

# A Sample Review of 3 Typical Copy Clients

*By Gordon Graham*



In Part 1 of this series, I wrote about what makes a perfect client, for YOU. Then in Part 2, I described a simple method for reviewing your clients once a year.

Today, I'll show you this system in action with a sample review of three typical clients. So, let's jump in.

Using the same basic form I explained yesterday, I added three more columns to review three typical clients: Save-the-World NGO, Consolidated Medi-Devices, and Another Alt-Coin Start-Up.

This time, I shaded in my scores to give a more visual effect. That way, you can see at a glance any gaps where each client falls short of your ideal.

	Ideal Client			Client 1: Save-the-World NGO			Client 2: Consolidated Medi-Devices			Client 3: Another Alt-Coin Startup		
The People	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
The Work	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
The \$\$	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
The Values	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
TOTAL	3+3+3+3 = 12			3+3+1+3 = 10			2+2+2+2 = 8			1+1+3+0 = 5		

## Client 1: Save-the-World NGO

You've been writing blogs and case studies for this wonderful nonprofit. You love the people you're meeting. The projects draw on fascinating research, exactly what you love to write about. Their mission is a perfect fit for your background, and all the staff embody positive values that match your own. They're a dream client!

Well, all except for one thing: Save-the-World NGO doesn't pay very well. You rate them 3 in every category but only 1 for the money. They still score 10 out of 12, which is pretty high.

But you worry ... can you afford to keep writing for such low fees? Doesn't that mean you have to charge someone else much more to make up for them?

## Client 2: Consolidated Medi-Devices

This client makes connected medical gear that helps doctors monitor older patients better — for a fee. Their latest device works, but it's no breakthrough. You wrote a video script and some product pages for their website.

The people are okay, the projects are so-so, and the money is average. The company doesn't inspire you, but it doesn't turn you off either. You figure they're "average" so you give them straight 2's across the board for a total score of 8.

Now they've asked you to do more writing for them, but you can't get excited about it — especially when you have a project from the NGO on your desk at the same time.

## Client 3: Another Alt-Coin Start-Up

This start-up plans to launch a new cryptocurrency like Bitcoin, only to buy and sell frequent-flier points. As though anybody needs that?!

Honestly, the people seem dodgy. The work is stultifying, because they have no real story to tell. You wrote a white paper for them, and they paid you more than you've ever made before. But everyone there just wants to get rich quick.

You don't like the people or the work, so you give them low scores of 1. And although they rate 3 for money, you give them 0 for values. Your alt-coin client scores only 5 out of 12, the lowest of the three.

You shudder to imagine ever writing for them again.

## Not a bad mix of clients

This is actually not a bad mix of clients. There's one you love, though they don't pay well. There's one that's just okay. And there's one that pays well, but doesn't align with your values. You have a different issue with each client — and that happens.

Now, what does your gut tell you about each of these clients? What should you do about each one going forward? Is it obvious? Or are you scratching your head?

Well, here's what I would advise you to do with each client ...

## Get a higher return from Client 1: Save-the-World NGO

This was the dream client that scored top grade in every factor but one: money. They just don't pay what you usually make, and you wonder if you can afford to keep them.

My advice: Never threaten to quit writing for an almost-dream client; instead, see how you can develop them further.

Set up a phone call with your main contact there. Start the call by telling them that you love their mission, the people, your projects, and everything about them. Except for this one thing that you're concerned about ...

Then ask directly how you can provide more value and raise your rates. They may come up with something.

Here are some ideas you can suggest. Could you repurpose your case studies into press releases or slides? Could you write the emails to promote your case studies and posts? Or help post them on Facebook or LinkedIn? Could you deliver your text already pre-formatted in some way that saves them time down the line?

## Can Client 1 help you in other ways beyond money?

*Could they make a bigger commitment?* What about signing an annual contract for a minimum amount of work? Or a retainer for a certain number of hours every month?

*Could they help you find other clients?* How about a testimonial on your website, and on LinkedIn? What about referrals to their peers in other NGOs?

