



ORION
ADVISOR TECH

YOUR BREAKAWAY PLAYBOOK:



**Navigate Today's Challenges
on the Road to Independence**

Introduction



The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic and market uncertainty may have derailed your best-laid breakaway plans—but that doesn't mean you should abandon your dream of starting an RIA or joining a new one.

In fact, the pandemic may actually be a driving force for some advisors: According to a Fidelity study, two-thirds of advisors think digitally innovative firms have become more attractive during the pandemic, while half of advisors believe working remotely makes going independent feel more feasible¹.

But whether you plan to join a new firm or start one of your own, one thing is certain: the right technology is more important than ever. And with advancements in advisor technology only continuing to accelerate, you have a nearly overwhelming number of tech partners to choose from—so how do you choose?

First, establish your must-haves:

You Need cloud-based technology that empowers you to work from anywhere, especially when being in the office isn't an option.

You Need powerful client experience tools that allow you to engage and connect with your clients virtually.

You Need deep integrations with the software you already know and love, so you can get started without missing a beat.

You Need robust platform training and access to dedicated support teams to ensure you're making the most out of your new technology.

You Need seamlessly connected solutions that create an incredible experience for you and your clients.

Next, your critical business processes—such as financial planning, trading, reporting, and billing—need to run smoothly to support your firm's growth. Here's what to look for.

¹“The Five Stages of the Advisor Movement Journey White Paper.” 12 Nov. 2020, <https://institutional.fidelity.com/app/literature/white-paper/9899914/the-five-stages-of-the-advisor-movement-journey.html>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2021.



Data Reconciliation: The Orion Way

To ensure the accuracy of your data, we go far beyond the basics. Each day, we apply unrealized gain/loss information and also reconcile daily changes in realized gains and losses as supplied by custodians—and speaking of custodians, we work with all the major players: Schwab, TD Ameritrade, Pershing, and Fidelity.

If you want to see more of your clients' assets, we help with that too. Ask us how account aggregation through Orion can help you see more of each person's financial picture and help you provide more comprehensive advice.

Data Reconciliation and Aggregation



Data provides a roadmap for your interactions with clients. It's also critical for understanding the health of your business. Complete and accurate data is your foundation for making decisions, whether at the client or firm level.

The quality of your data influences everything—if your data is wrong, so are your reports, bills, trades, and more. Whether it's data sent from a custodian or aggregated through a third-party, one thing is clear: It has to be right.

The Data Reconciliation Problem

Data reconciliation is tough work. If you're trying to download files from a custodian and reconcile asset balances each day, you're adding a lot of unnecessary manual work to your firm—not to mention the security risk of keeping all that data onsite. And there are often questions to track down and transactions to correct to ensure balances stay in balance.

The Solution

Since your data is critical, you want a Reconciliation team that's as dedicated to its accuracy as you are. That means a partner that reconciles and audits your data in daily, weekly, and monthly intervals — including the most critical information, such as new products purchased, asset positions, transaction details, and prices. You also want to make sure your partner integrates with your custodian.

And since you're still getting started, on-boarding is an integral piece of the data reconciliation puzzle. You'll want a team with coordinators that guide new advisors through the appropriate forms, as well as work with your custodians to get your data flowing to you.

Finally, your technology provider should be held to the highest standards:

ISO-27001 Certification

The international standard for maintaining specifications of an information security management system.



SSAE-18 Audit

The auditing standard for service organizations demonstrates effective internal controls for financial reporting.





Marketing: The Orion Way

Orion Market[®]r, our powerful marketing automation engine, marries professionally designed, customizable campaigns on timely topics with best-in-class execution technology. Our breakaway-specific campaigns are built to help newly independent advisors get in front of new prospects while promoting their value proposition.

Marketing



The transition to a remote work environment has only accelerated the change that was already occurring across our industry; namely, a shift from relying solely on in-person meetings and events to engage new clients to a focus on digital marketing.

Consider this: Almost 85% of investors say they believe receiving personalized content is important for making their decision about who to invest with, and 42% now start the search for a financial advisor online². That's a dramatic difference from the days of client referrals as the sole source of new business.

The Marketing Problem

As a breakaway advisor, establishing your value proposition and engaging prospects is especially important. But doing digital marketing right—especially if you have little experience, and while you're trying to set up the rest of your new business, can be a challenge.

The Solution

Technology can take most of the digital marketing heavy lifting off your hands by automating the execution and delivery of creative assets—such as emails, landing pages, whitepapers, social media ads, and more. Some platforms go a step further and write and design these assets for you, enabling you to customize them with your brand colors and unique value proposition.

