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Apr. 10, 2018



Hindsight is 20-20. Over the course of my career, I have regretted accepting select engagements. The interesting thing is a voice in my head always told me to “run!” I listen now after much aggravation and loss of time and money. The patterns that these engagements share are:

The client tells me a story that makes no sense.

I had a client who was being audited. He insisted that his services were not taxable.

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Everyone who doesn't agree with the client is "stupid."

We all know this person. The person acts like everyone who asks a question or doesn't agree quickly with his conclusion is "stupid." A prospect called and asked for research on taxability. She told me that she could understand my assertion that what she did was taxable because I "lacked imagination."

Either the transaction is taxable or it's not. There are many rules that govern taxability. It's not my job to tell anyone what they want to hear. She found someone else to service her. I moved on to someone who values what I do. It was a win-win.

Everything is an emergency.

You get a call from someone who needs a filing by 5:00pm today. It's 3:00pm. This person was referred to you 3 months ago and you never heard back. You don't know the facts of the case and the taxing authority says you can't have an extension. The assessment is going to be deemed final in 2 hours. Your client had over a year to respond. Need I say more?

Procrastination on a client's part shouldn't constitute an emergency on yours. Bye, Felicia!

The contact is non-responsive.

You set a deadline. You need data from your designated contact. He won't respond to phone calls, email, or text. The signatory on your contract has told you she doesn't want to hear about the matter. She trusts your contact completely.

You can't service the account. The only thing you can do is withdraw from the engagement. Do it formally before you prejudice the client's matter. This type of

engagement is a nightmare because it stresses you out and leaves someone with the

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I don't know about you, but I'd rather eat a dirt sandwich than become involved in a matter where there is no chance that the client will get a "good" outcome. The client is never happy and almost never pays in full. Pay attention to the signs...You can't cut and run fast enough!

Keep it pushing!

Mary C. Thomas is a TX CPA/attorney who works in state and local sales/use tax. As a principal of [Thomas, Thomas & Thomas P.C](#), she helps business owners and accountants comply with sales/use tax regulations. When she is not solving tax puzzles, Mary enjoys taking Ella (her dog) on social dates, gardening, and walking off good meals.

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