



## Fairness and Trust

Life isn't fair. We all know this, and yet so many of us are willing to use that as an excuse for certain, shall we say, negative behaviors. We say things like "I deserve to have a new car" or "I work hard so I should be successful" and then we buy that new car (or house, or bling), even though we can't really afford it. We want it, we justify it under the guise of "fairness," and we compromise our values just a bit to get it.

Some people take it to extremes. We all know or have read or heard about someone who tries to "get" his clients before they screw him first; someone who believes the "it's a dog-eat-dog world" theory of business and will thus try to get her vendors to drop their prices insanely low or get stuff for free while all the time complaining about clients who try the very same tactics; or someone who lowballs because it gets him business even though it hurts others trying to make their livings in the same industry. Often these people use the fact that life isn't fair as an excuse.

Yes, life isn't fair, but that is not a valid excuse for not running your business in an ethical manner. Just because Tom DeLay gets away with lots of money for his smarmy acts doesn't give you license to behave in any way similarly, no matter how little. Each of us needs to run our businesses to the highest ethical standards possible, regardless of what anyone else does.

In addition to building good karma, running your business ethically will actually pay off better for you, especially in the long run. When you are ethical, you don't:

lie; jerk around your employees or crew; steal; badmouth others in the industry; badmouth other clients; over-promise; under-deliver; lowball; etc.

Besides being lousy behavior, most of those actions break trust with your clients, and that will hurt your business. Imagine lowballing to get a project--on the project, you realize that you really can't do it for what you said you would; now you have to go to the client and ask for more money, or lose your shirt on the project. Future business is shot with that client because even if you eat it, that client will expect the next project at that same rate, and if you don't, they'll never trust you again so they won't work with you again. Or, when you badmouth anyone, the client will always wonder if you are saying stuff behind their backs too--bye-bye repeat business.

This is a fundamental truth both in "real life" as well as business: build on trust and you build on a solid foundation. In the creative industries, that means being honest with your clients even when it is hard (like standing up for value) and being honest with yourself (do you really need that new whatever or do you just want it). Being as ethical as possible, even if every other person in your industry seems not to be, will build trust and long-term relationships with your clients. And that will mean a successful business.

Life may not be fair, but doing the right things in life and business works out for the best.