FIDELITY WEALTH®

# Closing the advisor succession gap

## What Canadian wealth advisors need from succession planning, and what stands in the way

# Succession planning is emerging as a critical stewardship challenge for Canadian wealth advisors, with implications for clients, business value and the legacy advisors leave behind.

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- **Only 17% of Canadian wealth advisors aged 50 and older have a complete, documented succession plan**, even though a large majority of them have a general timeframe for retirement in mind.
- Among advisors without a documented plan, uncertainty around the **formal timeline for succession** and the **lack of a clear successor** are cited as barriers to succession planning.
- **Ensuring their clients are taken care of during the succession process** ranks as the top concern for a majority of advisors.
- Advisors say their optimal succession plan **prioritizes identifying the right successor** and **retaining clients**, reinforcing that succession is about **continuity** as well as **transaction value**.
- **Developing a formal succession plan early** provides advisors with peace of mind and confidence that their needs will be met.

# Only a minority of advisors nearing retirement have a documented succession plan

For many advisors, succession planning is one of the most important stewardship decisions of their career. It determines how clients will be cared for, relationships will be carried forward and the value of the business they have built will be protected.

Canada's wealth advisory industry is entering a period of transition, with a large cohort facing retirement in the coming years. Most Canadian wealth advisors aged 50 and older have a firm idea of their retirement timeline: **One in three expects to retire from advisory work within the next five years**. Even so, **only 17% have completed a formal succession plan** that documents how and to whom they'll transfer their business.

**Fidelity Wealth's 2026 Retiring Advisor Report** shows a clear gap between retirement intention and formal succession planning. Many advisors would benefit from support to develop a succession plan that is clear, practical and aligned with their priorities.

Overall, our report highlights that advisor transitions are more than just financial transactions. Advisors tell us they want a succession plan that prioritizes client continuity and identifies a successor who will bring a similar approach to client services. An effective plan also benefits the advisor, prioritizing a fair valuation, ease of transition and providing a measure of flexibility as the transition unfolds.

### About the 2026 Retiring Advisor Report

This proprietary report was commissioned by Fidelity Wealth Canada and fielded between January 26 and February 19, 2026 by Environics Research.
The research was conducted with 530 English and French-speaking financial advisors across Canada, aged 50 and older.
Participants were a mix of securities-licensed advisors, mutual-fund-focused advisors and insurance-focused advisors.

# Most advisors know *when* they want to retire, but not *how* they'll get there

While the vast majority of Canadian wealth advisors say they have a general retirement timeframe in mind, just over half have no plan to get there. And of all the advisors we spoke to, only 17% said they have a complete, documented succession plan.

**68**

The age at which, on average, **advisors expect to retire**

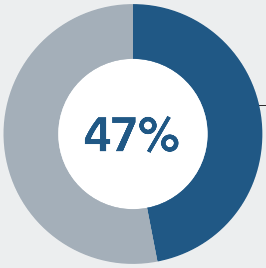
**32%**

Percentage of advisors who told us they plan to **retire within the next 5 years**

As we explore in this report, there are common reasons for this succession planning gap. Many advisors have not yet identified a clear successor. Others are unsure of how to approach the transition of a business they have built over many years.

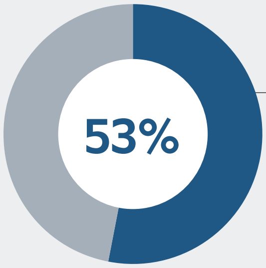
Institutional support also makes a difference. Advisors are much more likely to have a succession plan if their dealer offers formal transition planning support and resources.

