

The Lone Drainer and Carlos the Evil Plumber

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Around Los Angeles there is a plumbing service known as the Lone Drainer. The Lone Drainer typically drives around in a van and responds to various plumbing issues. To my astonishment, there are Lone Drainers all over. I even saw a Lone Drainer in Australia a few years ago.

I used the Lone Drainer for the first time in 1997. The Lone Drainer showed up at our door one Saturday afternoon in response to a clogged sink. He was wearing a straw cowboy hat, which he tipped at me when I answered the door. He seemed to be Mexican and spoke in broken English with a very heavy accent.

The house I was living in was on stilts and perched on the side of a cliff—the fall was hundreds of feet vertically. The plumbing was all beneath the house on a sloped concrete platform. Were the Lone Drainer to fall, he would plummet some 200 feet to either his death or at the very least suffer many broken bones.

I informed the Lone Drainer that this kitchen sink was backing up all the time despite the fact that we never put anything but water down it. With this information, the Lone Drainer became more interested in the home's overall plumbing than in just the sink and the current clog.

Instead of working on the sink itself, the Lone Drainer spent the majority of his time climbing beneath the house. He arrived at approximately 1:00 pm and spent at least 4 or so hours exploring beneath the house and hanging from this rafter and that. Finally, around 5 pm he emerged from under the house and announced that he had found a solution:

"There's a huge grease trap that is backing up your drain," he announced. "I am going to open it up and release the pressure. The grease will come out like a fire hose and go down the side of the mountain."

Without knowing quite what to expect, I gave him the go-ahead and he proceeded beneath the house. A few minutes later I heard some gurgling coming from the kitchen sink, and then a giant torpedo of grease and water the thickness of my leg shot at least 30 feet out the side of the house for a few seconds covering the side of the cliff beneath our home.

The Lone Drainer emerged from beneath the house, his face and coveralls dripping with grease. "My work's done here!" he exclaimed. He lit a cigarette, put his straw cowboy hat back on, and wrote us up a bill. I don't believe it was for more than \$250. Not only did the Lone Drainer fix our problem, he was honest and did not charge us a lot of money.

"All these houses probably have the same problem with their grease traps," he told us. He began waxing philosophical about the situation. The Lone Drainer had seemed fascinated with what he had done and stuck around 30 minutes or so chatting about his experience unplugging the grease trap and his climb beneath the house. "They are all built on the side of this cliff and have similar systems to capture grease."

The Lone Drainer drove away. I kept his number, and that was the last I thought I would ever see of him.

The next morning, I received a call from my neighbor on my cell phone as I was driving to brunch with my girlfriend.

"Is the Lone Drainer legit?" he asked me. "He's recommending some work on a grease trap. He just showed up at my door."

"He's definitely legit," I told him. "In fact, he's first rate, and his prices are very fair. I was extremely impressed. He figured everything out. Our water pressure is even better in the house now. And I thought all that was wrong was a stopped-up kitchen sink."

When I returned home a few hours later I saw the Lone Drainer's truck at the house next door. I peered around the side of the house, and sure enough, the Lone Drainer was working underneath it, fidgeting with some pipes. Sometime thereafter, I looked up from my newspaper and saw a giant blast of grease and water shooting out of my neighbor's house as well.

I'm not sure how many homes in that neighborhood the Lone Drainer provided his services to that day, but he ended up contacting just about all my neighbors up and down the street and drained the grease traps of all the homes that would pay him to do so. To this day, I don't know what a grease trap is—or even why all these 1950s-era homes had them. What I do know is that the Lone Drainer did a lot of business and got a lot of business in my neighborhood that he otherwise would not have gotten had it not been for my backed-up sink.

The Lone Drainer's visits ended up having some strange and unpredictable consequences.

As I said earlier, our house was on the side of a cliff. By the end of the Lone Drainer's second day of draining grease and water down the side of all the homes, the cliff was covered with the grease from at least 10 homes. It was actually a pretty disgusting sight—but the grease was largely odorless.

On Tuesday I came home from work to a very strange scene. Several coyotes had gathered on the cliff side beneath my house and were calmly licking at the grease. In all the time I had lived at this house I had never seen a coyote. Now a small group was here, in broad daylight, lapping at a collection of grease discharged by the Lone Drainer.

