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The Urge to Surge

“Surge scheduling is focused, deep work that liberates financial advisors and delivers massive value to clients” - Benjamin Brandt, CFP

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1. INTRODUCTION

Do you sometimes feel like you are spinning your wheels and always looking for time to get back on track? Emails, notifications, messages, phone calls, client meetings and compliance checklists are keeping you busy and then you still must find additional time for Slack, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms.

Right now, you feel like you are being pulled in many directions which results in you being stretched too thin to be all things to all people. The way you are managing your business and servicing your clients, is not the way it has to be. Surge meetings can be a game-changer for you.

2. WHAT ARE SURGE MEETINGS?

Surge meetings have increased in popularity among financial advisers in the USA since their introduction by Stephanie Bogan¹. So much so that advocates of surge meetings share stories about doubling their revenue and reducing their time spent in the office by 50%!

These meetings will allow you to maintain important ongoing client contact and improve your time management. Surge meetings, if properly implemented, will help you switch from meeting between 2-5 clients a week throughout any given year to holding 3-6 client meetings a day for a few months every year and in so doing, freeing up time in your diary.



This change in operational process will allow you to focus your client review meetings in organized and concentrated blocks of time, make a step change in client service and create a schedule that will allow you to run your business instead of it running you.

3. THINKING THE SURGE THROUGH

On the surface surge meetings appear simple but, it requires concentrated time and effort to think the process through, document it and roll it out to your clients. Surge meetings are typically held every quarter for 6-week periods during set months every year. Batching your work like this allows you to free up time.

Thinking is something that advisers do not have much time for. Productive thinking involves learning. Learning means being exposed to new concepts and ideas. Ongoing CPD, evolving technology, financial market developments, emerging trends and their practical benefits for your business and your clients are required of you to stay on top of your game.

Clients too, are counting on you to stay on top of these many factors that impact on their wealth and opportunities to grow and increase it going forward. This requires time. Additional time does not simply appear in your diary by itself, it requires some bold steps in your business and personal life to make it happen.

Clients are counting on you to stay on top of many factors

¹ [How Client Meeting Surges Boost Advisor Productivity \(kitces.com\)](https://www.kitces.com/news/how-client-meeting-surges-boost-advisor-productivity.aspx)

According to Stephanie Bogan², the surge concept allows for the systematizing of the back-office work and actually enhances the client meeting experience by creating additional time in your diary for work that requires analysis, research and discussion so that you can engage with your clients more deeply during the meeting, closely examine complex issues and also identify potential concerns that may go unnoticed without having had the time to do deeper analysis.

4. PREPARING FOR THE SURGE

To leverage your productivity, you need to rethink and reorganize your staffing and processes into a documented workflow so that you can deliver client reviews in well-organized and efficient blocks of time.

Clients need to be communicated with to explain the new meeting process and then asked to find a time in your Calendly diary that works for them. This will free up more time because it eliminates the activities of finding a time that suites everyone. These blocks of time are the only options for your clients will have for sitting down with you (or digital) and checking on their progress.

It is also advisable to prepare yourself, your family, and your staff your client surge meetings. The meeting cycle of prepare, hold, and then implement will entail working longer hours during your surge time blocks. Consider what your support structure needs to know about starting their day earlier and leaving later. Implement team breaks for lunch and exercise and ensure planned time off for everyone when the surge is completed.

5. EXECUTING YOUR SURGE MEETINGS

The most crucial step is to decide when during the year you will hold your surge meetings. Look to offer two surge blocks around May/ June and again around October/November each year.

This way you can fit in those clients requiring bi-annual progress meetings or those that only require 1 meeting a year. Your planning will also include preparing value-added content for each client on market insights, educational pieces, legislative changes, and estate planning. This ensures that your meetings will always deliver value and go beyond simply a progress meeting on a client's investment performance.

During surge weeks your Mondays are reserved for preparing for your meetings with your client. Client meetings are then held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with Fridays being reserved for follow-up work, for working on your advice business or being better informed so that you can help your clients make sound, informed decisions.

Plan to hold between 3-5 client meetings a day and if the concept is new to you then start off with between 2-3. It is also advisable to plan a time buffer between meetings so that you have time to write up your file notes and team instructions as well as to prepare for your next meeting.

Send out your initial progress meeting notification to your client about 6-8 weeks prior to the scheduled surge. Follow this up with another email 4 weeks out from the scheduled meeting. Then ensure your team contacts the client by telephone/ mobile to set up a meeting time 3 weeks before the surge. The meeting is confirmed by email (may include a digital meeting link) and the client is given homework to do which must be completed 2 weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. This allows both you and your team to prepare for the progress meetings and reschedule with clients who are unable to attend meetings.

² Masterclass on Surge scheduling, Benjamin Brandt



The meeting reminder and email containing the agenda should be sent out 1 week before the meeting is to take place.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Review each client file for the week	Between 2-6 meetings and buffer time	Between 2-6 meetings and buffer time	Between 2-6 meetings and buffer time	Personal check in calls to clients 40 days after meeting
Updates or changes required	Complete file notes and team instructions	Complete file notes and team instructions	Complete file notes and team instructions	Completing CPD
Check progress report and meeting pack	Send client post meeting notes, documents within 1 week of meeting	Send client post meeting notes, documents within 1 week of meeting	Send client post meeting notes, documents within 1 week of meeting	Team catch-up

Your meeting lengths will depend on the intensity of your client meeting schedules. Research by both the FPA and international community³ agree that the average time advisers spend on client service each week can be 26 hours or more.

This being more than 8 hours for client meeting time, more than 5 hours for meeting preparation, more than 6 hours for research and analysis, and more than 6 hours for follow-up work. Implementing a surge meeting process will allow you to focus hard for between 16 and 22 weeks in a 52-week calendar year. That equates to freeing up 36 weeks or 75% of your time every year.

Requests for urgent meetings by clients will always occur and clients need to know that your offices are always open to them on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. They have engaged with you to look after their financial life, and you need to be there when they need you. However, once clients are used to your new meeting process you will find that they may be happy to simply put that meeting request or query onto the next progress meeting agenda

6. BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING SURGE MEETINGS

The payoff for developing and implementing a surge meeting process are as follows:

- Help maintain important ongoing client contact.
- Better manage everyone's time.
- Improves ability, capability, and efficiency of team.
- Improves the quality of the progress meeting for clients.
- Improves your value proposition and client experience.
- More control over your diary because you control the meeting times.
- Free's up to 36 weeks every fiscal year.
- Increases your time for professional development.
- Increases available time to work on the business.
- Improves the quality of your time off.

Remember that this quality time does not appear magically on your annual calendar and requires initiative-taking steps from you to make the surge approach happen.

³ [How Do Financial Advisors Actually Spend Their Time? \(kitces.com\)](https://www.kitces.com/articles/how-do-financial-advisors-actually-spend-their-time/) and Mapping Fintech to the Financial Planning Process FPA, Australia 2017.

7. SURGING AHEAD

Developing an urge to surge offers you more flexibility in balancing client meetings with other aspects of managing and growing your advice business. Systematizing and streamlining your client meeting process will require a mindset change by your team in considering how you can leverage productivity by reorganizing your team, processes, and value proposition into an efficient surge system. It is time for you to consider how you can rethink everything in your business and accelerate your success in ways you never thought possible.

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