

Better the Devil You Know



Executive summary. Many folks make changes based on temporary pains. More often than not, *better the devil you know than the devil you don't.*

The problem. It happens with a girlfriend, a new service provider, or a material supplier. You've been in this *relationship* for some time and the performance has been less than desired, recently. So, your decision is to dump them. Does this help you and your company? Does starting over in a new relationship make things better?

What's going right. Perhaps the salesman doesn't get back to you in a timely fashion and that irks you – it could be a thousand things. But, perhaps you should start by looking at what's going right, and how this is affecting the overall team.

Maybe from your vendor the product is good, the billings are accurate, the reputation is solid, the location is optimal, or even the yearly fishing trip is fun. Who knows, but I've got one guarantee for you.

The next guy is probably not that different. These minor, or maybe even major, pains exist in most companies. At least if you know where the weaknesses are in your current vendor you plan around them. You can find a new salesman or maybe go out of your way to call a day or two earlier knowing that this guy is not going to call you back right away.

My story. Earlier in my career as a project engineer, I spent hours at the end of many days sorting through invoices from our pipe supplier. Quantities were wrong, unit prices were incorrect, and then on top of it all the billings were untimely. Then I'd get yelled at by the Accounts Payable department for not approving invoices quick enough. But they were one of the biggest suppliers in town, had everything we needed, and they would deliver materials to us at 2:00 am if we needed it. I was working for a new employer at the time and went to the owner of the construction company and complained of these awful billings from the supplier. The owner, what did he say? Basically, he said, "get over it". It was a case of "Scott, they're all this way. The next guy is no better."

When I became a company owner, my position was the same. You learn to pick your battles and learning to lower your expectations is just a fact of life. Try it, your business life and your personal life will get much better!

Work safe!