fire the client, do so with respect and tact so you can keep in contact and continue to use them as a reference and a source of referral business.

## The Wrap Up

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Owning your own business should be something that brings you great joy, even in times of high stress. Stay true to who you really are so you can attract the best clients and continue working with them for many years. If you have a client who is testing your boundaries or disrespecting your time, make a decision about keeping or ending the relationship. Don't be afraid to put your personality into your business; just be careful to keep a balance between professionalism and being personable. If you can strike this balance in all of your client relationships, you'll be on your way to a more successful and more rewarding career or a larger and more thriving business.

## About the Author

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Jennifer Gniadecki is the owner of [Marketing Curve](#), a company specializing in consulting on Internet marketing and networking, both online and offline. Jen loves to network. Naturally an introvert, she taught herself the skills necessary to get out there and talk to strangers. In the last year alone, she has made more friends and gotten more referral business than ever before, all because of effective networking.

Jennifer is also the author of *Non-Toxic Networking*, a book that will help new networkers as well as veterans get out there and make meaningful connections more effectively. Jennifer wanted to share with others just how easy it is to find people to network with and connect with those people in order to get more clients and more referrals.

*Non-Toxic Networking* isn't about making an elevator pitch and talking at everyone you come into contact with, it's not about handing out as many business cards as possible. It is a real, step by step approach to entering a networking event, finding someone to talk to, knowing what to say, and forging a bond that will make the other person want to do business with you.

If you would like to interview Jennifer for your blog, podcast, magazine or newspaper – send an email to [Jennifer@marketingcurve.com](mailto:Jennifer@marketingcurve.com) and she'll be happy to set up a time to chat further. She's also fabulous in front of a crowd, so if you're looking for a dynamic speaker for your group – send an email.

If you're curious about her writing style, visit her blog at [Beyond Mom](#).