Beyond Referrals

The Future of Advisor Marketing: Driving Growth Through Marketing Strategy and Insight

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Introduction: Understanding the Evolving Landscape

The financial advisory industry in 2025 is characterized by rapid change, increasing digital noise, and heightened client expectations. To navigate this complex environment, Visionary Square conducted a marketing survey in early 2025 among independent financial advisors. The research aimed to analyze current marketing practices, identify key challenges and opportunities, and provide data-driven recommendations for effective marketing strategies. A crucial aspect of the research was to uncover common trends related to advisor demographics, experience, and firm size, with a particular focus on Assets Under Management (AUM) and the perceived importance of marketing. This white paper presents the findings of this research, offering actionable insights for financial advisors seeking to thrive in this dynamic landscape.

There are different marketing strategies based on an advisor's asset size and how they view marketing as a driver to their firm's success.

The current state of financial services marketing is at a critical juncture. Many advisors still heavily rely on traditional referral models, exhibiting a sluggish adoption rate of modern technology and digital marketing strategies. This inertia puts them at significant risk of failing to meet the evolving needs and expectations of today's investors. In a stark illustration of this danger, investors, particularly younger generations, are increasingly drawn to the perceived authenticity, visibility, and convenience of financial advice from unlicensed TikTok influencers, even over established institutions and regulated advisors.

Many advisors rely on referrals to grow their business despite advances in technology and opportunities.

While the last decade saw the rise of robo-advisors as a disruptive force, the rapid, COVID-infused technology boom of the past five years has dramatically accelerated the pace of change. This has created a "digital divide," where advisors who cling to outdated methods are in danger of becoming irrelevant, losing market share to those who effectively leverage technology and engage with clients in the digital spaces they inhabit.

COVID expedited the rate of technology change, and some advisors did not keep pace.

Advisors are under threat of becoming irrelevant as a source of information.

Executive Summary: Navigating the Headwinds of Advisor Marketing

The survey results reveal a compelling narrative: financial advisors who embrace marketing as a fundamental pillar of their business are significantly more likely to achieve superior growth and overall success. However, the path to effective marketing is often fraught with challenges.

The Time and Expertise Conundrum

One of the most significant obstacles advisors face is the scarcity of time. A substantial 31% of advisors cite the lack of time as their primary marketing challenge. This is not surprising, considering the demanding nature of client management, financial planning, and regulatory compliance. Furthermore, 22% of advisors admit to struggling with a lack of marketing expertise. Many advisors, while highly skilled in finance, may not possess the specialized knowledge required to develop and execute effective marketing campaigns. This can lead to a sense of being overwhelmed and a reluctance to engage in marketing activities.

Advisors struggle with time constraints and often lack marketing expertise.

The Budgeting Blind Spot

A startling 42% of advisors operate without a clearly defined marketing budget. This lack of financial planning for marketing can result in inconsistent efforts and missed opportunities. It's akin to a business owner attempting to operate without a sales budget – limiting growth potential.

A significant percentage of advisors lack a defined marketing budget, hindering consistent marketing efforts.

The Underutilization of Paid Advertising

Despite its proven potential for generating leads and driving growth, paid advertising remains underutilized in the financial advisory sector. Only 9% of advisors leverage paid channels such as LinkedIn, Google, and Facebook. This reluctance may stem from a lack of understanding of the rules and regulations surrounding financial advertising, a lack of expertise in managing paid campaigns, or a prioritization of other marketing activities.

Paid advertising is underutilized by financial advisors, possibly due to regulatory concerns, lack of expertise, or other priorities.

The Growth-Oriented Approach to Outsourcing

The survey data indicates a strong correlation between firm size and the propensity to outsource marketing. 29% of advisors with over $100 million in AUM choose to outsource marketing functions, compared to only 17% of smaller firms. This suggests that larger, high-growth firms recognize the value of specialized marketing expertise and are willing to invest in it to achieve scalability.

Larger firms are more likely to outsource marketing, indicating a recognition of its value for growth.

The "Essential" Marketing Mindset

Perhaps the most compelling finding of the survey is the difference in behavior and outcomes between advisors who view marketing as "Essential" and those who don't. The 28% of advisors who consider marketing essential allocate 4x more resources to marketing and experience significantly faster growth. This highlights the importance of mindset in shaping marketing strategy and investment.

