



# Checklist: How to Handle a Business Dispute with Grace (And Protect Your Business While You're At It)

Print it. Bookmark it. Save it—so you're ready when things get messy.

DISCLAIMER: This is not legal advice, for educational purposes only.

## First, Take a Breath.

- ☐ Do not panic. You are not the first business owner to deal with this. You won't be the last.
- ☐ You are not a failure. Disputes happen, even to well-run businesses.
- ☐ This is just business. Respond with clarity, not emotion.

## Step 1: Start Documenting Immediately

- ☐ Save every email, text, and message related to the issue.
- ☐ Write down a clear timeline of what happened, in your own words.
- ☐ Note dates, agreements, payments, names, and any relevant promises or actions.
- ☐ If it was a phone call or in-person convo, write a summary of what was said—who, what, when, where.
-  Why this matters: If it's not written down, it can be twisted or forgotten. Your notes may save your case.

## Step 2: Don't Respond Just Yet

- ☐ Avoid sending emotional replies or threats.
- ☐ Do not make offers, admit fault, or "try to fix it" over text or DM.
- ☐ Pause and take a beat to assess with a clear head.
-  Sometimes silence is strategy. Don't feel pressured to answer immediately.

## Step 3: Get Legal Eyes on It

- ☐ Schedule a consult with a business attorney (even if it's just a quick one).
- ☐ Bring your timeline and any contracts or messages.
- ☐ Ask: "What are my real risks here? What's the best next move?"
- ☐ Let the lawyer contact the other party if needed—sometimes that alone resolves it.
-  Your lawyer can reframe the issue, take heat off you, and protect your rights.

## Step 4: If You Negotiate, Do It Smart

- ☐ Everything goes in writing. Always.
- ☐ Be professional and calm—even if they aren't.
- ☐ Keep the goal in mind: resolution without escalation.
- ☐ Don't take the bait if they push emotional buttons. This isn't personal.
-  Think long game: you're building a reputation as someone who handles business with grace.

Following these steps can empower you and help you protect what you have built.





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## ▶ **Bonus Section: When the Other Side Is Not Playing Nice**

### **If They Threaten Legal Action or Send a Demand Letter:**

- ☐ Pause before you react. It's tempting to call, text, or try to defend yourself. Don't.
  - ☐ Do not respond in writing until you've spoken to a lawyer—emotional replies can come back to haunt you.
  - ☐ Forward everything (emails, letters, texts) to your attorney immediately.
  - ☐ Avoid apologizing or admitting anything—even casually.  
("I didn't mean to..." can be taken as an admission.)
  - ☐ Let your lawyer evaluate:
    - What are they really asking for?
    - Is there real legal exposure?
    - Is there a simple way to settle this quickly?
- 🔑 Remember: just because someone threatens legal action doesn't mean they have a strong case.

### **If They Stop Responding:**

- ☐ Note the date of the last communication.
  - ☐ Write down your last attempt to connect and how (email, phone, etc.).
  - ☐ Stop chasing. Preserve your documentation.
  - ☐ If you're in negotiation or trying to resolve something, consult an attorney before taking further action.
- 💡 Silence can be a tactic—or a red flag. Don't assume it's over just because they're quiet.

### **If You're Feeling Angry or Embarrassed:**

- ☐ Take 24 hours before writing anything.
  - ☐ Talk to someone objective (your lawyer, a trusted advisor—not the group chat).
  - ☐ Remind yourself: This does not define you as a business owner.
- 💡 Smart business leaders don't ignore problems—they get help to solve them.

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