**Transition Plan to Move Clients**

**From One Advisor to Another**

**3 Parts:**

**Part 1: Initial Planning and Communication**

**Part 2: Joint Client Meetings**

**Part 3: Debrief and Adjust**

**Part 1: Initial Planning and Communication**

**1. Create Two Client Lists**

 - Personalized Transition List: Consists of all the clients that you want to have a personalized transition plan. These are your key clients you don’t want to lose. Determine which advisor each client will be transitioned to. For example, this might consist of the clients that make up 75 to 80% of your revenue, but will likely make up a far smaller percentage of your total number of clients.

 - Group Transition List: Clients that you are ok with announcing the transition to via a letter and/or email.

**2. Client Knowledge Transfer**

 - Brain Dump Sessions: The Lead Advisor should conduct detailed meetings with the Associate Advisor to share essential client history, preferences, and unique circumstances. These sessions should be recorded and transcribed for future reference and attached to the client’s record in your Client Relationship Management System (CRM).

 - CRM Review: Ensure all critical client information is accurately documented in your CRM system, addressing any gaps identified during the brain dump sessions.

**3. Develop a Communication Plan**

 - Craft Initial Message: Create a clear and consistent message about the transition that emphasizes the strengths and qualifications of the Associate Advisor, reassuring clients of continued high-quality service and support. Make sure the entire team knows about the transition and the messaging.

 - Personalized Transition Plans: For the Personalized Transition List, develop individualized transition strategies and a tailored timeline for each client's transition process.

 - Group Transition Plan: For the Group List, develop a communication plan that may include postal letters and emails describing the transition and a timeline for when they are sent. You may want to send them in batches and adjust future communication based on any feedback you get from the first batch of letters and emails.

**4. Develop Stories, Analogies, and Prepare for Objections**

 - Create Relatable Analogies: Develop meaningful analogies (e.g., relay race, diversified investment portfolio) to help clients understand and relate to the transition process, highlighting continuity and teamwork.

 - Anticipate and Address Objections:

 - Identify Potential Concerns: Consider common client concerns regarding the transition, such as continuity of service, expertise of the Associate Advisor, and changes in communication.

 - Prepare Responses: Develop thoughtful and reassuring responses to address these concerns effectively, ensuring clients feel heard and supported.

**5. Increase Associate Advisor’ Visibility**

 - Lead Educational Initiatives: Have the Associate Advisor conduct webinars, workshops, and seminars on relevant financial topics to showcase their expertise and build credibility with clients.

 - Feature in Communications:

 - Newsletter Contributions: Include articles and insights from the Associate Advisor in the firm's newsletters and email communications.

 - Social Media Presence: Highlight the Associate Advisor on the firm's social media platforms through informative posts and professional highlights.

 - Prominent Roles in Events: Assign the Associate Advisor leading roles in upcoming social and educational events, allowing clients to engage with them in various settings.

**6. Update Marketing and Communication Materials**

 - Revise Website Content: Update the firm's website to prominently feature the Associate Advisor, including detailed biographies, credentials, and professional photographs.

 - Create Introduction Videos: Produce short videos introducing the Associate Advisor and highlighting their expertise.

 - Refresh Marketing Collateral: Ensure all brochures, presentations, and other marketing materials reflect the evolving team structure and highlight the collaborative approach.

 **Part 2: Joint Client Meetings**

**1. Schedule and Conduct Joint Meetings**

 - Co-Lead Client Meetings: Arrange meetings where both the Lead Advisor and Associate Advisor are present, with the Associate Advisor gradually taking on more responsibility and leadership during discussions. Rather than call a separate meeting with the client to discuss the transition, consider maintaining your normal review schedule with clients and then introducing the transition as the client comes up for their scheduled review.

 - Collaborative Agenda Setting: Plan meeting agendas collaboratively with the Lead Advisor and the Associate Advisor to ensure all pertinent topics are covered and to demonstrate a unified advisory approach. Have the associate advisor take the first pass at establishing the agenda.