After a few weeks, each night we would hear terrible shrieking sounds made by cats. Up and down the street, our neighbors with cats—one by one—found themselves losing their animals to the coyotes. From what I could tell, the coyotes had decided to remain in the area, waiting for more grease after they had finished up what they'd originally found. Eventually these coyotes became hungry and started picking off the local cats.

I did not live in that residence very long. Five or so years later, I was living in another part of Los Angeles when one of the pipes in my backyard exploded. Since I did not have a lot of experience with plumbers, I pulled out the Lone Drainer's telephone number and called him. The Lone Drainer did not pick up and the name of the plumbing company had changed.

Within an hour or so, another Mexican man showed up at the house and immediately declared the situation with the exploded pipe in the backyard to be extremely serious. By this time my entire backyard was flooded; there was water everywhere. The plumber needed to root around in the backyard in boots and ended up calling a few other trucks from his company to assist him.

Over the next several hours, they ended up plugging the pipe and pumping all the water that had flooded our backyard back into the storm drain.

The bill was somewhere between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

"What happened?" I asked the Lone Drainer's successor as I wrote the check.

"You have galvanized pipes in this house," he said. "You need to replace them with copper pipes. The pipes you have are all corroded on the inside and are going to continue to give you trouble. You need to replace all the pipes in the entire house with copper."

"How much will that cost?" I asked.

"Are you interested in paying more than you should—or paying a little above what it costs to do it?" he asked.

"A little more than it would cost to do it," I told him.

"If you pay a little bit more than it costs to do it, I can do it with some of my friends for around \$4,000. If you want to pay more, my company would charge around \$12,000 to do it. I will use the same materials and workers, who are just as good; it just will not cost you as much," he told me.

Now, I'm sure you can understand the moral dilemma I was under here. I was faced with the choice of spending either \$4,000 or \$12,000 for what was essentially the same service. I understood—instinctively—that what was being proposed occupied an ethical gray area. But I had not signed any contracts with the plumbing company. I was paying them what they'd asked for the service being provided. But what was being offered still seemed suspect.

"When can you and your friends start?" I asked.

Within 48 hours, a couple of young Mexican men who spoke no English were working beneath my home with blowtorches. One after another, pipes were being cut out and replaced with new ones. Around the third day, something went horribly wrong. The water in the home stopped working completely. The basement flooded and I frantically called the man I'd contracted from the plumbing company. He was forced to drop what he was doing on the other side of town and rush over to try and fix the problem. This happened several days in a row, as the problems with the plumbing work continued to worsen.

Years later, I can still remember how water exploded out of walls and how my backyard flooded again. I remember the basement flooding and how water came out of the pipes all rust colored. Meanwhile, we'd not been able to shower all week. By Friday, the toilets and sinks started to back up without any provocation. They just decided to go into reverse. It was like a bad horror movie.

Just when I thought things could not get any worse, as the home was flooding on Friday and the plumber and his assistants were running around in a panic, two well-dressed men in a Jaguar (who later told me they were from Iraq) showed up at my front door, wearing lots of gold and looking very angry.

"Where's Carlos!" they demanded. "What is he doing here! He's supposed to be at another job. We've installed GPS on his truck. Is he doing work for you on the side?"

Carlos came out looking very frightened. Now, mind you, Carlos was very well built. He had all sorts of poorly made, ominous-looking tattoos all over his body and did not look like a particularly nice guy. But the sight of these two men definitely put him on edge.

Within moments, the Iraqis fired Carlos and confiscated the keys to his work van and Carlos and his young friends vacated the house. The Iraqis then told me how upset they were. One of them went out to the street and shut off the water they saw oozing out of the house in various directions.

"We gave him a chance! He was fired from his last job for doing the exact same thing and he promised he would never do it again. Now here we are again!"

The Iraqis then told me they'd be back the next day to finish the job. Honestly, these guys were so terrifying looking that I was not sure what else to agree to. They told me they'd finish the job for the same price that Carlos was going to charge. This sounded like a great deal.

That evening, my wife, an office colleague, and I returned from dinner to find Carlos and his two worker friends standing outside our front door. It was 10:30 in the evening.

Carlos was clearly upset. He had just lost his job. His workers were upset too. Despite my paying him over \$2,000 for the job so far, Carlos had not paid them a dime.

Carlos came in and told me he wanted to finish the job.