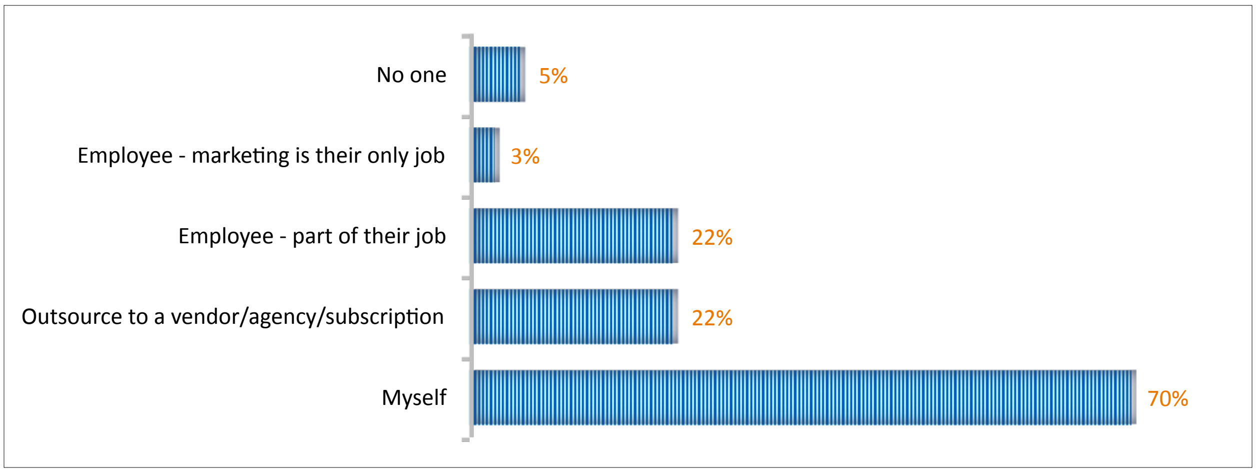
Advisors who view marketing as "Essential" invest more resources and experience faster growth.

Summary of Key Survey Questions

Who Executes Your Marketing Tactics?

The survey reveals that a majority of financial advisors (70%) take a "do-it-yourself" approach to marketing, handling all marketing activities in-house. Only 22% choose to outsource to marketing agencies or freelancers. This inclination towards self-execution often stems from a combination of factors. Cost concerns play a significant role, as advisors may be hesitant to invest in external marketing support. Some advisors express a desire for control, preferring to maintain direct oversight of their messaging and branding. Past negative experiences with marketing vendors can also contribute to the DIY mentality.

Most advisors handle marketing in-house due to cost concerns, desire for control, and past negative experiences with vendors.



However, this approach can have limitations. Advisors who juggle marketing with their core responsibilities often struggle with consistency. Marketing can fall by the wayside when client demands and administrative tasks take precedence. As one advisor candidly shared, "I spent hours designing a newsletter that only got three clicks. If I'd hired a professional, I could've focused on clients instead." This anecdote underscores the opportunity cost of advisors attempting to be marketing generalists rather than focusing on their strengths.

Handling marketing in-house can limit consistency and distract advisors from focusing on their core strengths.

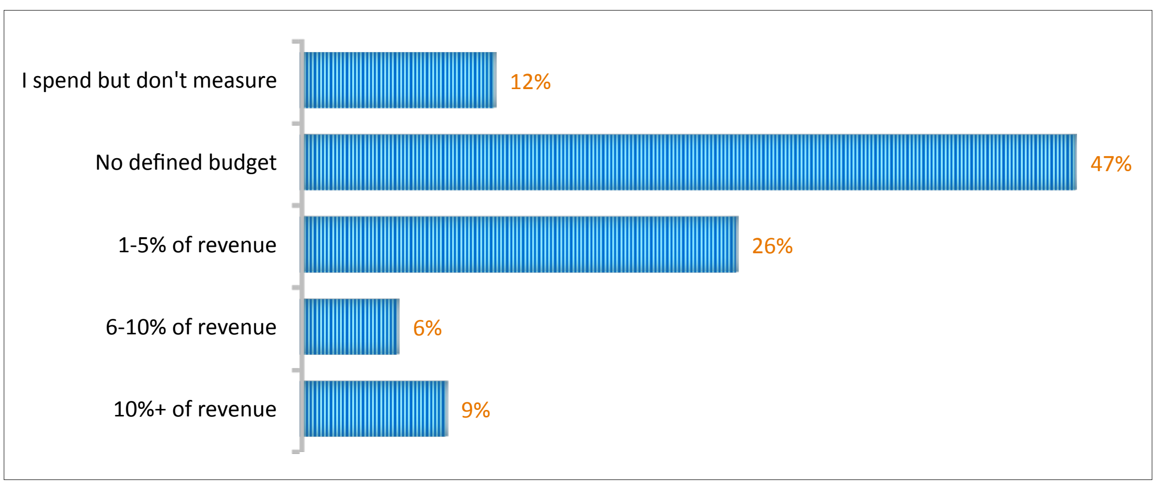
Furthermore, the DIY approach can hinder scalability. Firms that rely solely on referrals and sporadic social media posts may find it challenging to achieve consistent and predictable growth. It's like trying to fill a bucket with a leaky cup – some water gets in, but it's not an efficient or reliable way to get the job done.