 - Demonstrate Team Synergy: Use these meetings to showcase the seamless collaboration between the Lead Advisor and Associate Advisor, reinforcing client confidence in the team's capabilities.

**2. Joint Communication Initiatives**

 - Co-Signed Communications: Begin sending emails, reports, and updates co-signed by both the Lead Advisor and Associate Advisor to signal start of the transition.

 - Response to Inquiries: Encourage clients to reach out to the Associate Advisor with questions and ensure timely, coordinated responses to reinforce the collaborative support system.

**3. Enhance Client Relationships**

 - Personal Outreach by Associate Advisor: The Associate Advisor should proactively reach out to clients for check-ins, updates, and to address any concerns, building direct and trusting relationships.

 - Celebrate Client Milestones: Acknowledge and celebrate clients' special occasions (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries) through personalized messages or small tokens from the Associate Advisor.

 - Social Engagements: Organize informal gatherings or one-on-one meetings (e.g., lunches, coffee meetings) between clients and the Associate Advisor to strengthen personal connections outside of formal settings.

**4. Reinforce the Team Approach**

 - Consistent Messaging: Continuously emphasize the strength and depth of the advisory team in all interactions, assuring clients that they are supported by a cohesive and competent group dedicated to their financial well-being.

 - Highlight Collaborative Successes: Share examples and stories of successful collaborations within the team to illustrate the benefits and effectiveness of the team-based approach.

 **Part 3: Debrief and Adjust**

**1. Regular Debrief Meetings**

 - Scheduled Team Discussions: The Lead Advisor and Associate Advisor should hold regular meetings to review the progress of the transition, discuss experiences from joint meetings, and share client feedback.

 - Assess Client Comfort Levels: Evaluate how clients are adapting to the transition, identifying any signs of discomfort or resistance that need to be addressed immediately.

**2. Collect and Analyze Client Feedback**

 - Feedback Surveys: Consider distributing brief surveys to clients to gather structured feedback on their experience with the transition and the Associate Advisor.

 - One-on-One Feedback Sessions: Engage in direct conversations with select clients to gain deeper insights into their perspectives and any specific concerns.

**3. Adjust Transition Strategies as Needed**

 - Identify Areas for Improvement: Use the collected feedback to pinpoint aspects of the transition process that may require refinement or adjustment.

 - Implement Changes: Modify strategies, communication approaches, or timelines based on feedback to enhance the effectiveness and smoothness of the transition.

 - Provide Additional Support: Offer extra resources or support to clients who may be struggling with the transition, ensuring they feel valued and understood throughout the process.

**4. Monitor and Celebrate Progress**

 - Track Milestones: Keep track of key transition milestones achieved, acknowledging the progress made by both the team and the clients.

 - Celebrate Successes: Recognize and celebrate successful transitions and positive client feedback within the team, fostering motivation and reinforcing effective practices.

 - Document Best Practices: Compile learnings and successful strategies into a documented framework that can be used for future transitions or shared with broader teams.

**5. Finalize Transition**

 - Transfer Full Responsibility: Gradually have the Associate Advisor take over full responsibility for client relationships, with the Lead Advisor stepping into a supporting or strategic advisory role as planned.

 - Ensure Ongoing Excellence: Continue to monitor client satisfaction and service quality post-transition, making adjustments as necessary to maintain and enhance client trust and engagement.

**Sample Script to Communicate a Lead Advisor**

**Who is Phasing in Their Retirement**

Note, you’re not going to use this verbatim. It’s just an example and you should modify it, add to it, subtract from it, and use your own voice.

**Sample Script:**

"[Client name], as you know, I've had the privilege of being your financial advisor for [X] years now. We've worked closely together to build and manage your wealth, and I'm proud of all we've accomplished.

As I approach my 65th birthday, I've been giving a lot of thought to our succession plan. It's positive for all of our clients to ensure the longevity of the firm.

I want you to know that I have no plans to retire completely anytime soon. However, in the interest of ensuring a smooth and well-planned transition, I am going to start reducing my time commitment over the next couple years. My plan is to cut back to 50% time.