"You want to finish the job?" I asked. "I'm not sure that's such a good idea. Your bosses look like they have killed people—several people—and I'm not sure I want to upset them."

"That's probably true," Carlos said. "This is big. Did you know they only hire people like me who have done lots of time because they know we know how to hustle and intimidate to get people to pay more for work? These guys will only hire Mexican gangsters who have done time for drug-related crimes. I wouldn't have gotten this job unless I'd done seven years in San Quentin for dealing and assault. None of the guys working here would have. Being a plumber is just like being a drug dealer," he told me.

I was starting to get real nervous. What was I dealing with here? Carlos was clearly not messing around. I was now involved in something far more significant than I'd imagined.

"Listen," Carlos told me. I've called all the local networks and one of them is going to do a story about these guys. I also told them about what happened today and one of them wants to come out here and do an interview with you for the 5:00 and 11:00 pm news tomorrow. This is a big story. You have one of the largest plumbing companies in Los Angeles and it's made up of nothing but guys who have done serious drug time and is being run by a couple of guys who got some type of amnesty here from Iraq after the Persian Gulf War. Do you understand how big this is?"

For the next 60 minutes or so, Carlos filled me in on all the ways that his company had taken advantage of me. He told me

that the leak he had charged thousands of dollars to fix the first day was simply a broken valve that cost less than \$1.00 to fix. He told me the other people who showed up the day of the yard leak were not plumbers at all but illegal immigrants to which the company paid \$50 a day so they could look like plumbers and inflate the total bill. He related several other scenarios—taking advantage of the elderly, taking advantage of the sick—you name it. The stories went on.

He talked about his tattoos and how they actually meant he was a good person.

“See this one,” he said turning around and lifting his shirt. “That’s a bat coming out of a cave. It means coming out of darkness. I got that one the first time I got out of prison and resolved to turn myself around.”

Carlos also told me about getting pumped up lifting weights in prison.

Carlos then asked me if I would mind lending him a few thousand dollars so he could get his life back in order. He said that he was worried he might have to go back to a life of crime.

Since I had no reason whatsoever to trust Carlos, I did not do this. Nevertheless, I felt extremely sorry for his workers. On one occasion they’d even worked a full 24-hour stretch when things were at their worst with their plumbing job.

I ended up paying the workers what they’d told me Carlos owed them—which was around \$1,000. They left and I never saw Carlos or the two workers again.

The next morning the two Iraqi guys showed up with an ex-con who did not appear to have a neck. The Iraqis were dressed in their usual silky shirts, creased pants, and immaculately shined shoes. One, who carried a thermos that did not appear to have ever been used, was driving a large, shiny Mercedes; the other was driving the Jaguar from the day before--a Jaguar that I realized was an unusual model I had never seen before, so I asked about it.

The older Iraqi then told me how he had “fine tastes” and had specially ordered the Jaguar, a limited edition, and as he talked I could not but help thinking about the absurdity of the situation. Here was a rich plumber who probably wasn’t even a plumber telling me about his refined tastes and special Jaguar, while he hired ex-cons and was running a huge scam.

After I’d established some rapport with the Iraqi, I mentioned my pending news appearance.

“Yes, that’s right. Carlos told me that Action News at 5 is going to interview me here at the house today. They’ve already left me a message at the office.”

The Iraqis looked terrified. First, one of them took the ex-con without a neck aside, and within 30 seconds he was in the plumbing van and driving away. Then the Iraqis mumbled something that didn’t make much sense and disappeared as well. I never saw them again. I also did not have the opportunity to get on the news. I called the reporter back and she never returned my call.

The next day an established local plumber showed up at my house.

“This is the worst re-piping job I have ever seen!” he told me.

“Yeah,” his assistant said. “Ain’t no one stupid enough to hire a plumber like this.”

Long story short, I got the job done properly—for around \$25,000—and everything ended up working out just fine in the long run. Unfortunately, the bad plumbing work had created collateral damage--to walls, floor, bathrooms, even light fixtures--which had to be either fixed, ripped up, or replaced. So the total, final cost? Something like \$50,000.

You may be wondering what the lessons are in this crazy story—and there are lessons. The most important is this:

The Better You Understand Your Client, The More Effective You Can Be

The Lone Drainer was very smart. He could have easily come into the house and unplugged the sink. In fact, my guess is this work could have been done with a plunger or a snake. But unlike most plumbers, the Lone Drainer studied the situation more completely. He spent a few hours climbing beneath the house and realized that some sort of grease trap was backing up the water in the house.

