

# Do I stay or do I go? Lessons from crisis behaviour for advisors



By Eleanor Becker | 30 April 2026



Nicola Langridge CFP® Wealth Manager at [Private Client Holdings](#)

Drawing on the UAE's recent 'ghost flight' paradox, FPI planner of the year Nicola Langridge discusses lessons in managing client behaviour and the value of advice.

From ceasefires to blockades, the world – and its markets – seems increasingly unpredictable. Headlines are dominated by conflict in the Middle East, rising geopolitical tension and markets reacting in real time.

'When the world feels uncertain, it's human nature to ask one question: should I stay, or should I go?' wrote Nicola Langridge, wealth manager at Private Client Holdings and current FPI Financial Planner of the Year, in a recent release.

She cited an article on Australia’s repatriation efforts from the UAE following Iranian attacks in the region. After an initial rush, in which expats filled flights home (organised by the Australian government), planes became progressively emptier – dubbed ‘ghost flights’.

Many expats chose to remain in the UAE, trusting official messaging and the country’s defence capabilities.

Langridge (pictured above) who is also a [Citywire Top 50 Adviser](#), believes this behaviour reveals important insights into both human nature and financial decision-making in times of crisis.

‘Why weren’t people leaving any more? Why weren’t they taking the opportunity to “get to safety”? What fascinated me was the response from those who stayed. Despite the chaos, they trusted the information shared by the government, believed they were safe and felt at home. With the same headlines and risks, why did some go while others stayed?’ she said. ‘Some people reacted to the noise, while others responded based on trust – in their environment, the systems around them and the people advising them. Crucially, they had clarity about what was true versus what was simply “loud”,’ she said.

For her, this is exactly what happens in clients’ financial lives. When markets fall and uncertainty rises, the question is whether to react or respond. ‘Do you “get on the plane”, or stay the course?’

### **Behavioural reaction**

Some investors act on fear – often at the expense of returns.

‘When emotions take hold, investors tend to lose perspective... zeroing in on recent losses, alarming headlines or isolated data points rather than the bigger picture,’ wrote [Raluca Filip](#), founder of By Choice Consultancy, in a CFA Institute article earlier this year.

Momentum Investments’ [annual Sci-Fi report](#) highlights the value lost when investors switch strategies during volatile, rising markets. Advisers therefore need processes, tools or behavioural coaching skills to support clients through such periods.

For Langridge, when markets are falling or volatile, investors need a trusted adviser who communicates clearly, cuts through the noise and keeps their best interests at heart while anchoring them to their financial plan.

‘This is where financial empowerment begins – not just in building wealth, but in having the confidence to make decisions in uncertain environments,’ she said.

Such clients are less likely to be driven by fear or paralysed by complexity, and instead feel grounded because they understand their plan and trust the person guiding them, she added.

### **The value of advice**

For her, financial planning is not about predicting the next crisis, but helping clients trust their plans rather than make reactive decisions when the world feels unstable.

She cited a 2001 Vanguard study, ‘Advisor’s Alpha’ that found that a wealth manager can add about 3% a year in net returns after fees, largely by helping clients remain disciplined rather than through stock selection.

‘The value of advice is not linear. It shows up most during crisis moments, where advisers can add significant value by preventing poor decisions,’ said Langridge.

‘In those moments, how the adviser communicates matters as much as what they know.’ She added that sounding clever or working for a large firm does not necessarily build long-term client confidence.

Nearly half the value of advice is non-technical – rooted in trust and clarity, she said. It depends on how comfortable clients feel asking difficult questions, whether the adviser listens and explains clearly, and whether clients feel safe enough to be fully honest when making important decisions, particularly during uncertainty or change.

In moments of panic, clients are not looking to be impressed, but for guidance – someone to help them decide: ‘Do I stay... or do I go?’ she added.

### **Map goals**

Langridge believes a goals-based approach to wealth management, especially in volatile times, creates clarity, confidence and calm.

She classifies client goals into three tiers.

The first is security. ‘This covers basic needs – retirement income, housing, medical aid and living expenses. It can also include priorities such as children’s education.’

The second focuses on enjoyment. ‘These are lifestyle goals such as travel or hobbies, but also include the reassurance that loved ones will be secure through legacy planning, as well as philanthropic aims.’

The third is aspirational – the ‘bucket list’. ‘Financial planning should not constrain, but enable people to dream,’ she said, noting that discussing these ambitions allows advisers to

build practical plans to achieve them. Advisers should then work with a team of specialists – spanning tax, investment management, fiduciary services and risk – to create a comprehensive financial plan for the client and their family.

Finally, she said that plans evolve as clients' lives change, making regular reviews essential.



For more details about Nicola, scan here.

