

My Clients Are My Billboard

A Personal Approach to Business Growth

“I know it’s not normal, but it works for us!” Reid Johnson, CEO of MBA Wealth Management, located in Broomfield, Colorado, is the first to admit his methods of client acquisition and service are unique.

Johnson’s business grows solely on referrals, as MBA Wealth Management relies on the repeated, glowing recommendations of clients to find new ones. Instead of steak dinners, spa days, or golf events, he prepares each client to spread the word. “We spend all of our efforts with our clients; educating and equipping them with confidence.” Clients in turn, recognize the ongoing value provided and share that with their friends and family. “We don’t ask them to refer, they do it voluntarily, sometimes unknowingly! My clients ARE my marketing plan and my only billboard.” It’s been his primary marketing strategy from the beginning.

How It Works: Focus on Value and the Long-Term

For almost 17 years, Johnson has run his financial practice as a holistic, solutions-based consulting firm, providing guidance and direction from immediate needs through estate transfer to heirs, and at every step along the way. When Johnson meets a referral, he conducts what he considers a mutual interview. His approach is educationally based, as a coach and partner providing clients the necessary tools to pursue their own goals. He will only proceed with providing consulting support when deemed valuable by both parties. “Clients have to be internally motivated; I can’t want it more than they do,” Johnson said.

Consulting costs are determined based on the monetary value Johnson and his firm can provide the new client factoring complexity and primary focus areas. This amount varies dramatically between clients, from executives, surgeons, attorneys, and business owners, to young adults just starting out, and even those who just went through bankruptcy. Regardless of their circumstance, Johnson will charge a small fraction of the determined value annually.

Investing in relationships means Johnson sometimes spends more time on smaller accounts than would be viewed as profitable. “The fewer resources clients have, the more efficient they may need to be to accomplish their goals,” Johnson said. “Our long-term approach focuses on client outcomes and not short-term compensation. We aren’t profitable in the first year for most cases, but we know that going in. We are priced for an intentional lifetime relationship. New relationship risk goes both ways: our commitment to the process mirrors that of each client.”

Fee for Service

Use AdvicePay to open your practice to new opportunities for growth. Charging a fee outside of asset management gives you the opportunity to expand your revenue generation capabilities and differentiate your practice

Younger clientele who have solid earnings but don’t meet an AUM minimum will appreciate the opportunity to work with an advisor through a fee-for-service arrangement.

Existing clients who require additional services not tied to money management may benefit from one-time, hourly, or subscription models.

AdvicePay allows you to offer clients online and automated billing with streamlined compliance and operational back-office processes.

Enroll in [AdviceWorks™](#) to find out more.

His pricing structure provides the freedom and flexibility to adjust his services according to each client's unique needs. "We decouple costs for asset management from consulting advice—so fees are transparent, highly competitive, and allow anyone to afford a professional and receive quality advice."

"The goal in working with a client is to make sure they receive quality advice for a reasonable price," Johnson explained. "If they are not getting significantly more value than they are paying for, why work together? I'm not here to profit from clients, rather to simply make an honest living while they benefit from solid guidance and direction. Would you want me using your fees to cover dinner or golf with someone you've never met?"

Though possible, Johnson rarely chooses to charge by the hour because it would be exorbitant considering the amount of time spent with and for each client per year. With high time commitment and low rates, where's the profitability? "It's in the referrals, in who they know, and in the ability to develop a lifelong professional relationship—then they spread the word."

By working as diligently for small accounts as for larger ones, Johnson's practice benefits not just from referrals but high retention. MBA Wealth Management has never lost an engaged consulting client to a competitor. "I want my clients to receive value," Johnson explained. "I want them to *be* valued and know it. I want them to confidently share with anyone, 'My advisor cares about and understands me.'" Even when he transitioned from his previous broker-dealer to Cetera Advisor Networks, all consulting clients sought out and chose to move with Johnson. "If a professional is regarding your finances, your priorities, and your direction in life just as important as their own, would you ever want to lose them? I wouldn't."

MoneyGuidePro

Integrated into AdviceWorks, MoneyGuidePro® is designed for you with your client in mind, providing sophisticated solutions and smart assumptions to help navigate the complex financial elements of clients' lives. Deliver the right amount of planning every time for every client through:

- Adaptable financial planning, from quick to robust
- Built-in natural workflows that guide the process and facilitate client conversations
- Dynamic and interactive features that let you and your clients immediately see the impact of decisions or outside factors
- Understanding your client's expectations, concerns, goals and full financial circumstances to help you act in their best interests
- Defining and prioritizing goals to help them put their financial decisions into perspective.
- Breaking down incremental financial decisions and wellness topics in a bite-sized way.

Resources: The Tools that Make It Possible

Johnson's delivery platform starts with AdviceWorks™ and includes MoneyGuidePro and AdvicePay, all of which allow him to deliver client tools and charge for his hard-earned consulting work separately from managed assets. He bills actively managed assets by percentage, but at a fraction of the national average. "We don't overlap asset management work with consulting advice, nor do we get over or underpaid for either, based on market performance variation, for the time we spend helping each client navigate their financial lives."

Johnson values the way MoneyGuidePro integrates with AdviceWorks and lets clients see the impact of potential outcomes in real-time. Clients ask, "What if I do this instead?" and watch as he adjusts their curated scenarios. He shares with clients, "Here is your current situation. If we altered it this way, or that, the likely outcome down the road is..." He likens it to a pilot landing a plane: "We don't like financial surprises and want our clients to feel confident in their goals, approach, and land successfully, without unnecessary stress or fear of crashing."

By the Numbers

MBA Wealth Management's practice growth has averaged 120% per year since joining Cetera in 2011. During 2020's COVID-19 disruption, Johnson's referral growth has massed over three times his historical pace. "It's been busy, no doubt, but that's what we are here for: to listen, and help those who are searching for objective answers to the best of our ability."

If you're interested in adopting a fee-for-service business model, incorporating MoneyGuidePro into your practice or learning more about AdviceWorks, contact your Advisor Growth team at growth@cetera.com.