Sporadic social media posts do not predict growth.

What is Your Marketing Budget?

A significant portion of financial advisors (42%) operate without a defined marketing budget. This lack of a structured financial plan for marketing activities is a major impediment to consistent and effective execution. It's difficult to achieve any business goal without allocating the necessary resources, and marketing is no exception. Among the advisors who do have a budget, most (26%) allocate a modest 1-5% of their revenue to marketing. This figure often falls short of the 6-10% typically seen in other professional services industries, suggesting that financial advisors may undervalue the importance of marketing investment.

Many advisors lack a marketing budget, which hinders growth.

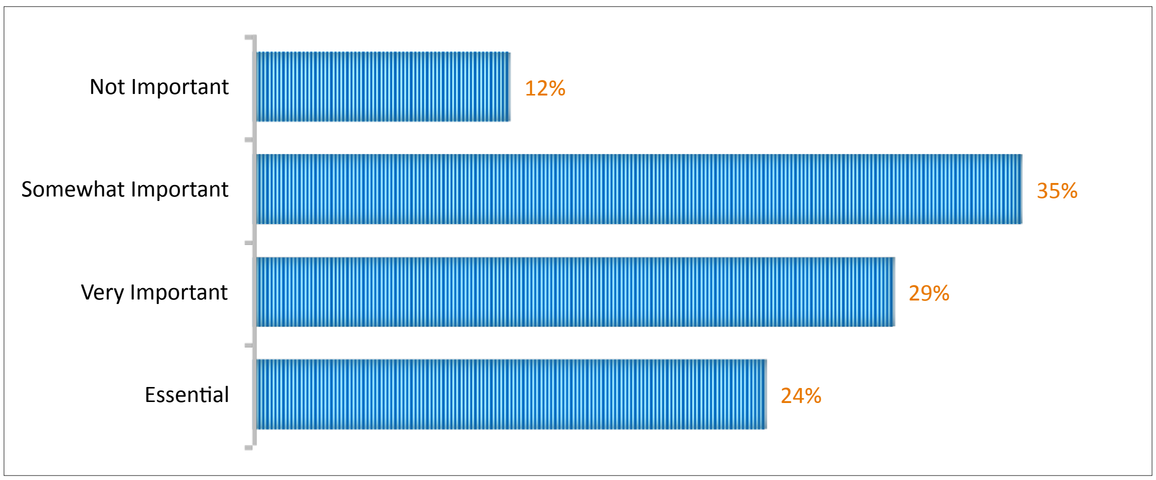


This reluctance to invest adequately in marketing can have consequences. The survey data indicates a strong correlation between marketing budgets and growth, with firms that have structured budgets growing 2.3x faster than those without.

How Important Do You Consider Marketing in Growing Your Business?

The survey reveals a significant disparity in how advisors perceive the importance of marketing. Only 24% of advisors consider marketing "Essential" to their business growth.

Only 24% of responding advisors say marketing is essential to their practice.



This group tends to exhibit distinct marketing behaviors and achieve greater success. On the other hand, many advisors still hold the belief that "I get all my clients from referrals." While referrals are undoubtedly valuable, relying solely on them as a growth strategy can be risky. As one $200M AUM advisor astutely pointed out, "Referrals are great—until they dry up. Digital marketing is the pipeline that keeps my practice growing." This highlights the need for a more proactive and diversified approach to client acquisition.

Proactive marketing outperforms a referral-only strategy.

Marketing Objectives

Financial advisors need to understand the impact that marketing efforts will have on their practice. An advisor's marketing strategy is not monolithic; it's a carefully calibrated blend of different objectives. Here are the common objectives for financial advisory marketing:

- Brand awareness: an advisor wants their business name to be known, ideally for a specific target market. For example, "I want to be known as the go-to financial advisor for women in transition in Dallas, Texas."
- Client communication: a common thought is that clients leave their financial advisor due to the portfolio's performance. Research, however, states otherwise. According to [1]McKensey Research (2017), they found that 65% of clients who left their advisor cited "lack of proactive communication" as the primary reason, while only 14% cited "poor returns." [2]WealthManagement.com emphasizes the point, stating, "advisors who communicate less than 4x/year have a 90%+ attrition rate."
- New Client Acquisition: the two common methods to organic growth (non-M&A) are to increase the wallet share per client or to acquire new clients. Acquiring new clients can come from inbound marketing efforts, outbound tactics or referral marketing.