*Could they help you develop as a writer?* What about more feedback and coaching to help you write even better? What about paying for some professional development for you? Or flying you to their annual meeting or a conference free-of-charge as a thank you?

When you put on your thinking cap, you can find many ways for an almost-ideal client to bump up their return to you. Just be positive, and keep the channel open.

## Try to upgrade Client 2: Consolidated Medi-Devices

Remember this one? Client 2 scored 2's across the board, just so-so. And they want you to do some more writing for them. What do you do?

Remember what my consultant friend did about clients stuck out in no-man's land? Find more interesting people, more stimulating projects, or get higher fees.

Be proactive, instead of just accepting whatever projects they toss your way. Ask for introductions to meet other people higher up the corporate ladder or in other divisions or locations. Suggest some more challenging or stimulating projects. And start charging higher fees.

If any or all of these "upgrades" happen, that same client will score higher on your next review, right?

## Dump Client 3: Yet Another Alt-Coin Start-Up

This client pays well, but everything else stinks: the people are impatient, the work is stressful, and the company is driven by greed. It's clear that for you, this is a loser client.

And if you're honest with yourself, you realize you don't want to work with them any longer. You don't even want to talk to them. So why do it?

Next time they ask you write for them, tell them you're all booked up for months out. Or tell them you've realized they're not a good fit for you. Don't bend. Don't get sucked in. Think how relieved you will be to never deal with them again.

And like magic, a much better client will come in to fill the space you cleared by dropping them. I've experienced this many times.

## Perfect clients are rare

After going through this exercise with me, I'm sure you appreciate that an ideal client that scores a perfect 12 is lovely.

I remember one day when I came into the kitchen to tell my wife I'd just finished writing a white paper for a new client.

"You're done already?" she said. "And I didn't even hear you swearing about them once!"

That's because they were totally pleasant to deal with, a perfect fit for my interests and experience, paying my full fees without a complaint.

But the reality is that not every client in the world is a good fit for YOU. And the gift you can get from a bad experience is realizing that there's something more you should add to your vision of the ideal client, for YOU.

So don't let a bad fit get you down. This can happen to anyone, from a beginner to an established pro.

And even with a great client, no relationship can possibly be perfect all the time. But you can work on it, and try to make it better.

A client that doesn't get a perfect score can still be worthwhile, as long as you're aware of the tradeoffs you're making. And as long as you resolve to upgrade them when you can.

Understand that not all clients are created equal, and that you have the power to pick and choose between them to build a portfolio of clients you feel good about. That's the way to whistle while you work.

Do you have any questions about doing a client review and bringing them closer to your ideal client? Please share with us in the comments below.

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# 4 Responses to "A Sample Review of 3 Typical Copy Clients"

Piece by piece the world of copy is starting to make some sense.

Chevron convention rep said they have a 20 yr content writer, their loss.

*Guest (T)* – over a year ago

Question: If in the process of dumping a client they ask for a recommendation to replace you, how do you handle it?  
Thanks.

*Diana C* – over a year ago

Thanks for sharing this post. I have always been motivated after reading your emails. I'm Victor Eshameh, president of Giftedminds Writers Firm, Nigeria. Getting a writing, research offer isn't easy in this side of Africa, but thanks to your guidance. I have never made any comments since I joined in 2014. I just want to say a big thank you. I hope to have enough funds soon so that I can come for your products and programs. Keep the good work and I am just too sure that you are a blessing to many

*Guest (Victor )* – over a year ago

**Diana C: I think the best answer is to look at why you don't want to work with that client.**

**If they are terrible people with no budget and no ethics, you don't want to inflict them on anyone else.**

**If they're fine but can't pay your fees, a junior writer could be happy working with them.**

**The few times I've "fired" a client were when I found them impossible to work with, so I didn't refer them on. If they asked, I would say, "I don't know any other writer who would be a good fit for you."**

*Gordon Graham* – over a year ago

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