² "Here's Why Financial Advisors Need to Amp Up Their Digital ..." 19 Nov. 2020, <https://www.thinkadvisor.com/2020/11/19/heres-why-financial-advisors-need-to-amp-up-their-digital-marketing/>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2021.



Financial Planning: The Orion Way

We believe connectivity is critical for creating powerful experiences—both for you as an advisor and for your clients. Our financial planning tool is not only available at no additional cost to Orion advisors, but it's also seamlessly connected to our Market*r campaigns, so inspired prospects can engage with your business right away.

Orion Planning allows you to walk clients through Monte Carlo simulations and What If scenarios, as well as create personalized presentations and reports. To further prove your value, you can easily show the connection between your investment decisions and progress toward goals.

Financial Planning

Another industry shift critical to breakaway advisor success involves investor expectations. Clients are now looking to advisors to guide them through major life events and volatile markets to reach their long-term goals. In short, they're looking for financial planning.

And it's easy to see why: Financial planning offers concrete benefits for investors. Research shows that clients with a financial plan are seven times happier than those without one³. They also refer new business at higher rates⁴.

As you establish your independence, you're in a perfect position to make financial planning a major part of the investment journey for your clients—as long as your technology enables you to do so.

The Financial Planning Problem

Financial planning can be expensive, time-consuming, and cumbersome; not exactly a winning trifecta for advisors already juggling the complexities of starting a new firm. Between buying and implementing financial planning software, gathering information from clients to build plans, and then actually doing so, financial planning can eat up a major portion of an advisor's time and budget.

The Solution

Simplifying financial planning starts with making it more efficient to gather client and prospect information—so a financial planning tool with intuitive, goals-based workflows that investors can fill out themselves is ideal.

Your planning tech should also make it easy for both you and your clients to view progress, adjust goals, and take action quickly, dually helping you solidify your advisor value while also deepening your client relationships.

³"Why Planning-Led Advisors Are Better Positioned During a" 5 Jun. 2020, <https://www.thinkadvisor.com/2020/06/05/why-planning-led-advisors-are-better-positioned-during-a-pandemic/>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2021.

⁴"Research - Iris.xyz." <https://www.iris.xyz/research/>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2021.



Outsourcing Investment Management: The Orion Way

Orion's model marketplace marries unprecedented access to leading third-party strategists with the flexibility to retain full trading discretion. Each strategist on the platform is extensively vetted, and the model marketplace integrates seamlessly with our trading tool, so you can assign models and execute trades without hours of data exporting and reimporting.

Outsourced Investment Management



You may not want to use third-party models in your portfolio construction—but if you do, your tech partner should make it easy for you to access, assign, and execute using a powerful model marketplace.

The Outsourced Investment Management Problem

Using a model marketplace to help build client portfolios should save you time while making it easier to meet your clients' unique objectives, but the truth is, it can be both costly and cumbersome to assign models and execute trades. And depending on the rigidity of the model marketplace, you may feel like you've lost the ability to maintain full control over changes to your clients' portfolios.

The Solution

Advisors outsource investment management for two important reasons: To free up time to spend on client relationships, and because they want access to more models in order to meet their clients' needs. Your model marketplace should check both boxes, saving you valuable time while enabling you to act in your clients' best interests.



Trading: The Orion Way

Our tax-efficient platform is built with intelligent dashboards that proactively monitor accounts for tax-loss harvesting opportunities as well as portfolio drift. It's also fully connected to our custom SMA optimizer, empowering you to construct portfolios personalized for client-specific risk, tax, and investor preferences, and execute them with ease.

Our tools support any way you want to trade, whether that's simple, account-based trading, sleeves, or complex household trading. Orion's trading suite helps you generate tax alpha, improve your client service, and increase the value you bring to managing client portfolios.

Trading



Unless you've completely outsourced your portfolio management to a third-party manager, you need a way to keep portfolios aligned with client goals. An efficient, feature-rich trading platform gives you functionality that adds value to the services you provide to clients.

The Trading Problem

One of the biggest challenges advisors face with trading is balance: marrying custom, the tax-efficient portfolios with efficient time management and profitability. Creating customized portfolios manually is time consuming and impossible to scale, but building portfolios that don't account for your client's restrictions, tax sensitivities, and investment goals devalues your role as their trusted advisor.

