

How to Tell a Client About a Project Delay

Seven word-for-word swaps for telling a client a project is late: give a reason, a new date and a plan, so the delay costs you time, not the client.

WHAT THIS ADDS

Clients rarely leave because a project slipped. They leave because the news was vague, late or shrugged off. Every swap here replaces a soft excuse with something concrete the client can plan around: a reason, a date, an option or a check-in schedule.

When you need these lines

Delays happen in every small business. A supplier ships late, someone gets sick, a job turns out bigger than it looked. The delay itself is rarely what damages the relationship.

What damages it is how the client hears about it: too late, too vague, or with a shrug. The seven swaps below turn a delay message into something that keeps the client's trust.

1. Instead of "We ran into some issues"

Say: "The supplier shipped late, so here's the new plan."

Why it works: A real reason builds trust.

2. Instead of "It'll be a little longer"

Say: "Your new delivery date is Thursday the 14th."

Why it works: A real date ends the worry.

3. Instead of "Things happen"

Say: "That's on us, and here's how we're fixing it."

Why it works: Owning it keeps their respect.

4. Instead of "I meant to tell you sooner"

Say: "I wanted you to hear it from me first."

Why it works: Early news feels like care.

5. Instead of "You'll just have to wait"

Say: “Want part one now and the rest on Friday?”

Why it works: Choices give back control.

6. Instead of “It's not that late”

Say: “I know this changes your plans, and I'm sorry.”

Why it works: Name the real cost to them.

7. Instead of “I'll keep you posted”

Say: “I'll update you every Tuesday until it's done.”

Why it works: A schedule beats a promise.

The whole cheat sheet

Don't say	Say instead
We ran into some issues.	The supplier shipped late, so here's the new plan.
It'll be a little longer.	Your new delivery date is Thursday the 14th.
Things happen.	That's on us, and here's how we're fixing it.
I meant to tell you sooner.	I wanted you to hear it from me first.
You'll just have to wait.	Want part one now and the rest on Friday?
It's not that late.	I know this changes your plans, and I'm sorry.
I'll keep you posted.	I'll update you every Tuesday until it's done.

DO THIS

Before your next delay message goes out, check it has three things: the real reason, the new date, and when you'll update them next. If one is missing, add it.

What Fynl.io is

One portal a small business runs itself on, instead of five subscriptions that do not talk to each other.

- A CRM and pipeline that shows every lead and where it stopped
- A calendar clients can book straight into
- Quotes, contracts and invoices, with deposits taken up front
- A website and form builder, so the enquiry lands in the same place
- Your Gmail connected, so the whole thread sits on the contact
- Automations for the follow-up you keep forgetting to send

The AI runs on **your own Claude or ChatGPT key** — no markup on it. No SMS or phone calls yet. \$49/month per business, \$149 Agency, and we move your contacts over for you.

When the job, the client's contact details and every message about it sit in one portal like Fynl.io, it's easier to spot a slipping deadline early and send the update before the client has to ask.