## MORE THAN HALF OF ADVISORS SAY THEY DON'T HAVE A SUCCESSION PLAN




**I have a plan (formally documented or not)**

| | |
|---|---|
| I have completed a documented plan | 17% |
| I have started, but not completed, a documented plan | 7% |
| I know what I'll do, but don't have a documented plan | 23% |



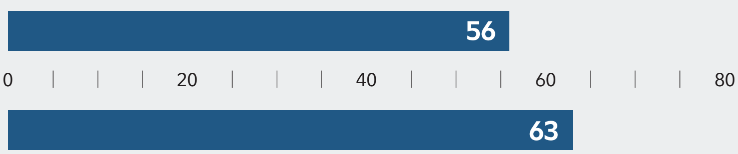

**I have no plan**

| | |
|---|---|
| I have a pretty good idea but am still developing it | 22% |
| I have a rough idea of what I'm going to do but no real plan | 23% |
| I haven't really thought about what I'm going to do | 8% |

# Advisors with a succession plan tend to start earlier

Advisors who currently do not have a documented succession plan say they intend to create one around the age of 63. On average, this is **seven years later than those who have already completed their succession plan** and it's much closer to the average expected retirement age of 68.

**Age at which advisors with a succession plan began developing it**




**Age at which advisors without a documented plan say they expect to create one**

Starting succession planning later can reduce flexibility and narrow available options to wealth advisors. It leaves less time to identify the right successor, prepare clients for the transition, agree on fair value and determine how the advisor wants to step back from the business. Succession planning is typically a multi-year process comprised of many important decisions, where wealth advisors require time to ensure proper successor fit, client continuity, fair value for the business and flexibility in how the advisor steps back.

Delayed planning can also affect advisor confidence. **Advisors with a documented plan express more confidence** in their approach than those who've yet to formalize their intended transition. Nine in 10 wealth advisors with a documented succession plan say they are satisfied with their plan and how it fits their needs.

> **One of the most common things I hear from advisors is, 'I'll retire in about five years.' It's far enough away to feel comfortable, but close enough to feel responsible. Succession planning often lives in advisors' minds, without formal structure or timelines. Advisors do a great job telling clients to plan, write things down, create structure and prepare for the unexpected. But I find they don't always follow that advice when it comes to their own succession plan.**
>
> **PIER-ALEXANDRE DROUIN**
> **VP, Business Development – Wealth Management, Fidelity Wealth**

# Succession planning involves both practical and personal considerations

Our findings highlight several barriers to creating a documented succession plan.

**40% of wealth advisors** without a documented plan are most likely to cite **uncertainty about their succession timeline** as the reason for delaying. **Another 38%** say the major obstacle is having **no clear successor**.

**For 17% of advisors**, there just **isn't enough time** to devote to succession planning. Others say they **lack clarity around which sale/transfer option** is best, or don't even know where to start.

These findings suggest that practical and logistical questions remain significant barriers for many advisors, underscoring the merits of having support throughout the process.

But our research also shows that succession planning has a personal dimension.

For the majority of wealth advisors, their top concern is **ensuring clients continue to receive the support and service they expect during the transition**. Other top concerns include **finding a successor** that can take over the relationships they've nurtured, followed by **maximizing the sale price** of their business.

## KEY CONCERNS IN NAVIGATING SUCCESSION PLANNING

| | |
|---|---|
| 62% | Ensuring that my clients are taken care of in the process |
| 44% | Finding an advisor to take over my relationships with clients |
| 40% | Maximizing the sale price for my assets/business |
| 38% | Determining what would happen to my clients and business if I were to die or become incapacitated |
| 32% | Planning for the tax impacts of selling my assets/business |
| 31% | Finding a buyer for my business/assets |
| 29% | Understanding how to best wind down my business as I exit |
| 25% | Helping my team/staff transition to new roles |
| 20% | Figuring out what to do in retirement |

**% who are concerned or very concerned about successfully achieving succession planning priorities**

## For many advisors, business and personal identity are closely connected

Many wealth advisors build their business around personal relationships and a reputation developed over time. Transitioning a business so closely associated with their personal identity can be difficult. It explains why many wealth advisors delay succession planning or place greater importance on identifying the right successor.