He fixed the problem

As a byproduct of fixing the problem, the Lone Drainer earned my trust. He earned my trust because he took the time to understand exactly what I needed done. He made no assumptions and did the work the way it should have been done.

The Lone Drainer told me that 30+ years of grease were released when he opened the grease trap. I wonder if he was the first person to understand this issue in 30+ years. I wonder if he was the first person to understand this issue with all of the other homes on the cliff over the past 30+ years.

Very few people are good at their work and truly take the time to understand their clients. The fact that all of the homes up and down the street had the same problem indicates this was something that had been completely missed. How much business do you think the Lone Drainer was able to get from each of these other homes in the future, based on what he found at our home?

Leverage One Contact Into Another

Most plumbers would have simply fixed the sink and moved onto wait for the next call. When you think about it, this is what most professionals do: They fix the job they were called upon to fix then wait for the next call.

But here, the Lone Drainer did something incredibly effective: He studied my issue and realized that practically every other house up and down the street, most of which had been built at the same time and with the same sort of plumbing system, had a grease trap. Instead of sitting home on Sunday, the Lone Drainer decided that the smartest thing for him to do would be to talk to all these other homeowners about their own grease traps.

Because he was fair with me, he knew I’d give him a recommendation to my neighbor. Because he was fair to this neighbor, he probably knew he would get a recommendation from that person as well. He repeated this process up and down the street.

How much business was this worth to the Lone Drainer that Sunday and over the next week? Probably several thousand dollars. Over the next five years? Probably tens of thousands of dollars. Over his career? Maybe millions, if he did it right.

If you understand the significance of this, there’s no telling how successful you can be. If one person trusts you and you do a good job, you can leverage this trust into more business, then more business from there. The process is self-perpetuating.

Your potential success suddenly becomes limitless.

This is the most powerful way to get business. This is the most powerful way to get jobs. This is the most powerful way to make whatever happens in your career something you want to happen.

When I was practicing law, sure I had clients—but I wanted more. Yet I never thought that the best way to get clients was by leveraging my existing clients and the people I was working for. Instead, I thought I needed to do something else—something that seemed, better. At the time, various people and companies specialized in teaching attorneys how to go about getting business. These companies had strategies that advised you to do things like send letters to potential clients, to cold-call people on the phone, and so forth.

Do you know how uncomfortable all of that made me? I simply didn't enjoy any of it. At all. I got hung up on and it was essentially a waste of time.

Why was it a waste of time? Because no one knew me. I was not trusted. I was not referred from or by someone else.

When the Lone Drainer went to my neighbors' doors, he had evidence that he could be trusted: he had fixed our plumbing issue. It was as if their own next-door neighbor was showing up to testify on his behalf. You can always leverage existing business into new business if you know what you're doing.

How does this translate into getting a job? If you do work for someone inside a company and they're impressed with it and you're honest and do a good job, they'll give you a good recommendation. You can leverage this recommendation and accomplish a great deal.

Let me share with you a couple of conversations I've had over the past few weeks. Tell me which conversation you think is more persuasive:

Conversation 1

Them: Hi. My name is Jason. I am with X Credit Card Processing Company. Do you have a moment to talk about your credit card processing needs?

Me: No. I'm pretty busy at the moment.

Them: Are you sure? I'd just like to ask you a few questions. I do not need more than 10 minutes of your time.

Me: No. I'm really busy—like I said.

Them: OK. Thanks.

Conversation 2

Them: Hi. My name's Paul. I'm with Y Credit Card Processing Company. We're currently providing credit card processing for a few of your competitors like Giant Jobs and a few other job boards. We've been able to save them millions of dollars a year through a special program we developed for them that quantifies their unique risk. Do you have a few moments to discuss this?

Me: Yes.

Them: Great. [blah, blah, blah]

Conversation 3

Them: Hi. My name's Paul. I'm with Z Credit Card Processing Company. I've just gotten off the phone with your friend Geoff over at Gorilla Jobs and I couldn't wait to speak with you. We've been able to save them millions of dollars a year through a special program we developed for them, and we realized you're on the exact same processing platform. I cannot believe that we may just have found you a couple of million dollars in savings without even meeting. When can you meet?

Me: Of course! Where are you? Would you like me to come see you?

