ASSETMARK

Advisor Highlight Series

Featuring Ally O'Neill

The Advisor Highlight Series features the unique insights and successes of advisors who use the AssetMark platform. In this series, we sit down with advisors to get their professional views on practice management, industry trends, and what they have learned over the course of their work to help clients reach their personal and financial goals. We hope you enjoy this chance to learn from your peers!

1. **Why did you choose a career in financial services?**

   My awareness started with basic finance classes in college, where I saw the power of inflation and ensuring your assets keep up with it. I could see that the people close to me would benefit from good financial advice, and I wanted to share and deepen my knowledge. I started my career in regulatory compliance for small to midsize banks and ultimately built a business with my current business partner who is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Together, we make a big impact through sound tax and financial planning.

2. **How do you leverage technology to instill investor confidence in a financial plan?**

   I started my career with access to financial planning technology, so I find it challenging to advise without it. We use Right Capital to present financial plans and cash flow analyses, including how client spending and saving might be realigned for better outcomes. We revisit these plans with clients regularly and adjust based on the clients' life events. It helps facilitate conversations that get at both the pain points and the solutions for financial success. It's so rewarding when a client says, "Oh… I get it. I see the path forward."

   My business partner handles the tax side of the business. A lot of our clients work in the Silicon Valley and have heavily concentrated stock positions. We help them unwind these positions and understand the tax implications doing so. I would say this is an area where we shine. We also advise on real estate as a critical component of the financial plan: from downsizing to the purchase or sale of investment properties. There can be such a heavy tax implication, especially for clients who want to relocate after owning a home here for an extended period of time. We help them see it in the context of their larger plan and understand the potential tax flows or ramifications.

3. **How do you balance your time between client meetings and maintaining your business?**

   A lot of it is leveraging technology, and AssetMark has been a huge part of that. We don't have an office admin—I do it all—but AssetMark's technology suite is so comprehensive it makes putting together paperwork seamless and quick. I'm able to get things done much faster and with a good level of confidence that the AssetMark team will get things processed quickly. I don't have to babysit the process and rarely have an issue. It's given us a lot of momentum coming out of last tax season.

Also, AssetMark's portal lets me to check how frequently clients are logging in, which prompts me to reach out to make sure clients are comfortable with the market and how they're positioned.

4. **How do you stay up to date on industry changes and keep your clients informed?**

   I read any monthly or quarterly market update I can get my hands on; AssetMark has a great platform for that. I monitor Morningstar daily, check out market headlines, and look at the markets from an indices perspective to watch for dips and understand why. I also sit in on our tax team's quarterly webinars, which provides a huge opportunity for me to learn and provide additional value to my clients.

5. **What surprised you when you were new to the business?**

   When I first started out, I wanted to work with everyone. But over time, I realized that the most successful clients are truly committed and bought into the process of improving their financial lives. Our clients range from young professionals to retirees, but for the relationship to be successful, clients need to be just as engaged and focused on their financial success as I am. We have a truly wonderful client base, and I feel fortunate to serve them every day.

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