

# What Clients Expect

By Tim W. Hrastar



Clients have needs, wants, and expectations. Needs are the things a client must address in order to solve existing problems, avoid future problems, or create opportunities. Clients may not know what those needs are specifically; perhaps they have just a vague idea, that's why they are coming to you—so you can take them below the tip of the iceberg and show them what's really there. Needs are the things that must be addressed in order to complete the matter successfully.

Wants are important to clients. Many times clients may know what they want when they come to you, but not what they need. Find out why they want what they do. Make sure the wants are accommodated when you do the work for them. Sometimes wants are just nice to have, but not necessary for the matter's success, but remember, to the client they are important.

Expectations are the things in their mind that they expect to have happen when they work with you. For example, expectations include such things as how they want to be treated, what they'll get for their money, and if the matter will be done on time and within the price you said it would be. Some of these expectations may be right at the top of their mind, while with others they may not be able to quite articulate. You need to help them do that.

The following are ten things client's look for in a relationship. How do you rate in providing them on a consistent basis to all your clients?

## Clients Expect—

1. **Respect and courtesy at all times.** This is treating people sincerely and being polite at all times. It should be automatic with everyone they come in contact with at your firm. It's a good idea to review this expectation and make sure it is happening on a consistent basis by reminding people of the importance of treating clients with respect.
2. **To understand what they perceive as value.** The client determines value and you need to make sure your perception matches theirs. Ask questions to determine what is really important to them.
3. **Quality work product.** You provide a quality work product by doing everything right the first time. That means, for example, before a document is sent to the client it is perfect in its content, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. No mistakes, even small ones are acceptable.
4. **Prompt and efficient delivery.** Make sure that the work is delivered on-time, or preferably before the deadline, to give a client a chance to review it without being rushed. Promptness is really appreciated.
5. **Responsive communications throughout project and relationship.** This means returning phone calls and e-mails before the end of the business day or sooner.



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This isn't difficult to do. If you can't do it, have someone else handle it—24-hours is too long.

6. **Staying within budget.** Clients don't like surprises, unless they're good ones. Monitor the budget and keep the client aware if you are approaching a quoted cap for example. It's always better to do this before you run over budget than after the matter is completed.
7. **Transparent and easy to understand billing and terms.** Talking about price can be a sensitive issue. Take the sensitivity out of it by being upfront with how you bill and agree on a final price for the matter before you begin, if possible. Clients don't like surprises, especially when it comes to billing.
8. **You will meet their expectations.** Discover what all their expectations are before you even start the matter. Make sure you do everything you can to meet their expectations throughout the engagement. Keep in mind that when you meet expectations clients aren't overwhelmed—you've done the minimum expected. Now is the time to exceed expectations.
9. **Provide a little something extra.** You provide that little something extra by exceeding expectations. For example, whether it's additional ideas on a project, or personal delivery of a document instead of by courier—it's the little things that can make a huge difference in how clients perceive what you do for them.

10. **You will never take them for granted.** No one likes to be taken for granted; it's a sign of disrespect. Let them know you care about them personally as well as their business. Respect is a universal need and want. Pretend they are the only client you have and you are about to lose them.

Ask yourself how you measure up with each of these ten expectations important to clients. Then work on one at a time over the next several weeks to make sure it is firmly entrenched into your behavior. You'll see a difference in your client relationships in a hurry.

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