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How To Handle A Client Leaving: 13 Valuable Lessons



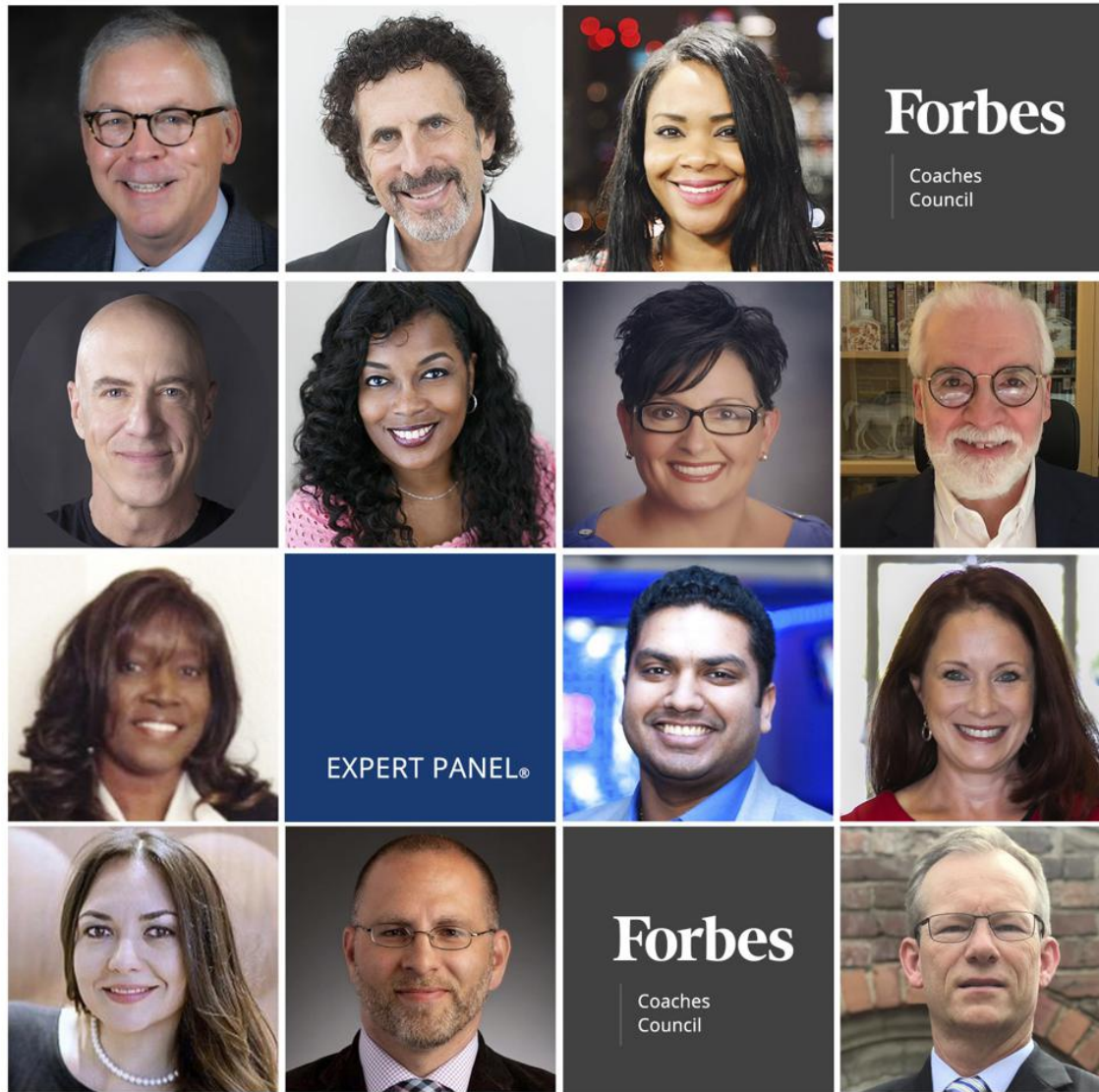
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Leadership

It's not just your revenue that could take a hit when a client leaves; you may find your confidence taking a blow as well. While they might have ended their working relationship with you for any number of reasons, you'll likely wonder what the root cause was and whether you could have done anything to change the outcome.

Doing a post-mortem analysis after a client's departure can unveil valuable insights that could help you start future accounts off on a better foot and avoid the issues that led to this one ending. Below, [13 Forbes Coaches Council](#) members explore the most valuable lessons they've learned from clients leaving.



