



## How to Spot Bad Management

Many SWOP-USA members have had experience with bad management while working in the sex industry.

While SWOP-USA does not promote or do advocacy work for those in management roles in the sex trade, many of us either started off working for a third party or presently work for a third party, and we realize many individuals start off working for someone else.

This hand-out is based on our collective experiences and should help workers who choose to work for a third party avoid ending up in an exploitative or dangerous situation.

### Across-the-Board Bad Signs

- The Company website markets itself to workers, *not to clients*. Look for companies in the same way a client would look for them. Most strip club, escort agency, and modeling websites will have one page with a submission form for applicants. The entire website of a legitimate company will not be oriented towards finding talent.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If an agency is 'highly established,' with a '40-year-history' of serving diplomats from around the world and a cast of supermodels, it probably doesn't need to bother to email independent providers or advertise on Backpage or Eros looking for new talent. Same goes for adult film or modeling companies.
- Bad grammar, syntax and spelling. Most strip clubs and adult magazines & production companies have highly professional staff members. Most elite clients will not want to book someone off of a poorly written, poorly designed site.
- The company rushes you as you're reading the contract or distracts you. Not allowing you sufficient time to attentively read it or understand it before signing it.
- Management provides false or misleading information about what the job involves and what is expected of you, dodges questions you ask, or answers them vaguely. Management should explicitly outline information about your rates, the amount that goes to management, the number of hours and days you are expected to work, and their expectations for you.
- Management discusses private issues publicly, in front of clients or other workers who are not involved.
- Management screams at sex workers privately or in front of clients or other workers. This can be extremely humiliating and is not a healthy or acceptable way for management to communicate with workers. Management has no business degrading or berating any workers. If management has legitimate concerns to discuss with workers, they need to do constructively and in private..
- Management ignores or refuses to listen to and consider concerns that sex workers express.
- The manager, bouncer, etc. asks for free sexual services from you before they hire you or at any time during your employment with them. (This might be phrased as an 'audition,' a 'test run,' 'let's see your skills,' etc.)
- The company should have reviews on yelp or on an adult-entertainment-specific website. If reviews repeatedly mention poor working conditions, disorganization (vis-a-vis scheduling), or unhappy workers, you probably do not want to work for the agency or club.

## **Questions to Ask and Tips for Avoiding Bad Management**

- Listen to your gut. If your gut is telling you, "hmmm, something doesn't seem right here" ... there's probably a reason for that even if you can't put a finger on what it is.
- Communicate and network with other sex workers. Share information about working conditions.
- If you CAN, check out several agencies/brothels/clubs/palors before agreeing to work for a given firm. Most legitimate business operations will be okay with this.
- Ask to see copies of the contracts before agreeing to work for an agency/brothel/club/palor .
- Carefully and thoroughly read the whole contract. Ask about anything that is unclear to you and make sure that you are totally clear on what the contract says before signing it.
- Always ask for a detailed description of the cut received by the agency/club/palor/house/brothel upfront. Also ask if there are any 'start-up' fees (for photographs, for creating advertising for you) or penalty fees (i.e., for starting late, for working longer hours). Finally, ask when you will receive payment: does management collect fees from clients and pay you later? How soon do you get your money after a client pays the management by check or credit card?
- If you are working for an agency, massage parlor, out-call dancer service or a brothel, ask what screening procedures the management uses. Also ask if any bad incidents have occurred and what the brothel/agency/MP did (if anything) to avoid similar problems in the future.
- For agencies or massage parlors ,check to see if the agency/massage parlor is a member of a legitimate screening or client-verification program. Most legitimate screening/client-verification programs will not allow sham-agencies/brothels to have a membership.
- Most (but obviously not all) agencies that have a long-standing reputation/relationship with client-review websites are legitimate agencies. If the agency is not listed on a major client-review website, ask why it is not listed there.
- Ask about the management reputation: how long has the agency/brothel/MP been around for? How many clients does it have? What percentage of clients are repeat clients? How does the agency market itself/get clients? What is the staff turn-over rate?
- Ask how many days the average worker works, how many client the average worker sees on a given day or in a given week, and how much the average worker takes home in a week. This will obviously vary from person to person, but it's worth asking.
- For Dungeons/Brothels/Massage Parlors/Strip Clubs, ask:
- What is the screening process for new clients?
  - Is a manager on the floor at all times when someone is in session/doing a private dance
  - How are sessions guaranteed to keep you safe?
  - If there have been incidents before, how were they handled?
  - What is the policy on clients drinking or doing drugs in a session?
  - Are drugs and alcohol permitted on the premises?
  - What is the process for arranging shifts and how flexible is that schedule?
  - Will I have to provide all my own clothes or are there house clothes and shoes?
  - Can I call out sick without being fined?
  - Can I leave a session if I feel uncomfortable without being fined?
  - How do you handle conflict between employees?
  - Will I be required to do submissive or switch sessions/what services are expected of me?

