MORNINGSTAR Data+Analytics

Client Success Story **Integrated Wealth Strategies**

How Integrated Wealth Builds Data-Driven Client Relationships

"I'm just impressed with Morningstar overall. You've continued to deliver and provide really good support for questions and making sure I'm being as efficient as possible."

Maryann Ruck
President and Founder

Company
Integrated Wealth Strategies

Application used
Direct Advisory Suite
(formerly Advisor Workstation)*

Use cases
Risk Profiling
Client Relationships

Industry
Financial Services

*Everything advisors love about Advisor Workstation has been enhanced and reimagined: Direct Advisory Suite is a connected set of tools designed for proposal creation, investment research, and investment planning—helping advisors stay efficient, informed, and ahead of the curve.

For Maryann Ruck, President and Founder of Integrated Wealth Strategies, building strong client relationships has always been paramount. With a background that includes working with foundations, endowments, and high-net-worth families, she understands the importance of thorough research and clear communication.

The Challenge

Despite her extensive experience using Morningstar tools since the 1980s, Ruck encountered obstacles in her advisory practice. Client risk assessment remained vague, with many clients claiming higher risk tolerance than they actually possessed. Additionally, translating complex investment concepts for less sophisticated clients proved challenging, while her growing business needed more efficient workflows to maintain high service standards.

The Solution

Morningstar's Direct Advisory Suite provided Ruck with systematic tools to address these challenges. The enhanced risk profiling questionnaire became a cornerstone of client onboarding, while the AI assistant Mo transformed client communications. Interactive portfolio reports revolutionized meetings, and advanced screening tools enabled scalable research processes at Integrated Wealth Strategies.

"A successful tool, for me, means that I'm getting things done more quickly and efficiently."

Using AI tools for financial planning and risk assessment

Ruck embraced Mo, Morningstar's AI assistant, as her primary learning and communication tool. "Mo is my favorite part. It really helps me professionally, and I think enhances communication with the client, which is just such a win, win," Maryann explained. The AI assistant helped her translate complex concepts and made technical information accessible without being condescending.

The risk tolerance questionnaire became transformational for client relationships. "Having that more detailed risk mechanism is great for me. To have the data I need and to feel comfortable that I do, in fact, understand my clients, so I can then make the appropriate recommendations is fantastic," Ruck noted. This data-driven approach helped set realistic expectations and reduced volatile market-related client calls.

Using Morningstar tools for investment research and client communication

Interactive portfolio reports revolutionized Ruck's client meetings. "The interactive reports are just a huge wow. More and more of the technology I'm using has that interactive feature to it," she observed. These tools allowed real-time exploration of different scenarios and timeframes, meeting clients' expectations for immediate answers and enhanced engagement.

"The interactive reports are just a huge wow."

Mo also proved invaluable for investment research beyond client communication. Ruck used the AI assistant to analyze structured notes, asking questions like "What's the historical performance, or what's the difference in return... between the S&P futures index versus the S&P," benefiting from Morningstar's data-oriented foundation for high-confidence responses.

Investment analysis tools and workflows

The screening tools became central to Ruck's research methodology. Drawing from her institutional background, she built standardized screens using her preferred statistics: "I have preferred statistics that I look for in my analysis, and that doesn't change. It doesn't matter if I'm looking at large cap or mid cap or small cap, I'm typically looking for the same things."

Portfolio comparison tools, a new feature in Direct Advisory Suite, enhanced her due diligence process. "The portfolio comparison tool also helps me go deeper in the research," she explained, particularly valuable for her extensive use of SMAs where company-provided information often appeared generic.

Using data analytics to improve client relationships and provide better service

ESG scoring and investor preferences became powerful relationship-building tools, especially important in northern Colorado where ESG interest runs high. "I was really impressed with Morningstar when they first came out with that data, and I was able to again present clients with these reports that have ESG scoring," Ruck noted.

The client dashboard integration made clients feel heard by displaying their preferences prominently. "I think because it's on the dashboard, it helps clients feel heard," she observed, drawing from her experience of tripling a predecessor's business by ensuring clients felt listened to and followed up with properly.

How Morningstar streamlines research and due diligence

Saved searches transformed Ruck's business efficiency. "If I can build that out and then just use it over and over, it definitely helps with efficiency from a business standpoint, and it enables me to create it, but then to allow my team members to run it," she explained. This delegation capability allowed her to maintain institutional-level research standards while scaling operations.

Ruck uses the platform for ongoing portfolio monitoring, maintaining managers "on bench" and running monthly screens to ensure current selections remain optimal. "On a monthly basis, I want to run those screens and see, have those, those batter up... become more attractive than the one that I'm using?"

What success with Direct Advisory Suite looks like

For Ruck, success centers on efficiency and enhanced client experience. The platform enables her to deliver on her promise to clients while maintaining her research-intensive approach. "I enjoy swimming in the data and then bringing to you the best ideas," she noted, emphasizing how the tools help her feel confident in her comprehensive analysis while ensuring clients "leave my office saying, I just always feel so much better after I talk to you."

The comprehensive approach aligns with her philosophy of thorough research and clear communication, enabling continued growth at Integrated Wealth Strategies while maintaining the personal touch that defines her practice.

Transform Your Practice with Direct Advisory Suite

Discover how Morningstar's Direct Advisory Suite can help you transition from generic solutions to customized investment strategies that truly serve your clients' unique needs.

Maryann Ruck has not received any cash or non-cash compensation from Morningstar, directly or indirectly, in exchange for this client success story.