

Consultancy and Professional Practice

W7: Concluding & Evaluating

Planning for Positive Disengagement

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WHY ENDINGS MATTER

Final interactions carry disproportionate weight in how clients remember the entire engagement.

— drawing on the peak-end rule (Kahneman)

- You remember how things **ended** more vividly than the middle
- Recall W2: your ending is your **marketing**
- Even difficult projects can end well if closure is handled properly

When to Say Goodbye

Objectives achieved

The agreed goals have been met or are self-sustaining

Capability built

The client can continue without you

Diminishing returns

Your additional contribution is declining

⚠ If the client remains **dependent** on you, you haven't succeeded, regardless of how much revenue that dependency generates. Sometimes the right answer is to leave **before** the budget runs out.

Block (2011)

Why Handovers Fail

The Afterthought Problem

- Handover treated as final rush before next project
- Treated as a **single event** rather than a process
- Months of work compressed into a single meeting

What APM Found

- Studied Crossrail, TfL, AWE/MoD projects
- Consistent finding: handover fails when treated as an afterthought
- Must be planned from contracting, not bolted on at the end



This is especially critical when consultants develop solutions that clients must then implement independently. Organisations have limited “**change capacity**” and can only absorb so much at once.

Common Handover Failures

No Overlap Period

Consultant leaves, client has questions with nobody to ask. By the time the problem surfaces, the consultant is deep into another engagement.

Documentation Only

A 200-page report handed over on the last day. Nobody reads it. The tacit knowledge walks out the door.

Wrong People in the Room

Senior sponsor attends, but the people who will actually implement weren't invited. They inherit something they don't understand.

Single Handover Meeting

Too much information compressed into too little time. Everyone nods, nobody retains.



Handover must be **planned from the start** and resourced adequately. It's not a free add-on at the end.

Creating Closure

1. Project Reviews

Structured reflection on achievements and challenges, while learning is fresh

2. Two-Way Feedback

What did the client value? What could we do differently? Honest exchange in both directions

3. Team Celebrations

Acknowledging completion and recognising contributions, even if the project had difficulties

Block (2011), Chapter 21

The Emotional Dimension

Long engagements create genuine working relationships.

- Endings involve **loss** as well as achievement
- Clients may feel relief *and* concern about managing alone
- Allow time for proper goodbyes
- Express appreciation genuinely



Don't rush the ending just because "the work is done." Taking time for closure is part of **professional practice**, not a luxury.





Think about a project or job that ended well. What made the ending feel complete? What about one that ended poorly: what was missing?

→ COMING UP NEXT

Capturing and commoditising knowledge: how consulting firms build leverage.