The Solution

Your platform should enable you to align client portfolios with their goals, using strategies like tax-loss harvesting and portfolio drift, without having to spend your days monitoring the market.

Before you vet any solutions, you need to know how you want to trade: trading at the Household level will help you take advantage of asset allocation optimization and tax-loss harvesting, but it will require a more robust platform than simple account-based trading.



Billing: The Orion Way

When you begin, our Onboarding team will help you quickly and efficiently input all your fees schedules, payouts, and unique processes. Initially, we focus on helping you bill new accounts as soon as possible, based on your preferences. From there, we will provide continued guidance on billing cash flows during each quarter, the quarter-end process, forecast billing to analyze your future income, and more.

Advisory Fee Billing



Cash flow is critical for a successful launch of your new firm. For a breakaway firm like yours, getting paid fast will help ease stress, keep your employees happy, and give you a firm footing when going out to find new business.

The Billing Problem

Nothing's more important to an advisory firm than consistent revenue. Without a profitable and healthy firm, it's hard to offer much help to clients. When you're just starting up, that cash flow becomes even more critical. Without help, you could end up spending most of your time each quarter-end trying to decide if your calculations are correct, and then spend even more time ensuring you've collected what you're supposed to get.

The Solution

Billing can be a heavy lift for technology partners: you want a solution that allows you to get paid quickly without monopolizing your quarter end, and that can scale, grow, and flex with you as you figure out the most effective way to run your practice.

The way you structure your billing will be unique to your firm; however, there are a few best practices to consider as you get started:

- **Bill in arrears using average daily balance, once a quarter.**

Billing in arrears using average daily balance is the most efficient and accurate way to bill client accounts. If you can do this from the start, we strongly recommend it.

- **Generate fees and invoices within your portfolio management platform and collect through your custodian.** Your provider should make it simple to calculate your fees and collect them at each custodian. Look for a solution that offers a direct connection with most major custodians so you can directly load your fee amounts into their system, helping you save time and reduce errors. From there, most custodians will automatically deposit your fees into your designated account.
- **Enable an integration to accept credit cards, ACH transfers, and other payment methods for faster collection.** If your firm offers financial planning, now may be a good time to consider separately billing for those services. Your platform should make it easy to set up flat fees for certain client relationships without affecting an AUM fee you may also need to bill.

Compliance



Advisory firms are highly regulated. You'll need to keep stringent records, archive all communications, and ensure client data is secure. As an RIA, your new responsibilities may include:

- Submitting annual regulatory reports to the SEC ninety days following your fiscal year end
- Filing a 13F report each quarter if you have over \$100 million in certain individual securities
- Responding to an SEC audit of your operational and security processes, the likelihood of which increases as a new firm in your first year of operation

The Compliance Problem

Look, compliance is complex. There's no way to get around it. You've got to know how much information — and what information — to collect from clients from the start, then continually monitor what your employees do with that information. Finally, you need to keep that data safe day in and out. And that's not even getting into all the nooks and crannies that you can fall into with how and what is okay to communicate to clients.

The rules are always updating, and you need someone to have your back.

The Solution

Your ideal compliance solution is one that's built right in to your portfolio management platform, which will save you money on outsourcing and empower you to understand your business on a deeper level.

Maintaining your compliance and portfolio management reports in one place makes compiling, archiving, and producing records for the SEC a much more streamlined process.



Compliance: The Orion Way

In Orion's portfolio management platform, you can maintain your annual filings, ADV, and Form 13F, monitor employee trades, track clients against known money launderer lists, and much more. We also provide SEC audit support with reports in the format the SEC requires, plus a full library you can use to save items you'll need for a standard audit.



Reporting: The Orion Way

As you grow, Orion's reporting capabilities grow with you. Report Builder offers hundreds of out-of-the-box reports that you can brand and completely customize. In addition to client reports, you can guide your business to better decisions using our Business Intelligence data analytics, and enhance client meetings with visual, interactive reports from the Dashboard Builder.

Reporting



While the recent rise of client portals and mobile apps has changed the advisor-client communication landscape, client reports are still critical. Reporting today also touches so much more than the old quarterly mailed statements. Now, advisors make business plans with business intelligence analytics, compare management styles through composites, and so much more.

The Reporting Problem

Advisors need to strike a balance between providing value through their reports — with clarity, engaging designs, and accurate, important data that stimulates meaningful conversations — and not getting so caught up creating them that they lose time for other, more important client-relationship opportunities.

