

## Structuring 2011 Meetings for Maximum Impact

By Dan Richards  
January 11, 2011

*Advisor Perspectives welcomes guest contributions. The views presented here do not necessarily represent those of Advisor Perspectives.*

Last summer, I wrote about new [research](#) on the factors that shape how consumers recall interactions and experiences.

What researchers found was that in every experience, two things play the most important role in what people remember – that’s true whether it is a restaurant meal, a vacation or a meeting with an advisor.

These two things are the “*peak end effect*.”

### The “peak” effect

The first and most important driver of recollections is the extremes of an experience, both good and bad.

My focus in last summer’s article was the “peak” experience, the idea that to make a lasting impact you have to stand out.

For example if you invite key clients to an annual lunch as a thank you, often that lunch quickly becomes ho-hum. A better use of money is to do something more impactful every two or three years – for example, invite top clients to a private dinner at a top restaurant, and maybe give each a good bottle of wine as they leave.

Chances are you’ll spend the same amount of money in total – but by doing something bigger and more dramatic less often, you’re more likely to stand out.

### The “end” effect

So that’s the “peak” part of the “peak-end effect.” The other thing that drives peoples’ memories the most is what happens at the conclusion of an experience – that’s the end part.

There are broad implications to this for every business that interacts directly with customers.





If you're running a restaurant, you need to think about how you leave people with a positive recollection of the end of their dining experience. That can be a complimentary mini dessert or small glass of dessert wine – lots of high end restaurants serve a complimentary *amuse bouche* at the beginning of a meal, a mini appetizer. If you buy into this concept, you could move that to the end of the meal.

The maitre d' could make a special point of thanking people for coming –using their names in doing so – after all if you've made a reservation, they should have your name.

And finally, you could ensure people got their bill promptly. We've all had the experience of having an enjoyable meal and then being incredibly frustrated getting the bill at the end – and if that's the last thing you experience, it will shape your memory of the entire evening.

### **Ending on a positive note**

The same principle of ensuring that an interaction ends on a positive note applies to advisors – we all need to choreograph meetings so that they end on a high point.

Let's suppose you're using a meeting agenda to set the course of a meeting – something readers will know I advocate strongly.

The problem is that, as a general rule, advisors put the most important issues first on an agenda –as it should be. But you also need to ensure that you leave some high points to the final couple of agenda items, to end the meeting.

For example, you could end by saying you're planning some client breakfasts or lunches in 2011, that this client is someone whose opinion you value and would like to take three minutes to get his or her feedback on a list of possible topics.

That communicates a few positive messages. First, it speaks to your commitment to providing clients with useful information. And second, it communicates that you value this client's opinion and that you value this client.

Alternatively, simply thank clients at the end of a meeting by saying something like this (using your own words):

*"Jim and Sandy, I just want you to know how much I appreciate the opportunity to work with you.*

*You're among the clients I value the most, If there's ever anything I can do to improve your experience or if you ever run into a problem of any kind, I want you to pick up the phone and call me."*

Or consider ending a meeting with these words:



*"We've covered a lot of ground today.*

*If you take just one thing from this meeting, here's what I'd like you to remember"*

And now you have an opportunity to really drill down on an important and positive message for the person you're meeting with to take away.

One final point.

One older client I interviewed said his advisor always walked him to the elevator after a meeting, waited for the elevator to come and then thanked him one last time for meeting.

A small thing – but sometimes it's the small things people remember.

Whatever route you choose, give some thought to how to end meetings on a positive note – the two or three minutes this takes will pay big dividends in the impression clients take away with them.

---

*Dan Richards conducts programs to help advisors gain and retain clients and is an award winning faculty member in the MBA program at the University of Toronto. To see more of his written and video commentaries and to reach him, go to [www.strategicimperatives.ca](http://www.strategicimperatives.ca).*

[www.advisorperspectives.com](http://www.advisorperspectives.com)

For a free subscription to the Advisor Perspectives newsletter, visit:  
<http://www.advisorperspectives.com/subscribers/subscribe.php>