Them: Great. [blah, blah, blah]

The more you connect with your audience, the more you're referred; and the more benefit you can provide them, the less work networking and finding jobs can be. Can you imagine what would have happened in Conversation 3 if I had somehow been cut off? I would have immediately called Geoff over at Gorilla Jobs and done everything I could to reconnect with the person who called me. You need to be that valuable when you approach people.

Wow People with Your Service and Get Them Talking

By releasing grease from homes and having this grease spray down the mountain, the Lone Drainer was providing what is called a "niche service." I had never heard of grease traps before and have not heard of them since. But they sure made an impact.

This service almost sold itself. The Lone Drainer had discovered a certain type of work that all the homes on the cliff could benefit from but had not likely known about. By telling people he was an expert in providing this sort of service (while using the various references he had received), he offered something valuable and credible. As he worked up and down the street, I'm sure each homeowner must have been amazed to see grease shooting out of a neighbor's home. This type of niche service completely wowed people.

When I go to a Greek restaurant, I'm more than happy to pay \$10 for a slice of cheese, because it's service on fire with the waiter screaming "Oppahh!!" This works all over the world. Whatever you're doing, it needs to wow people. The more drama is involved and the cooler it looks, the more you'll sell.

You need to discover a niche you can sell yourself in.

- It's not good enough to be just a plumber: Be the Lone Drainer.
- It's not good enough to be just an attorney: Be an attorney who specializes in something arcane and who always delivers and always succeeds.

This is what the most successful people do. They specialize. They provide a service that blows people away.

Which conversation is more persuasive?

Conversation 1

Plumber: Hello. I'm a plumber. Do you have any backed-up sinks you'd like me to fix?

You: No.

Conversation 2

Plumber: Hello. They call me the Lone Drainer. I specialize in releasing grease that gets clogged in special grease traps that were built into Hollywood Hills homes constructed in the 1950s. If you release the grease from this trap, you can dramatically increase your water pressure instantly. Would you like me to give you a quick estimate?

You: OK.

Conversation 3:

Plumber: Hello. They call me the Lone Drainer. I specialize in releasing grease that gets clogged in special grease traps that were built into Hollywood Hills homes constructed in the 1950s. If you release the grease from this trap, you can dramatically increase your water pressure instantly. You may have seen the massive hoses of grease that have exploded out of homes in your neighborhood in the past few days: That was me releasing those grease traps. I've worked on just about every house on this street—including the Smiths and the Valerios.

I'm glad I could release all this grease around the neighborhood. I sense it might be dangerous to let it build up as it has in these houses. I've seen homes where the grease stuck in the pipes was so thick it could have caused a fire! No one wants to put their family or home at risk.

Would you like me to give you a quick estimate while you contact your neighbors to see if they were satisfied with my work?

You: Absolutely.

I hope you can see what's going on with these examples. The more specialized the product or person, the more likely the sell—so you need to find your niche. And the more dramatic the product or service, the more likely it'll sell too.

Impress People Once And They'll Want to Hire You Again (Power Point 5).

Have you ever kept the phone number of a plumber for 10+ years? That's what I did with the Lone Drainer.

Despite the fact that he was not the one who showed up to do the work when I called back, I always remembered the excellent service I'd received and made sure I called him the next time I had a problem.

What does this mean for you?

Regardless of what you do—or specialize in—if you impress the people you're working for, they'll call you the next time they have a problem. They won't call your competitor. They'll call you. They'll want to work with you again.

Had the Lone Drainer been the one who showed up and offered me the copper re-piping job, I probably would have paid him whatever he wanted to complete the work. I would have paid him based on the trust he'd earned from me when he did that small job so well for \$250. If you think about this, it should strike you as remarkable that one good job can carry this far--\$250 can easily translate into \$25,000 or even more.

Let's say, hypothetically, that the Lone Drainer showed up at my door 10 years later with the following story:

Lone Drainer: Mr. Barnes. I really enjoyed working for you several years ago. I also really appreciated you giving me such a good recommendation to your neighbor. I have since gone to school and gotten a bachelor's degree and also my master's degree in accounting. Do you know of any places I might be able to work? I'm really trying to better myself.

Me: Do you have a copy of your résumé? I have several ideas.