Forbes Coaches Council members share the best ways to handle clients leaving. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

1. Don't Rely Too Much On Any One Client

Many client departures end up being for the best. I have had clients leave who I really enjoyed working with or had become dependent upon. However, those transitions helped me learn more about what type of client is best for my work, and why it is dangerous to become overly reliant on any one or two clients. -

[Dan Ryan, ryan partners](#)

2. Communicate When Something Feels 'Off'

An important lesson I learned was to be more authentic when I'm sensing that something is "off" by communicating this rather than trying to address it on my own. This allows for collaborative dialogue and problem-solving that models vulnerability, respect and openness to other perspectives. - [Joel M. Rothaizer, Clear Impact Consulting Group](#)

3. Always Trust The Process

A lesson I learned from a client's departure is to trust the process instead of being overly attached to the outcome. I also realized that it's important that I work with "dream" clients rather than those I'm not too excited to work with. Ignoring your gut is never a good thing. When we work with dream clients, we are far more likely to receive great testimonials and enjoy the experience. - [Queen Chioma Nworgu, Queen Chioma Media](#)

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4. Work With People You Would Dine With

"I only work with people I would have dinner with." This has been written above my desk for years. While I've never had dinner with my clients 99% of the time, if I want to, it shows that we not only have a connection, but probably also some shared values. The lesson was to stay true and follow my gut instinct, my "inner ding." When I don't, watch out. It doesn't turn out well! - [Gregg Brown, Change Ready Leadership](#)

[Forbes Coaches Council](#) is an invitation-only community for leading business and career coaches. *Do I qualify?*

5. Have An ‘Out’ Clause

Sometimes clients string out an engagement, even if it is clear that the ideal win-win relationship does not exist. I’ve learned that it is best to include an “out” clause, where either one of you can terminate the engagement with appropriate notice to the other party in writing. This way, you both have a way to sever the engagement without damaging your relationship. - [Karan Rhodes, Shockingly Different Leadership](#)

6. Always Start With The ‘Why’

It was often in challenging times that I learned the most. When I think back on when clients have departed from my services, I first looked at the root of the departure. Was it something within my control, or not? Was their departure something that could have been avoided, or not? The lesson came from having space once occupied by one client now open for something even better! - [Denise Russo, School of Thoughts](#)

7. Ensure You’re Building A Healthy Relationship

Clients choose us, but we also choose clients. At the end of the day, it’s all about the tenets of a good relationship. If we don’t feel as if we’re building a healthy relationship from the very beginning, it will end up in a departure. Trust, collaboration and open and clear communication will be key to building the relationship. - [Luis Costa, Luis Costa - coach · facilitator · speaker](#)

8. Plan Ahead And Be Ready To Redirect Resources

Resources spent on client acquisition and retention are invaluable. Over time, some client relationships can become harmful to your business and your sanity. A lesson learned from a client's departure is that not all money is good money. Sometimes it is better to end relationships and redirect your precious resources elsewhere. Plan ahead and be prepared to handle these types of situations. - [Lillian Gregory, The HumEx Institute](#)

9. Beware Of The 'Scarcity' Mindset

I am not a fit for all clients, and vice versa. When running our own business, particularly when we're starting out, we must be mindful of the "scarcity" mentality that will lead us to act out of fear rather than ambition and abundance. That will lead us to act out of alignment with our values and what's best for ourselves and those who would be our clients. Act in service of them first. - [Dhru Beeharilal, Nayan Leadership, LLC](#)

10. Work To Increase Client Diversity

Client diversity is critical to surviving the natural ebbs and flows of business needs. Having big lucrative clients rarely hurts. Continue to allocate time for networking and building a client pipeline. By putting yourself in the position of allowing one client to own all your time, you have essentially sold your business. - [Erica McCurdy, McCurdy Solutions Group LLC](#)

11. Remember That Things Happen For A Reason

I strongly believe that things always happen for a reason. I discovered that my client had a pattern of using and abusing

people (besides me) with expectations of working 80-plus hours a week, resulting in high talent turnaround. Also, he was using our network and relationships with false promise. When I questioned his and his partners specific behaviors, it resulted in their quick departure. - [Izabela Lundberg, Legacy Leaders Institute](#)

12. Don't Take Leader Buy-In For Granted

Years ago, I was working on a long-term change initiative with a client. We had been making steady progress, helping the change to take hold within the culture, when, seemingly out of the blue, the client severed the working relationship. I had thought all of the key stakeholders were on board, but this experience taught me that I can't take leader buy-in for granted. It is a continual effort. - [Jonathan H. Westover, Utah Valley University & Human Capital Innovations, LLC](#)

13. Sometimes It Has Nothing To Do With You

A client who made a dramatic departure several years ago revealed a couple of years later that they were suffering some mental health issues and episodes. Although painful, it made me realize that a lot of what a client may be going through may not have anything to do with you; but because you were there, in front of them, some of their pain became yours. I have a clearer perspective now. - [John M. O'Connor, Career Pro Inc.](#)



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