## **Standard Practices in Sex Work**

- *Nevada Legal Brothel System*
  - sex workers typically split 50 percent of what we book for with the house. Many houses also charge rent on top of this, usually \$20-35 daily. A few brothels also have linen fees in addition to this. Some also provide limo and taxi services to clients, the cost of which goes to workers.
  - Sex workers need to obtain a sheriff's card in the county where they work and get weekly exams to screen for sexually transmitted infections (STI's) in order to work legally, and the sex worker typically pays for these.
  - Sex workers in the legal Nevada brothels typically set our own rates, but various brothels have house minimums saying that customers must spend at least "such and such" an amount for time and services, and a couple have posted prices for basic sessions.
- *Agency Work*: the typical 'agency-cut' is between 25% and 50%. This varies depending on what country, state, and city you are in as well as what services the agency provides workers.
  - It's fairly standard for the agent to ask for you to supply your own photographs or to suggest a photographer for a shoot. If you have professional photographs that sync with the style of the agency, the agent should be fine with these photos. The agencies one sex worker was employed at in Germany covered the cost of photographs, but required individuals who worked for the agency for under 3 months, or who earned less than the cost of the photo shoot for the agency (300 euro) to pay the fee themselves.
- *Web Cam/Phone Sex Work*:
  - it is common to work from home, though some entertainers work out of studios.
  - It is also common for customers to pay by the minute and for entertainers to this get paid per minute in a cam or phone show. However, some companies charge customers for blocks of time: for example, paying for a 20 minute block of time up front rather than paying per minute and then the entertainers get paid a percentage of this.
  - Whether the entertainer or the company sets rates varies between companies.

## **Signs of a Bad Strip-Club**

- Management blames you and takes it out on you when customers behave inappropriately or break the rules.
- Management pressures you to dance for or go back to VIP rooms with clients who are drunk, aggressive, pushy, disrespectful, or who make you feel uneasy in any way.
- Though various jobs may be short staffed sometimes and ask you to come in on your day off which isn't in and of itself a bad thing, it is not okay to pressure you to do this and give you a hard time if you refuse. This can happen even at legitimate strip clubs. If your shift-manager pressures you to work on days off, ask to speak with the club manager and explain to him that you cannot/will not do this.
- Management or bouncers don't step in when customers behave disrespectfully, break strip-club regulations about contact, or fail to pay the agreed upon fee.
- Pressures you to provide services to customers beyond just dancing, or to drink or do drugs with clients.
- The club allows clients to go into the 'private spaces' of the club (for example, the dressing room, the private parking lot for dancers). This does not mean the club is a sham, but it does mean that the club is poorly managed and that the safety of its workers may become an issue.
- <http://www.stripperweb.com/> is another great resource for individuals getting involved in erotic dance.

### **Signs of a Bad Mistress/Dungeon**

- The dungeon owner should educate you and clients about safe BDSM before you begin working, before sessions, and throughout your time working. For a new domme or submissive, finding a dungeon which appropriately trains their staff can be difficult, but it is an important first step in a safe workspace. Working as a dominatrix or submissive can be very physically demanding from both sides, and building these skills is important. Though it is not a replacement for hands-on training, the following resources can be helpful in learning those skills: [Kink Academy](#), [The Ultimate Guide to Kink: BDSM, Role Play and the Erotic Edge](#), Tristan Taormino, and <http://www.Fetlife.com>
- Someone is not present at all times when you are working, or does not keep track of the length of your appointments for you.
- The dungeon does not screen clients.
- The dungeon does not allow you to refuse clients, types of services or sessions, or stop a session. The dungeon owner continues to book appointments for you with clients you do not want to see or are uncomfortable with.
- The standard split between house and
- The owner/manager tells you to do sessions or longer sessions with a regular client as a favor to the dungeon/agency/club, without giving you full compensation for the services you provide.