The good news is that I have an extremely talented team here that I've been working alongside for many years. That’s why I named the firm Acrux Private Wealth Management, not Joe Smith Wealth Management - because it's not about me, it's bigger than who I am. It’s about the strength of the entire team.

You know [Advisor name]. [He/she] has been with me for [X] years and is an outstanding advisor with deep expertise in [areas of focus]. I have complete confidence in [his/her] abilities. Over the next [time period], I'd like to start/continue having [Advisor name] join our meetings and become more involved in leading our relationship. My goal is to have [him/her] become your primary advisor over time, with me still being available for strategic guidance and advice.

I want to assure you that you aren't losing me; you're gaining [Advisor name] and the entire team. I'll still be here, but [he/she] will be your main advisor contact. This will allow me to ensure I'm giving you the high level of service you deserve even as I step back my time commitment.

I'm fully committed to making this a seamless transition for you. [Advisor name] and I will be working closely together on your behalf. My top priority is making sure you are comfortable and confident with this transition plan."

The keys are to emphasize:

1) Your continued involvement with the firm, just at a reduced time commitment

2) The strength and talent of the whole team, not just you

3) The qualifications and tenure of the new advisor

4) The thoughtful and gradual nature of the transition - it won't be abrupt

5) Your desire to ensure the client is fully comfortable with the plan

By delivering the message this way, it frames the transition in a positive light and provides reassurance to the client that they will continue to receive the highest level of service and guidance. The client should feel they are in good hands with the new advisor and the transition plan.

**How to Initiate the Transition Conversation in a Natural Way**

Here are a few examples of situations where it would be natural for you to bring up the transition conversation with a client:

**1. During an annual review meeting:**

As you are discussing the client's financial plan and portfolio performance over the past year, you could segue into the transition conversation. You might say something like, "As we look ahead to the future, there's something I want to discuss with you about my own plans and how we can ensure you continue to receive the best service and advice."

**2. When a client asks about retirement or succession planning for their own business:**

If a client is seeking advice about their own retirement or succession planning, you could relate it to your own situation. You could say, "I'm glad you brought this up because I've been giving a lot of thought to my own succession plan. I want to share with you how I'm planning to transition my practice over the next few years to ensure you're always well taken care of."

**3. When a client expresses concern about what will happen to them if something happens to you:**

If a client asks a question like, "Joe, what happens to me and my money if something happens to you?" This is a perfect opening for the transition conversation. You could reply, "That's a great question, and it's actually something I've been planning for. I want to tell you about the succession plan I have in place to ensure you're always in good hands, no matter what."

**4. When discussing a client's long-term financial goals:**

As you are talking with a client about their long-term financial objectives, you could relate it to the firm's long-term commitment to the client. You might say, "Speaking of the long-term, I want to share with you the plans I'm making for the future of our firm. My goal is to ensure that you and your family are well served by our firm for many years to come, even as I start to step back a bit."

**5. At the end of a meeting, as part of the wrap-up:**

As you are summarizing the key points from a meeting and discussing next steps, you could include the transition as part of the conversation. You could say, "Before we wrap up, there's one more topic I want to discuss with you. It's about some changes I'm planning for my eventual retirement and how it will benefit you."

The key is to look for opportunities where the transition conversation flows naturally from the topics already being discussed. By relating it to the client's own situation or concerns, it becomes a relevant and organic part of the conversation rather than an abrupt or unexpected announcement.

**Using Analogies to Explain the Transition**

Here are 5 examples of analogies you could use to help clients understand the transition. Again, you won’t use this language verbatim. You might also come up with some other analogies that make sense based on the client’s particular situation. I’m sharing these as idea sparks that might prompt examples from you.

**1. Financial planning analogy:**

"You know how we've been working together to create a comprehensive financial plan for you? We started with a strong foundation and then built upon it over time, making adjustments as your life and goals changed. Well, I'm doing something similar with my own practice. I'm laying the groundwork now for a smooth transition in the future, so that no matter what changes, your financial well-being will always be attended to by one of my team members."