Think I'd want to hire the Lone Drainer in this situation? Think I'd go out of my way to see what I could do to help him? You better believe I would. Wouldn't you? I'd beat the pavement for this guy, call in favors, do whatever it takes.

This is how people get hired.

Let's talk about how this would work for an attorney.

- You go out of your way to provide incredible service to an important client.
- You help them save (or make) millions of dollars they otherwise would not have made.
- You help them out of a sticky situation.
- You work very hard for them. You prevent someone from taking advantage of him or her.
- You do less work than they would have paid you to do, because you know you can solve their problem less expensively.

This is the sort of thing the best attorneys consistently do for their clients. The rest of the attorneys get caught up in their big bills, expensive office spaces, other attorneys to support, and so on, and they forget how they got to be so successful in the first place. It happens so often.

If you can keep clean and stay on the right side of the fence though, people will come to appreciate you and want to help you. If you're losing your job because your firm isn't doing well, your client will want to hire you. If your client does not want to hire you, odds are they may know someone in a similar business that will. You'll always do well if you provide people a good service and impress them without fail.

Very few people in any profession provide this level of support, though. Instead, these people often view clients as obstacles and their work in general as a necessary evil. They do not realize the incredible success and opportunities that can come from providing a valuable service that people will remember. The value to you of this incredible service will last not just until you get paid, but for a long time to come, especially if you provide a really good service. People will never forget. But everything you do must be extraordinary.

Most People Are Greedy: No One Wants to Pay More Than They Have To

Regardless of what type of work you do, the odds are pretty good that you are paid far less than what your employer sells your work for. In most businesses, there is something called the Rule of Thirds: You're paid about a third of the money you generate for the organization you work for. The other two-thirds you generate are then distributed as profit and to pay for overhead.

For example, if an attorney is paid \$200,000 a year, odds are:

- The attorney's billing rate is around \$300 an hour,
- The attorney is expected to work a minimum of 2,000 hours a year,
- The attorney generates about \$600,000 a year in billable income.

This rule generally translates across most professions—be it sales, accounting, and so forth. There are tons of exceptions and different compensation models, but this is generally how it's done.

When Carlos the Evil Plumber came to me and told me I could save two-thirds of the cost I would have to pay his firm if he and his friends did the work, the Rule of Thirds was in action. He could charge this little because he did not have to pay for vans and equipment, he did not have to pay for insurance, he did not have to keep people on payroll, and so forth.

This occurred years ago. Today, I never would have entertained this offer from Carlos. At the time, it seemed a good risk for me to take. But the fact is, I hired Carlos out of greed. I did not hire Carlos out of trust. I did not hire Carlos out of empathy. I hired him out of greed, pure and simple.

Greed is a powerful emotion and something that we are all vulnerable to. It's an emotion that employers also are very quick to try and take advantage of.

Salaries for in-house attorneys are typically discounted to some extent vis-à-vis a law firm salary for similar work. For example, an attorney making \$200,000 inside a law firm can customarily hope to earn around \$120,000 to \$150,000 at a decent-sized corporation. This disparity pretty much disappears at the higher levels of compensation, but it's still present to some extent until you reach the highest levels. Thus, an attorney earning \$500,000 at a law firm may earn as much as \$350,000 to \$400,000 at a corporation, whereas an attorney earning \$1,000,000 at a law firm is likely to earn that much—or even more—working inside a corporation.

Regardless of the level at which an attorney is being hired, corporate greed, for want of a better word, can often be used to influence getting that lawyer hired. If a law-firm attorney is paid \$200,000, this means his or her work is charged out at \$600,000 a year (or more) to the corporation. By bringing the attorney in-house, the corporation can potentially "earn" or "save" around \$400,000 a year.

If you're an attorney seeking to go in-house, this can provide you with extremely powerful leverage, because no business in its right mind wouldn't want to save \$400,000+ per year by bringing an attorney in-house instead of paying a law firm for the same work. This sort of thing happens all the time.

But how does an attorney (or anyone in any profession) generate unsolicited job offers from clients and others?

First, you need to work very hard for your clients and make them like and trust you. This goes without saying.

Second, you need to make your clients aware of all the work you'd like to do for them but aren't because you want to save them money. As a general rule, good attorneys are always uncovering all sorts of new projects that "need to be done" for their clients. A good attorney (or at least a busy one) always leaves clients with the impression that there is way too much work to be done. So much work, in fact, that new projects need to be authorized immediately.