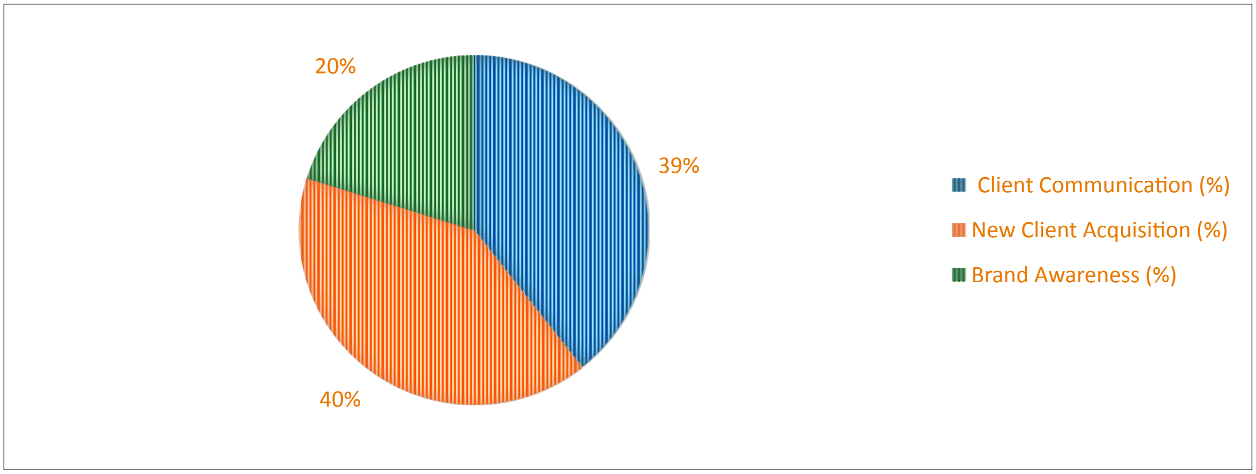
The survey reveals that, on average, advisors allocate their marketing efforts in the following proportions: 39% to client communication, 40% to new client acquisition, and 20% to brand awareness.

Marketing isn't one-dimensional: blend brand, communication, and acquisition.

Research shows that clients leave advisors due to a lack of communication, not poor returns.

Research also states that advisors who communicate less than 4x a year have a high attrition rate.

Calibrate your marketing: brand, client connection, and new growth.



This average allocation provides a valuable benchmark, but the ideal balance can vary significantly depending on an advisor's business goals and stage of development. For instance, a newer advisor focused on rapid growth might allocate a larger percentage of their marketing to new client acquisition, while an established advisor might prioritize client communication and brand building to foster loyalty and referrals. Understanding these strategic nuances is crucial for advisors seeking to optimize their marketing ROI and achieve their specific business objectives.

The ideal marketing mix varies; newer advisors prioritize client acquisition, while established advisors focus on communication and brand.

Generations Have Unique Financial Needs

Before diving deeper into how advisors communicate with existing clients and reaching potential new clients, it is important to understand the differences between generations. A marketing strategy is not a one-size-fits-all approach, both for the advisor and for the targeted investor. Advisors need to identify their target market, as basic as generation labels, and target them appropriately. For example, if an advisor targets Baby Boomers, they would most likely not have success by creating TikTok videos. Let's examine the tendencies and preferences of the three major groups.

Effective marketing requires understanding and appropriately targeting different generations.

Baby Boomers: Baby Boomers often exhibit a blend of traditional and evolving behaviors when it comes to financial content. While they may still value in-person interactions and printed materials, they are also increasingly comfortable seeking financial information online. Their approach tends to be more reactive, often seeking information when prompted by specific life events such as retirement planning or estate planning. Trust is paramount for this generation; they place a high value on established institutions, reputable advisors, and credible sources. When it comes to communication preferences, they appreciate clear, concise language and may prefer a multi-channel approach that combines traditional methods like phone calls and mail with digital options like email.

Boomers seek financial information reactively, trust established sources, and prefer clear, multichannel communication.

Generation X: Generation X represents a transitional generation, bridging the gap between traditionalists and digital natives. They are generally comfortable with both online and offline sources of financial information, demonstrating a mix of proactive and reactive behaviors. They will actively research financial topics but are also open to learning from online content and digital tools. Trust is important, and they value both expertise and transparency. Gen X tends to be independent and seeks information that empowers them to make their own financial decisions. Their communication preferences are flexible, appreciating direct and efficient methods, including email, online platforms, and concise summaries.