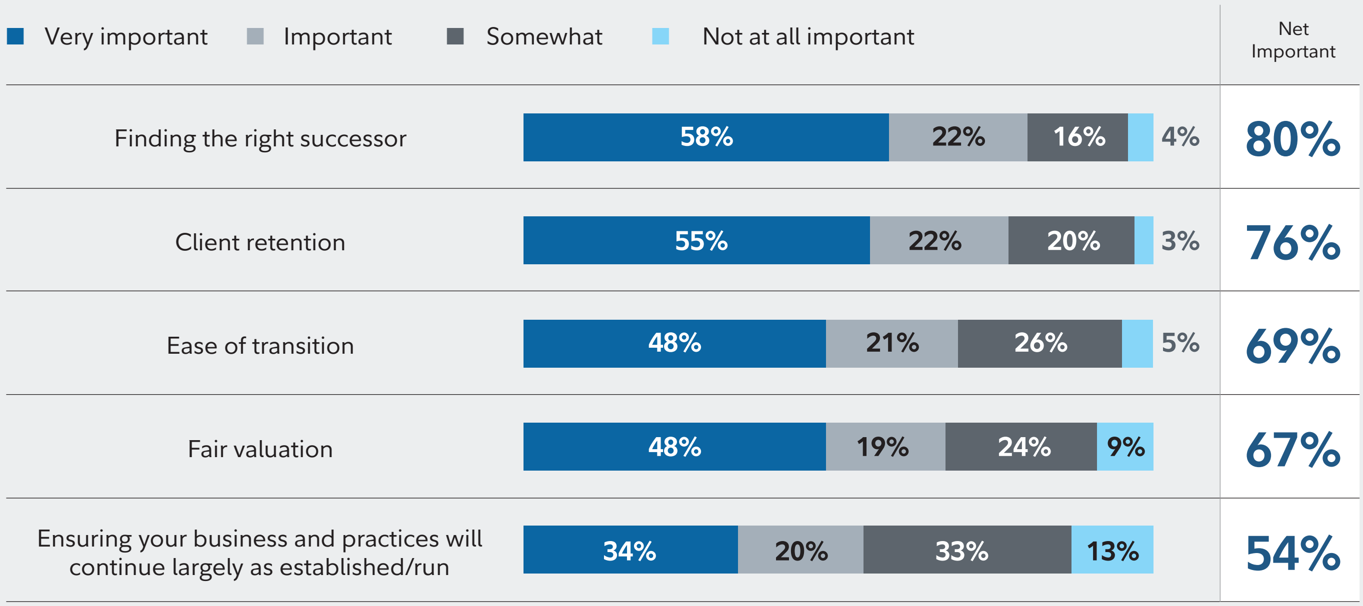
> **Succession planning is often framed as a sale, but the reality is far more complex and personal than that. For many advisors, their practice is deeply personal, which is why succession planning becomes about finding the right timing, the right successor and the right long-term outcome for clients.**

**PIER-ALEXANDRE DROUIN**
**VP, Business Development – Wealth Management, Fidelity Wealth**

# A strong succession plan balances advisor and client needs

Advisors say their number one priority in succession planning is **identifying the right successor**. 80% cite it as important, including 58% who say it's very important. **Client retention** again ranks as a top priority, echoing concerns about ensuring proper client care during the succession process.

## IMPORTANCE OF KEY FACTORS IN DEVELOPING AN OPTIMAL SUCCESSION PLAN




> **When it comes time to choose a successor, advisors aren't evaluating interest. They're evaluating readiness. It's not just about who can buy, but who can support their clients financially, operationally and culturally over the long term. They want to know their clients will be well taken care of for years to come.**