Third, you need to suggest to your clients that they'd be able to save a lot of money by doing some of the work in-house. This suggestion can be made in multiple ways, but it needs to be made subtly. You need to plant the seed of the idea. Once the seed is planted, the client must also be told that you know lots of people, and if they're ever interested they should contact you. The client should also be told that bringing the right attorney in-house could potentially save them as much as 75% on legal fees.

Fourth, remember: Most everyone is greedy. If you plant this seed successfully, your client will think about it and remember it whenever he pays a legal bill. Moreover, a strategic attorney might even find more work to be done for the client after planting this seed and proceed to do it, thereby inflating the bill. The client will think about this. A lot.

Fifth, as another strategic move and as a smart attorney, you will not dry up your own work source. You'll insure that when the client starts thinking about bringing on an attorney, you're right there, either to do the work yourself and take the job or to send one of your trusted colleagues (either from your firm or another) into that job. Under no circumstances do you want the work you're getting from the company to dry up. Instead, strengthen the bond.

Sixth, the company will often come to you within a period of weeks or months requesting a recommendation. The more likely scenario is the company will begin quietly negotiating for you to come work for them. At this time you can, of course, act as if this sort of thing was never on your mind and thereby gain even more negotiation leverage.

Seventh, with your negotiation leverage and because you're being sought out for an in-house job—not to mention your knowledge of the client—you can negotiate the best possible package of compensation, benefits, options, and so forth. It's a common formula for getting a job and can do wonders—if you make it work for you.

Eighth, do everything within your power to insure that throughout this process the client believes that working for them is something you'd greatly enjoy, that their legal issues appeal to you, and that you've always felt you were their advocate, with a special allegiance to the company.

Regardless of how you do it, people need to understand that they can save money if they use you. I never would have hired Carlos had it not been for greed.

Never Charge People More Than You Have To

The entire business operation of Carlos the Evil Plumber and the Iraqis was built upon charging people as much as they could—in every way possible. In fact, the enterprise was so innately evil that the owners went out of their way to hire convicted felons with street-level hustle and intimidation skills.

While this example is extreme, it's actually how many businesses operate. They are in it for the money and to charge people as much as possible.

This sort of business does not engender trust. This sort of person does not engender trust. People who do business like this are the sort I never want to do business with again.

I just got back from a wedding in the Caribbean. For some reason, I'd forgotten to pack my tennis shoes for the five-day festivities. All I had were sandals. So for each of those five days I wore them--on the beach, when I exercised, everywhere, all the time. By the end of the fifth day, those sandals smelled absolutely awful.

When I got on the flight home from St. Maarten to Miami, it was clear from the looks I was getting that those stinky sandals just had to go, so I determined to ditch them on our layover in the Miami airport and find some new shoes. I rushed off the plane and hustled into a Johnson & Murphy shoe store. All I wanted was to buy a pair of tennis shoes and socks. I picked them out in less than a minute.

But it took me almost 30 minutes to make it out of there.

An aggressive French salesman offered me the following when I tried to pay and get out of the store:

- 30% off the third pair of shoes if I bought 3 pairs.
- 30% off the third pair of socks if I bought 3 pairs.
- A special deal on pants.
- A special deal on shirts.
- Special "preservative spray" for my new shoes.
- More sandals.
- A new belt.
- A new wallet when I pulled out my old one.
- A new suitcase, despite the fact that the one I have is brand new.

I was the only customer in there—not a single person stepped in during my transaction. And I will never go back to a Johnson & Murphy for as long as I live. It's a nice enough store, but that French salesman didn't have my best interests at heart. Each time I refused his offer after he tried to sell me something new, he got angrier. When I left the store, I felt like the salesman was saying to me, "Screw you for not spending more money!"

He was trying to charge me more than he had to. Sure, airport rents are expensive. And I understand business is tough. But a customer needs to feel he's being looked after. People want to feel good about the money they're spending—even if it's on a pair of tennis shoes Johnson & Murphy paid \$3.00 to have manufactured in China then slapped on their name and charged \$100 for them. Isn't \$97 profit enough?

How many people have you done business with who tried to take advantage of you? How about auto dealers trying to charge you \$500 for something called "undercoat" on the bottom of your car? I once knew a guy who had an auto dealership and when I found out what the "undercoat" was I could scarcely believe it—it was a can of some silicone spray that costs about \$5 and took the dealer no more than 10 minutes to apply. The list of people trying to take advantage of us goes on and on.

