

# Done is Better than Perfect

A practical guide to letting go of perfectionism and getting more done



**PAY IT FORWARD**  
with Janine Burke

There's a mindset shift that changed the way I run my firm:

**Your clients don't need perfection. They need the work done.**

It sounds simple. But if you're anything like me, it takes real effort to actually live by it. I still work at it every day. And I can tell you that the more I've leaned into it, the more I've gotten done, the better I've been able to delegate, and the more sustainable my firm has become.

## The Wedding Analogy

Here's how I think about it.

### The analogy

When you plan a wedding, you have a vision. You know exactly how the flowers are supposed to look, what the food should taste like, how every detail is supposed to come together. That vision lives in your head in full clarity.

But your guests don't have access to that vision. They show up and experience what's in front of them. The flowers might be wrong. The food might not be what you planned. But your guests don't know that. To them, it's a beautiful wedding.

Client work is the same way. Your clients are not measuring the finished product against the version you had in your head. They're experiencing what you actually deliver. And if something doesn't look right to them, they'll ask. That feedback loop exists for a reason. You don't have to catch everything yourself before it ever leaves your desk.

## Why Accountants Struggle with This

Most of us got into this work because we care. We're detail-oriented. We want things to be right. And for a long time, that instinct serves us well.

But it becomes a problem when it starts slowing everything down.

Work sits on your desk longer than it needs to. Deliverables get held up. You spend two days on something that should have taken an hour. And when it comes time to build a team and start delegating, you find it almost impossible to hand anything off because no one will do it exactly the way you would.

That's where perfectionism stops being a strength and starts being a bottleneck.

## The Real Cost of Holding On

When I started my firm, I was doing everything myself. So when it came time to hire people and delegate, I ran into something I wasn't fully prepared for: letting go.

Every task had a version in my head of how it should look. Handing it off meant accepting that someone else's version would be different from mine. And different can feel a lot like wrong, even when it isn't.

What I had to recognize was that holding on wasn't protecting quality. It was protecting a standard that my clients weren't actually asking for. As long as the client experience was good and I was meeting my deliverables, the rest was noise.

Once I accepted that, delegation got easier. My team became more functional. And I stopped being the bottleneck in my own firm.

## What Quality Actually Requires

This is not about lowering your standards. It's about getting more precise about what your standards actually need to be in any given situation.

Some work genuinely requires deep attention and careful review. Some work just needs to be accurate and delivered on time. The problem is when we apply the same level of scrutiny to everything, regardless of what the situation actually calls for.

Ask yourself:

→ Does this meet the client's needs?

→ Is it accurate?

→ Does it fulfill what was promised?

If the answer is yes, it's done.

If something needs adjustment, make the adjustment and move forward. The goal is to spend two minutes on a review, not two days recreating work that was already good enough.

## Delegating Without Over-Managing

Once you accept that done is better than perfect, delegation becomes a lot less painful.

When you hand something off to a team member, the question is not "would I have done this differently?" The question is "does this meet the client's needs?"

If the answer is yes, let it go. If something genuinely needs to be fixed, fix it, note the pattern, and use it as a coaching moment. But resist the urge to rewrite work just because it doesn't match the version in your head. That's not a review. That's redoing someone else's work. And it signals to your team that their judgment doesn't matter, which makes delegation harder over time, not easier.

## How to apply this in the next 7 days

### Exercise

- DAY 1** Identify one task you've been sitting on longer than necessary. Send it out today.
- DAY 2** Delegate one piece of work to a team member without rewriting it first.
- DAY 3** Set a personal standard and write it down: if the client's needs are met and the work is accurate, it's done.
- DAY 4** When work comes back from your team, limit your review to what genuinely matters to the client. Note how long it takes.
- DAY 5** Identify one recurring task where you've been holding the bar higher than the client actually requires.
- DAY 6** Have a conversation with your team about what "done" means in your firm. Make the standard explicit so they're not guessing.
- DAY 7** Reflect on the week. How much time did you recover? What did you do with it?

## Summary - At a glance

- Your clients experience the work you deliver, not the version in your head
- Perfectionism that goes unchecked becomes a bottleneck for you and your team
- Delegation requires accepting that different is not the same as wrong
- The right question is not "is this how I would have done it?" but "does this meet the client's needs?"
- Done is not a compromise. It's a discipline.

The goal isn't a lower standard. It's a more honest one. One that's built around what your clients actually need, not the version of perfect that only exists in your mind.

**"DONE IS NOT A COMPROMISE. IT'S A DISCIPLINE."**

Start there. The rest gets easier.