

Sample Retirement Timeline

4–5 Years Before Retirement: Foundation & Preparation

Clarify Exit Goals

- Set a realistic retirement timeline and define post-exit involvement (e.g., consultant, part-time, full exit).
- Decide priorities: legacy, client care, payout, business continuity.

Identify Succession Path

- Assess readiness of junior advisor or begin recruiting/development.
- Explore internal transition vs. external sale vs. merger.

Digitize Operations

- Migrate paper files and notes into CRM.
- Build detailed client profiles (bio, family tree, preferences).

Clean Up Financials

- Analyze P&L, streamline expenses (staffing, software, marketing).
- Identify and track KPIs (Revenue/AUM per HH, client age).

Legal & Entity Review

- Update or draft buy-sell agreements, operating agreements, and continuity plans.

3–4 Years Before Retirement: Restructure & Optimize

Simplify Business Lines

- Consolidate platforms, money managers, custodians.
- Migrate clients to systems that align with buyer expectations.

Valuation & Strategic Advice

- Get a valuation from Harbour.
- Meet with your tax professional and attorney.

Client Segmentation

- Apply 80/20 Rule: Sell off least profitable clients or book segments.

Review Major Contracts

- Start compiling all lease and vendor contracts (office, copier, tech, internet).
- Note renewal dates, termination windows, assignment clauses.
- Begin mapping which contracts the buyer may want to assume.

2–3 Years Before Retirement: Develop & Test

Staff & Vendor Transition Plan

- Meet with key admin/support staff to understand their career plans and interest in staying post-sale.
- Begin informal discussions around transition support, possible changes in reporting structure.

Contracts & Leases

- Discuss potential lease assignment or shared use during transition.
- Reach out to landlords and key vendors to explore contract transfer or buyout terms.
- Prepare a list of subscriptions/services to cancel, transfer, or renegotiate.

Train Successor

- Create formal mentorship plan, start knowledge transfer.
- Begin shared client meetings for A & B households.

Document Operations

- Finalize fee schedules, onboarding workflows, service models.

Transition Simulation

- Trial-run small-scale book transition.
- Draft/structure purchase terms and valuation formula to be used subject to tweaks.

Prepare Clients Subtly

- Start messaging continuity themes in reviews and newsletters.

1–2 Years Before Retirement: Transition Strategy in Motion

Finalize Transition Terms

- Most people sell January 1 or April 1 for expense reasons.
- Many move to part time after the sell with no E&O
- Sign legal docs: purchase agreement, tax terms, non-compete/solicit.
- Buyer and seller determine amortization or lump sum, with tax strategy.

Client Transition Meetings

- Meeting 1: Seller leads, introduces the buyer.
- Meeting 2: Joint session with buyer co-leading.
- Meeting 3: Buyer leads, seller supports in background.
- Meeting 4: Buyer leads independently; seller steps away.

Operations Realignment

- Update office space/logistics (e.g., new leases, shared rooms).
- Provide buyer partial access to CRM/Redtail, software logins.
- Begin handoff of compliance, billing, tech stack.

Communication Plan

- Draft retirement announcement letters.
- Coordinate transition notice with custodian/BD.

Prepare Clients Subtly

- Assign or terminate leases (office, copier, internet, etc.).
- Transfer software subscriptions and admin tools (e.g., Redtail, Sharefile).
- Update payment responsibilities (e.g., Wi-Fi, phones, software auto-pays).

<1 Year Before Retirement: Execute the Exit

Complete All Contractual Transitions

- Ensure everything is either assigned, canceled, or documented for final closure.
- Confirm office, staff, and vendor arrangements align with buyer expectations.

Client Assurance

- Send final letters, host a thank-you event.
- Ensure smooth handoff and no disruption in service or communication.

Business Offboarding Checklist

- Cancel or transfer software, phones, copier, Wi-Fi, office lease, insurance, subscriptions.
- Transition 401(k), workers' comp, Zoom, GoDaddy, etc.
- **Post-Exit Role (Optional)**
 - Continue in a limited consultant or part-time role for 6–12 months if needed.