I can name all the people who've charged me more than they had to—and I guarantee you I will never do business with them again. I will never recommend them. I do not respect them. I will stay away from them.

The Lone Drainer did not try to take advantage of me. He wanted to provide a good service. These are the sorts of people who are employable in the future. This is the sort of behavior that will get you hired, referred, and employed for a long period of time.

Several years ago, I had an employee named "Norm," who turned in incredible amounts of overtime. In fact, this guy was seemingly working two jobs. Every Monday through Friday he was at the office bright and early and worked until late in the evening.

Norm never could work on weekends because they were always filled with religious activities. He spent a great deal of time in religious pursuits and even used his vacation time to go on religious retreats.

He never went to office parties so as not to be associated with any event where alcohol was served. He frequently spoke to people in the office about sin and damnation and the need for salvation. Norm really portrayed himself as living a righteous life.

A couple of years into his employment, I hired a woman who was not only extremely bright and loyal but who also happened to work right behind him. To her astonishment, she noticed that he did little all day but play video games. Norm had asked me to authorize the purchase of a special anti-glare screen for his computer—the only person in the office who'd ever made such a request. He installed this special anti-glare screen over his computer screen then played video games on it. Finally, we started recording what Norm was doing on his computer, since it was hooked up to our central server.

Then I called Norm into my office.

"You're playing video games all day," I told him. "Over the past eight weeks, you've spent less than five hours doing work-related stuff on the computer. I'm not authorizing any more overtime, and you need to stop playing video games at work."

Norm quit his job that day. And then went and filed unemployment, citing "unreasonable working conditions." Then his attorney wrote me a letter threatening to sue unless I paid them \$50,000. We sent the attorney a CD-Rom of Norm's login activity and never heard back.

Not working when you're at the office is charging people more than you have to. Not being productive with your time is charging people more than you have to. You need to be loyal to your employers and the people you're working with. This will get you more work and business.

Be Interested in Your Work

Some people are interested in their work as long as they can charge people a lot of money for it. Others are interested in their work because they're truly engaged in it and interested in it for its own sake.

The Lone Drainer was interested in his work for the sake of the work. He found plumbing engrossing. He found what he was doing fun and exciting. His interest came through. Because he was so interested in his work, he was able to uncover the unique issues with grease traps in the homes in our neighborhood that never would have been revealed but for his interest, his fascination, and his absorption in what he did for a living.

Few people are interested in the work they do at a very high level. But when you're interested in your work, good things happen.

Do you think the Iraqi plumbers were interested in their work? Do you think Evil Plumber Carlos was interested in his work? Far too many people are more interested in hurting others than they are in helping others. I'm not confident that the Iraqis who showed up at my home that day had ever done any plumbing work at all. It sure didn't seem that way.

Bad things happen to people who do work they're not interested in. Bad things happen to people who have bad intentions toward others.

The most important reason to be interested in your work, though, is because it will make you referable, memorable, and the sort of person that other people will want to call on again and again. We respect people who are interested in the work they're doing, and we want to work with them again.

Lone Drainer Conclusions

So here's the lesson of the Lone Drainer and Carlos the Evil Plumber:

First, the better you understand your client, the more effective you'll be. You must understand the people you're working for and take the time to do so. Far too few people take the time to understand their clients. Doing this will reward you.

Second, always leverage your contacts. One contact can help you build an entire career. One reference begets another reference, and so on.

Third, provide service that wows people. Provide a service that gets people talking. Your service needs to be exceptional. Ideally, yours should be a niche service that no one else provides. The fewer people performing your service, the better. And the more your service helps others, the better.

Fourth, impress people once, and they'll want to hire you again. Provide the people you're doing work for with service that is above average and exceptional. You never want people to forget you, and you want them to come back.

Fifth, accept that most people are greedy, and use this to your advantage. People's greed is a simple fact that cannot be changed. Understand how to make their greed work for you.

Sixth, never charge people more than you have to. The instinct of most people is to charge others as much as they possibly can. This is absolutely wrong. You want to charge people a fair amount, but never too much.

Seventh, be interested in your work. Nothing shows your character more clearly than whether or not you're interested in what you are doing. If you're not interested in what you're doing, you shouldn't be doing it.

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