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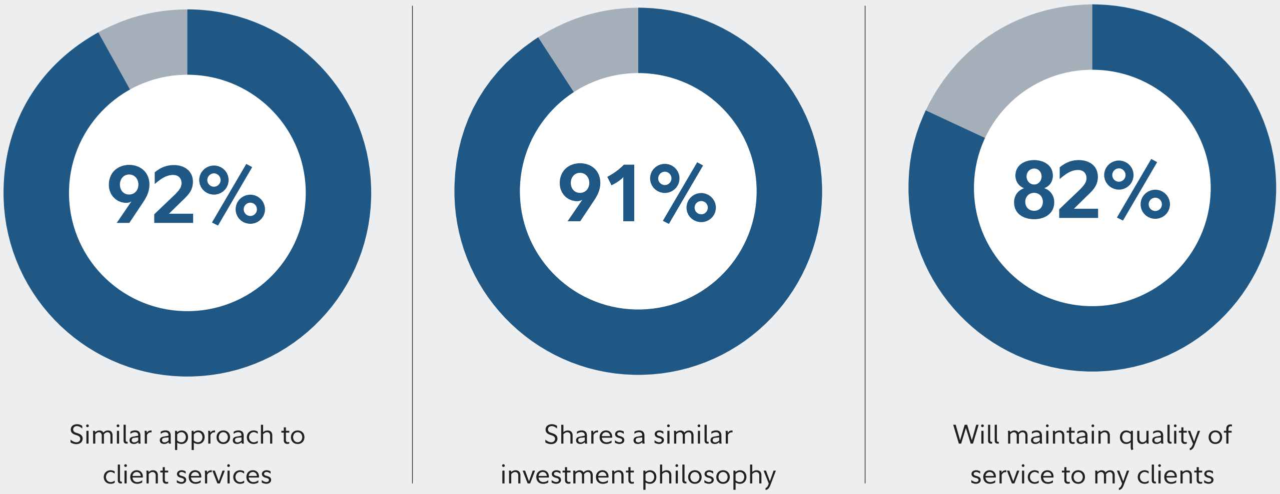
Advisors say they also prioritize ease of transition and flexibility. Of advisors with a written succession plan, **73% say they would like to continue working in some capacity** for a few years after their book is sold. Most of those advisors expect to act as a consultant to their successor, and some expect to continue working with select clients.

**Obtaining a fair valuation is important to 67% of advisors**, with 48% of advisors calling it very important. At the same time, many advisors appear confident in the value of the business they have built. One in three advisors say they are not especially concerned about being able to maximize the sale price for their business.

## ADVISORS CARE DEEPLY ABOUT CONTINUITY FOR CLIENTS




**% who agree that these attributes are important in a buyer/successor**

CONCLUSION

# A strong succession plan protects what matters most

For wealth advisors nearing retirement, succession planning is about more than selling their book and stepping away. **The strongest succession plans are shaped by four priorities**: continuity for clients, the right successor fit, fair value for the business and flexibility in how the transition unfolds.

Those priorities reflect what advisors need to feel confident about the transition ahead. They want clients to continue receiving the care and investment approach they expect. They want a successor who can carry relationships forward. They want a fair valuation for the business they have built. And they want options to transition on terms that fit their goals and timeline.

A well-documented succession plan helps bring those outcomes into focus. With the right support, it can help advisors build a transition plan that is clear, practical and aligned with their priorities.

# We’re here to help you transition your business with confidence.

If you’re an advisor thinking about retirement, the right support can help you approach succession planning with greater clarity and confidence.

Find out how we can help:
**wealth.fidelity.ca**

# About Fidelity Wealth

Fidelity Wealth is a new wealth management service designed to support financial advisors as they plan for their succession and transition toward retirement. We partner with retiring advisors to create thoughtful, customized transition plans that protect their legacy while ensuring continued high quality service for their clients.

**Pier-Alexandre Drouin, VP, Business Development – Wealth Management**

Pier-Alexandre Drouin specializes in supporting wealth management professionals through the complexities of succession planning. With nearly two decades of experience working closely with advisors, he has developed a deep, practical understanding of the business, personal and structural challenges advisors face when preparing for transition.

Fidelity Wealth ULC is registered with the Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization as a mutual fund dealer and investment dealer and a member of the Canadian Investor Protection Fund. Execution, clearing, custody and back-office solutions are provided through Fidelity Clearing Canada ULC, an affiliate of Fidelity Wealth ULC.

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