### **Signs of a Bad "Modeling Agent" or "Photographer"**

- The agent or photographer says you have to do a certain number of unpaid modeling jobs as "training" before they'll pay you.
- The agents demand money upfront in order to represent you, even if they say this is just to cover photography and portfolio expenses. If they're legitimate and see modeling potential in you, they'll cover these and other expenses.
- The agent or photographer doesn't pay you on-time or at all for your work, or pays you less than what you agreed to... even after you did all the work agreed upon.
- The agent or photographer refuses to sign a contract upfront saying what you'll be paid for how much time and what type of work.
  - <http://www.joeedelman.com/modeling-scams/> specifically discusses common modeling scams.

### **Signs of a Bad "Adult Film" Agent or Producer**

- The 'producer' or 'agent' is also your co-star.
- If you are auditioning, it's common to have to get naked or (for men) erect, but not to give samples of your sexual performance. If they say you need to do an "audition" in which you perform sexual services for the producer or agent before they'll give you any paid film work, this is likely just somebody trying to get free sex acts and might not even be an actual producer or agent, or have any actual jobs open. Do not work for people or companies that ask you to do this.
- If they aren't emailing you from a legitimate business .com email address, they aren't hiring for Playboy or Vivid.
- How are they communicating with you? Are they respectful? Do they have a concept? Or is it just a guy who "wants to make porn?"
- Research the business. [xbiz.com](#) and [avn.com](#) are good resources. They have directories.

- Understand the common practices. Know what your rates are for various jobs. Hourly is not legitimate. Per scene or per day are standard pay rates in porn.
- It's easy to get gigs if you are willing to travel, especially to LA. There are not a lot of legitimate companies in Chicago, but there are legitimate individuals.
- Ask lots of questions when you contact person when answering ads. Ask to see samples of their work. Ask to see a website domain. Ask if they have an LLC. Do they have information to show they are a legitimate company? Is there a studio or crew? If they can't answer any of these questions, be wary. Also get real name of business owner and Google everything about them that you can.
- Ask about 2257 records keeping. If they don't know what this is, they aren't legitimate and can't distribute. You will need to show an ID and sign release upon performing if they are legitimate.
- If you answer an ad and it says "Today" or "Tomorrow", it's not legitimate. You can't do 2257 and STD testing same day.
- Be aware of what you are getting into and ask for pay up front if the person you are working for seems shady. Ask for pay in cash if it is not an established company. Bring a friend or bodyguard with you if you are nervous.

### **Signs of a Bad Massage Parlor**

- Clients face no screening process.
- The parlor advertises for "massage" without a license.

### **Signs of a Bad Web-Cam or Phone Sex Company**

- The company doesn't reply to your phone and e-mail inquiries.
- There are repeated and consistent technical problems in the system, such as cameras and live chat freezing, cam shows or calls not connecting or getting cut off too soon, etc.
- The company doesn't pay you for all your cam or phone shows. Even if the company says this is because of a credit card dispute on the client's end, this is not your fault and you should still get paid for your work. Also, unless the web-cam or phone sex company sends you an official statement from the credit card company saying there was a dispute that you can verify, you have no way of knowing whether it is true.
- The company doesn't provide an online source that you can log into and check your stats, such as how much money you made, how long your web-cam or phone shows lasted, etc.
- In webcam, various companies provide free chat-rooms where entertainers chat with potential customers to encourage them to buy shows. You should be able to remove pushy, abrasive, rude and disrespectful customers from your chat-room with the click of a mouse. If the company does not provide anyway to do this, it's a bad sign.