**2. Investing analogy:**

"In investing, we always talk about the importance of diversification - not putting all your eggs in one basket. Well, I'm applying that same principle to my practice. By bringing in [Advisor name] and having [him/her] work closely with me on your case, we're diversifying the expertise and perspective you benefit from. It's a way to manage risk and ensure continuity in your financial care."

**3. Business succession planning analogy (for business owner clients):**

"As a business owner, I know you understand the importance of having a strong succession plan in place. You want to ensure that the company you've worked so hard to build can thrive even when you're no longer at the helm. I'm doing the same thing with my practice. [Advisor name] has been working with me for the past X years to ensure that when I step back, they’re ready to step in and continue to deliver the level of service and advice you’ve become accustomed to."

**4. Entertainer analogy (for entertainer clients):**

"You know how in Broadway shows the performers change over time, but the story remains the same? We’re making a similar change here as I step back and make room for the next generation of leaders to lead the firm."

**5. Relay race analogy:**

"Transitioning my practice is a bit like a relay race. For many years, I've been running the race, carrying the baton, which represents the responsibility of managing your financial well-being. As I look towards the future, I know it's time to start planning for a smooth handoff. That's why I'm bringing [Advisor name] in as my relay partner. We'll be running together for a while, and then when the time is right, I'll pass the baton to [him/her]."

These analogies take concepts that clients are already familiar with (financial planning, investing, business succession, entertainment, sports) and use them to create a relatable, easy-to-understand framework for the transition. They emphasize key points like continuity of service, risk management, and teamwork.

**Overcoming Potential Objections**

Here are 5 possible objections clients might have about you transitioning them to another advisor, along with suggested responses. Again, these are just ideas and you’ll want to use your own words and voice.

1. Objection: "I'm comfortable with you, Joe. I don't want to work with someone new."

Response: "I completely understand. The relationship and trust we've built over the years are incredibly important to me. That's why I've put so much thought into this transition plan. [Advisor name] isn't new to me or to our firm - we've worked closely together for [X] years. [He/She] shares my values and approach to financial planning. I'll be working side-by-side with [him/her] to ensure that you receive the same high level of service and advice you've come to expect from me. And I'll still be here, just in a more strategic role. I'm confident that as you get to know [Advisor name], you'll come to trust and appreciate [him/her] as much as I do."

2. Objection: "I'm worried that I'll be getting a less experienced advisor."

Response: "[Advisor name] is an outstanding advisor with [X] years of experience in [areas of expertise]. In fact, they have a specialty in [X] that goes beyond my knowledge in that area—and I think that can be quite helpful to you. [He/She] has been an integral part of our team for [X] years and has contributed significantly to the success of our clients. I have complete confidence in [his/her] abilities. Remember, I built this firm on the principle of providing the highest quality advice - I wouldn't be transitioning you to [Advisor name] if I didn't believe you would be in excellent hands. It’s not that you’re losing me, you’re gaining the rest of the team."

3. Objection: "Will my fees increase with this change?"

Response: "Absolutely not. Our fee structure will remain exactly the same. This transition is about ensuring you continue to receive the best possible service and advice, not about changing our fees. We remain committed to providing value to you and being transparent about our costs."

4. Objection: "I'm worried that my investments will be handled differently."

Response: "[Advisor name] and I share the same investment philosophy and approach. We've worked together for many years to develop and refine the strategies we use to manage our clients' portfolios. [He/She] has been involved in the management of your investments alongside me. You can expect the same disciplined, thoughtful approach to your portfolio management, aligned with your goals and risk tolerance."

5. Objection: "What if I don't like working with [Advisor name]?"

Response: "I understand your concern. It's important to me that you feel comfortable and confident with your advisor. That's why I'm proposing a gradual transition, where [Advisor name] and I will work together with you over [time period]. This will give you the opportunity to get to know [him/her] and develop a relationship. However, if at any point you feel that it's not a good fit, please let me know. My priority is ensuring that you receive the best possible service. If necessary, we can discuss other options, including exploring another advisor within our firm who might be a better match for you. Your comfort and confidence are paramount."