The Solution

As a newly independent advisor, you're undoubtedly juggling a multitude of tasks and responsibilities; it can be tempting to turn to a simple, generic report for all of your clients.

But sacrificing reporting quality in the interest of time isn't the answer: technology is. A portfolio management system with intuitive report creation tools, including personalization options and fast report generation times, gives you the power to appeal to each client's unique style while saving you valuable time on the back end.



Client Experience: The Orion Way

Within Orion's client portal, which can be white-labeled to your firm, your clients can view their financial plans, analyze performance, open new accounts, upload documents, and communicate with you—all from one place.

Looking at the bigger picture, all of our solutions are built to connect seamlessly to one another, so that our marketing campaigns empower a natural progression to financial planning workflows, and client progress toward goals is showcased alongside your investment decisions. This connectivity transforms the investment management experience from a disparate collection of static encounters into a dynamic journey for your clients.

Client Experience



Perhaps the most important and most challenging piece of starting your own firm is delivering a remarkable client experience right from the very beginning. All the tools we've already discussed can help you do that, but the key to success is connecting the pieces of the wealth management journey into a cohesive, seamless process that keeps clients engaged and keeps you at the center of their financial universe.

When your clients feel like active participants in their financial futures, that empowerment translates to a deeper, more meaningful relationship with you. The more engaged your clients are, the more they trust you. And the more they trust you, the more likely they are to become advocates for you and your firm.

The Client Experience Problem

With the rise of instant gratification internet delivery giants like Amazon and Netflix, your clients expect more. They want access, and they want convenience. Simply offering a client portal isn't enough: that experience needs to be seamless and intuitive with information that's readily available when and where your clients want it.

The Solution

A client portal is a must-have for encouraging client engagement. But your platform should also have advisor experience in mind when developing client-facing features. For instance, you'll want to be able to decide what information your clients see, and what information should remain secure. You also may want to white-label your portal to give clients a completely streamlined experience that reflects positively on your brand.



Platform Training & Support: The Orion Way

A dedicated Implementation Specialist will learn about your business so they can introduce you to your new system's most critical and important features. Your onboarding team, in tandem with our online learning platform, offers multiple ways for you to learn the Orion platform. You can also get tips and advice from our Subject Matter Experts, who are available by online chat, phone, and email.

Platform Training & Support



The technology systems you put in place can only support your team if you know how to use them. Once you understand how each fits into your firm's day-to-day processes, you can realize efficiency gains and identify ways to streamline how you work.

The Platform Training & Support Problem

Some advisor technology companies don't offer support beyond implementation, and some that do aren't committed to helping you truly make the most of their technology. Your technology partner should be just that: a partner, invested in helping you use their resources to grow your business.

The Solution

Here's where you need to advocate for yourself: as you're vetting providers, don't be shy about asking questions. Dig into the details of the new technology, and get concrete answers about the level of training and support you'll receive.

Find out about implementation, onboarding, employee training, and ongoing learning, as well as the process for rolling out new features.



Integration: The Orion Way

Orion offers over 100 deep integrations with advisor favorite CRM and financial planning tools, like Salesforce, eMoney, Riskalyze, AdvisoryWorld, and more. Through our custodian data and aggregation sources, Orion centralizes your firm's data so you can sync it and feed the rest of your tech stack clean, consistent, healthy data.

Integration



For most advisors, the point of breaking away is the freedom to run their firms the way they want to. As you begin to build your tech stack, think about what that freedom means to you, and how you can use what you've learned working at a wirehouse or IBD to inform the way you approach your new firm's structure.

The Integration Problem

The absence of integration is the real problem for advisors. When your tech stack is comprised of solutions that don't work together, the result is wasted time at best, and colossal, costly errors. An all-in-one solution might seem like the answer — except those jack-of-all-trades systems are usually also masters of none, meaning you'd be settling for a lesser experience from all angles.

The Solution

But you don't have to sacrifice quality technology for a seamless experience. You just need your tech stack to communicate — seamlessly. Syncing data between systems eliminates the need for multiple data entry, reduces errors, and increases your team's efficiency. And if your portfolio management system features an open API, you'll be able to easily integrate with future technology, enabling your firm to scale in a smooth, painless way.

Conclusion



In the same way that you support your clients on the road to a better financial future, your technology partner should support your burgeoning firm with robust and intuitive solutions to daily challenges. Your job is to make your clients' portfolios better; your technology partner's job is to make running your own advisory firm a better experience.



Ready to Start?

Get in touch today to set your business on the path to successful independence.

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