### **Signs of a Bad Escort/Private Dancing Agency**

- The agency repeatedly and consistently provides wrong appointment times, dates, locations, etc.
- The agency does not provide accurate descriptions of the escorts, or sends you to a client when they requested a different person or somebody who fits a different description without informing the client that they're sending you over. This is not only discourteous to the client,

but also to the escort, as the escort takes time to get ready and make the trip over to the client, only to likely be turned away because the escort is different from who the client was expecting. This could create an awkward situation for both the escort and the client.

- Up-selling: the agency advertises, charges and takes all of a set fee, and then requires workers to bargain with clients for 'tips' and additional services. Like agencies that advertise using stock model photographs, this will lead to cranky clients, stressful interactions, and a generally unpleasant work situation.
- The agency should allow you to collect money from clients and then directly pay the agency cut or deposit the agency cut into the agency bank account. If the client pays for an appointment via credit card with the agency, you should receive your portion of the booking promptly (within 1-2 weeks), or this fee should be deducted from agency commissions you owe immediately. If the agency says they will take all of your appointment fees and then compensate you later, it is a bad agency.
- -f the agency takes over 50% of your earnings, that is a bad sign. If the agency asks you to book your own hotel room and charges you over 30% of your earnings, this is a bad sign.
- The agency consistently and repeatedly provides inaccurate information to you about the clients, such as what the clients are like.
- The agency consistently and repeatedly sends you to bad clients. This indicates that the agency is probably not doing thorough enough screening, or not screening at all.
- The agency sends you to perform alone for a group of people, such as at a party. If you do not have a friend or security person to bring with you, the agency should provide one.
- The agency does not answer when you call to check in when arriving or check out when leaving an appointment. This is a standard safety precaution.
- The agency misinforms you about how many clients you will be going to see. For example, the company says you will be seeing one client, but there are five people at the location when you arrive. This might not always be the agency's fault since the client might misinform the agency, but if it happens repeatedly, then that raises "red flags" about the agency.
- <http://saafe.info> Support and Advice for Escorts includes advice sheets & a discussion forum. This is a terrific resource for individuals working as escorts or giving erotic massages. <http://www.saafe.info/#scamAgencies> specifically discusses common agency scams.

### **Signs of a Pimp or Trafficker (On the Street or Off)**

- Buys you food or "gifts", or gives you a place to stay, but later demands that you owe them for these and need to pay them back by selling sex and giving them the money you make.
- Is overly possessive and takes control over various aspects of your life.
- Makes you continue selling sex and refuses to let you stop for the day or night until you make at least a certain amount of money.
- Becomes physically and-or verbally abusive and treats you like you're indebted to them.
- Seizes your identification documents, such as passport, driver's license, etc.
- Won't let you communicate with family, friends, or the outside world..or monitors your communication with them (such as phone calls) and tells you what to say.
- Offers to manage, invest or take care of the money you earn for you. If your partner, manager or friend does offer to do so, keep tabs on where the money is going and make sure any assets (stock accounts, condos, cars, apartments, etc.) are registered in your name, or at least jointly.

## **Signs of a Bad Brothel**

- Management refuses to let you bring your own items, such as condoms, food, etc. and requires you to buy these from the brothel.
- Management pressures you to engage in dangerous sex acts with customers, such as sexual intercourse with no condom, etc.
- Management tells customers that you'll do certain types of acts without asking you first.
- Management requires you to be available 24/7 and won't excuse you from lineups to sleep, eat, take showers, etc., and might fine you for this.

## **Other Resources**

### **Online Discussion Forums & Communities:**

- **Stripping:** <http://www.stripperweb.com/>
- **Escorting/Massage Work:** <http://www.saafe.info>
- **BDSM:** [www.fetlife.com](http://www.fetlife.com)
- **Adult Film:** [http://www.xbiz.com/](http://www.xbiz.com)
- **Modeling:** [www.modelmayhem.com](http://www.modelmayhem.com)

### **Advice Sheets:**

- **Escorting:**
  - <http://www.saafe.info/#scamAgencies>
  - <http://www.saafe.info/scamblog/>
- **Modeling:**
  - [http://www.entertainmentcareers.net/data/bbb\\_talent.asp](http://www.entertainmentcareers.net/data/bbb_talent.asp)
  - <http://www.joeedelman.com/modeling-scams/>