





- It is sometimes impossible to predict that a promising relationship will turn into a frustrating one. No matter how perceptive you are, you can't be prescient. Have any of your previously good relationships become increasingly difficult over time?

Write down any that come to mind.

- One of the goals of this exercise is to grow your business to the point where you can politely dump the bottom 20%. For more thoughts on firing difficult clients, check out this post: [austinlchurch.com/fire-bad-clients/](https://austinlchurch.com/fire-bad-clients/)

Which clients do you need to fire sooner rather than later?

## II. IDEAL CLIENT AVATAR

### Do you notice any patterns?

The next step is to start filling out an ideal client avatar. You can also call this a “buyer persona,” “customer archetype, or “target audience.”

- Use your notes from the first section to identify positive traits that you're looking for in long-term clients. My best clients are generous, trusting, responsive, optimistic, low-ego, and appreciative. What traits do your best clients have and what traits do your most difficult clients lack?

- What do they have to believe in order to become your client?

For example, my clients need to believe that content marketing can be an effective way to generate leads. They also need to believe in generosity and consistency. Otherwise, they won't be interested in an ongoing retainer.

- What does your ideal client dream of accomplishing?

For example, maybe they want to retire early, adopt children, or hire more employees.

- What are their emotional drivers?

For example, maybe your client is stressed from working too much and needs better processes and systems in place. That's where you come in.

- What keeps them awake at night?

Write down their major fears, passions, and problems—at least as you understand them.

- What industries are they in?

Maybe your best clients run SaaS companies. Maybe they run large-scale manufacturing operations. Maybe they design and build tiny homes. Make a list of industries where you've had success in sales and in producing results.

- In terms of demographics, are they self-employed or corporate? White collar or blue collar? Highly educated or not? Young or old? Male or female? Business or consumer?

- Where do these people hang out online and offline?

They may have favorite websites, blogs, events, magazines, associations, subscriptions, and social media platforms. If you're not sure, ask them.

- Which of their problems do you solve on a regular basis?

Consider the primary ways that you create value and write those down.

### What are you missing?

Your ideal client may not be whom you expect. For example, your corporate clients may have big budgets, but their internal decision-making process—that is, design by committee—may kill your best ideas like clockwork. Your small business clients may pay less, but maybe their projects are more fun and conclude quickly.

- Depending on the type of client, you may have a higher profit margin on a smaller budget! Write down any outliers.

### Do you need to change how you interview and onboard new clients?

More often than not, at least in my experience, you know from the beginning if a new prospect is a bad fit. Maybe you wanted to be the hero. Maybe you needed the money. Whatever the reason, you didn't listen to your gut.

- Think through red flags and warnings signs that you ignored. Write them down, and use the examples below to supplement your list.

# Red Flags & Warning Signs

- The person mentions his shoestring budget in the first 10 minutes of the conversation. And then he talks constantly about how tight money is. Danger, Will Robinson.
- People who ask questions like, “How much do you charge for a website? What does a video cost? What can I get for \$600?”
- People who talk about how bad their last marketing firm or designer or writer or consultant was.
- People who need help with something that is several degrees removed from the work you most enjoy doing.
- You’re bored with the project before the client has even finished telling you about it.
- You send a deposit invoice, but they want to schedule another meeting before paying it. Run away.
- They email you with tons of questions and milk you for as much information as possible while trying to “make up their minds.”
- She sends you an unrealistic laundry list of features that she wants for \$500.
- The guy haggles with you about the price.
- The guy is rude and abrupt and then laughs about it and calls himself, “a straight shooter.”
- A referral tells you she could do it herself, but she just doesn’t want to or don’t have time. She is guaranteed to be an impossible-to-please micro-manager.
- A brand new client springs an insane deadline on you.

## **Lastly, who do you want your clients to become?**

Now that you've got a sense of your ideal client, you may need to revisit your branding and positioning. My tagline is "Build a profitable business you love."

That tagline will repel people who are looking for a quick fix, people who treat their businesses as a hobby, and people who aren't passionate about their businesses. By stating explicitly whom I want to work with and what the outcome of our relationship will be, I've been able to tighten my positioning. In fact, I probably need to tighten it further.

- What about you? Write down the outcomes you help your clients achieve, and have those on hand when you rewrite your web content.