

# 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.

# 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.

APM Research Fund (2017); Meyer & Stensaker (2006)

# 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



# 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.**