

The Best Way to End Client Meetings

By Dan Richards

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When it comes to leaving clients with a positive recollection of meetings, two things matter the most: “peak events” – the highs and lows they experienced, and “the end” – what happened at the conclusion of the meeting.

I have written about the role of the “peak-end effect” in shaping how consumers remember any experience – be it vacations, restaurant meals or meetings with their advisors.



In light of this, advisors need to give serious thought to how you wrap up client meetings in the most positive way possible – especially during markets that cause anxiety.

The key things you want clients to take away

A good place to start is to clarify the key things you want clients to take away from your meeting. Depending on your own approach and on the individual client you’re talking to, these could include:

- Reassuring clients that they’re on track to achieve their goals
- Putting clients’ recent performance in broader perspective
- Reinforcing your expertise and that client portfolios are well positioned
- Instilling confidence that to the extent anyone can be on top of what’s happening in markets, you are
- Ensuring that clients feel truly listened to and believe that their always needs come first
- Driving home that clients’ business is important to you and they’re not taken for granted

Let’s suppose you’ve got an important meeting coming up and have identified two attributes off this list that are particularly critical to convey. Now you have to think through how you go about making that happen.

One potential approach builds off an idea that I wrote about last week, relating how to begin a meeting effectively.



Closing the loop on a client meeting

In that article, I suggested that you start a meeting by saying: *"I have here the agenda that I sent you, based on the things you told me you wanted to cover today. Before we get into that agenda, what's the most important issue or question you want to address today, whether or not it's something that's already on the agenda."*

And then you need to make it your first priority to focus on whatever answer your client provides, before moving to other items on that agenda.

Let's suppose that your client has said that their paramount concern is getting a sense of whether they're still on track to retire in three years – and you've spent whatever time is required to address that.

Now at the end of the meeting, you could conclude by looping back to that initial conversation, by saying something like: *"At the outset, you indicated your number one goal today was to get a sense of whether you're still on track to retire. Tell me, how satisfied are you with the way we covered your question, from 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all satisfied and 10 being entirely satisfied?"*

If your client gives you an 8, 9 or a 10, you can thank them and be reasonably confident that they feel good about the conversation on that issue and perhaps respond by saying: *"I'm glad you feel good about our conversation on this. Given its importance, I suggest we continue to monitor this and make this the first item on our agenda when we meet next."*

Any score less than that and you need to suggest some further steps to clarify where the client stands, perhaps by saying something along the lines of: *"I think we made some very good progress on this issue today, but I want to give this some more thought. If you like, I'd be happy to schedule another meeting or a time to talk on the phone to further explore some options here."*

By going back to the initial part of the meeting, clients are reassured that you've listened and that you are responding to their needs and priorities. And chances are that during that early conversation, you did a good enough job of addressing the issue that was raised to get that score of 8 or more.

As a final note, you could conclude by saying: *"One last thing, when we meet next, is there any one issue or question that you've like to talk about that we didn't cover today?"* Whether or not the client makes a suggestion for your next meeting, this question again reinforces that this meeting is all about them and their needs.

Some advisors believe that each meeting stands on its own. In fact, every conversation with a client builds on the previous conversation and sets the stage for the next one still to come. By wrapping up your meetings in this fashion, you maximize the chances that



clients will leave your meetings feeling positive and lay the foundation for successful meetings in future.

Here's a [link](#) to the article on *the best way to start a client meeting today*.

And [here's](#) more on the research on the "peak-end effect."

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