Gen X bridges traditional and digital, using both online and offline sources while valuing expertise, transparency, and independence.

Millennials: Millennials are digital natives who have grown up with the internet and mobile technology. They are highly comfortable seeking financial information online, often demonstrating a proactive approach by utilizing search engines, financial websites, and online communities. However, they are also influenced by social media trends and may engage with financial content reactively through their feeds. Trust is a key consideration; while they value credible sources, they are also wary of traditional financial institutions and

Millennials are digital natives who proactively seek online financial information but are also influenced by social media, valuing transparency and personalized digital communication.

seek transparency and authenticity. Peer reviews and recommendations often play a significant role in their decision-making process. Their communication preferences lean heavily towards digital channels, favoring mobile-friendly content, videos, infographics, and interactive tools. They expect personalized and timely communication and appreciate advisors who can provide value through online platforms.

Successful advisors recognize the distinct characteristics of each generation and adapt their marketing strategies accordingly. Effectively identifying the target demographic, understanding their unique behaviors and psychology, and demonstrating a willingness to be flexible in communication and content delivery are essential for building strong client relationships and achieving marketing success. By acknowledging the differences in how Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials consume information, establish trust, and prefer to communicate, advisors can craft tailored approaches that resonate with each group, ultimately fostering engagement and driving business growth.

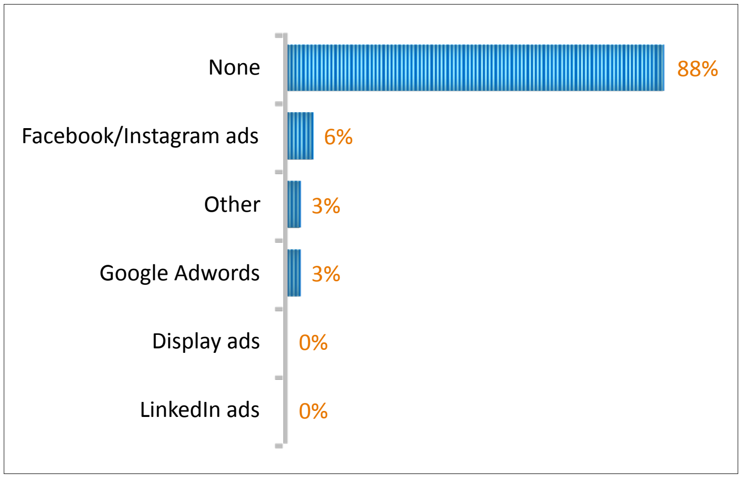
Understanding generational behaviors is essential for advisors to build relationships and grow their business.

New Client Acquisition Strategies

New client acquisition is a critical growth driver for financial advisors, yet the survey reveals potential inefficiencies in how advisors approach this aspect of their marketing. Specifically, there's a notable underutilization of both third-party lead generation services and paid digital advertising channels.

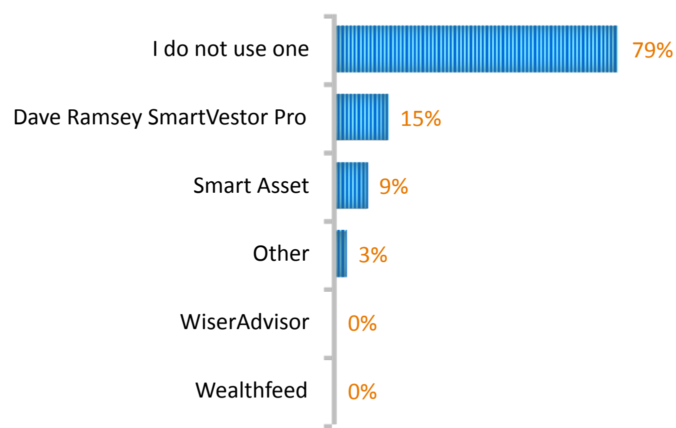
The survey indicates that advisors are under-utilizing third-party lead generation and paid digital advertising for new client acquisition.

Question: Which paid digital marketing channels have you used?



88% of advisors have not used paid digital advertising.

Question: Which third-party lead generation services have you used?



79% of advisors have not used a third-party lead generation service.

While these avenues offer the potential to significantly expand reach and target specific client demographics, many advisors appear hesitant to fully embrace them. Several factors contribute to this reluctance. Some advisors may have had a lack of previous results with these solutions, leading to skepticism about their effectiveness. Compliance concerns also loom large, as the regulatory landscape and firm policies can make advisors wary of advertising and lead generation practices. Unfamiliarity with digital advertising solutions and the complexity of options can further

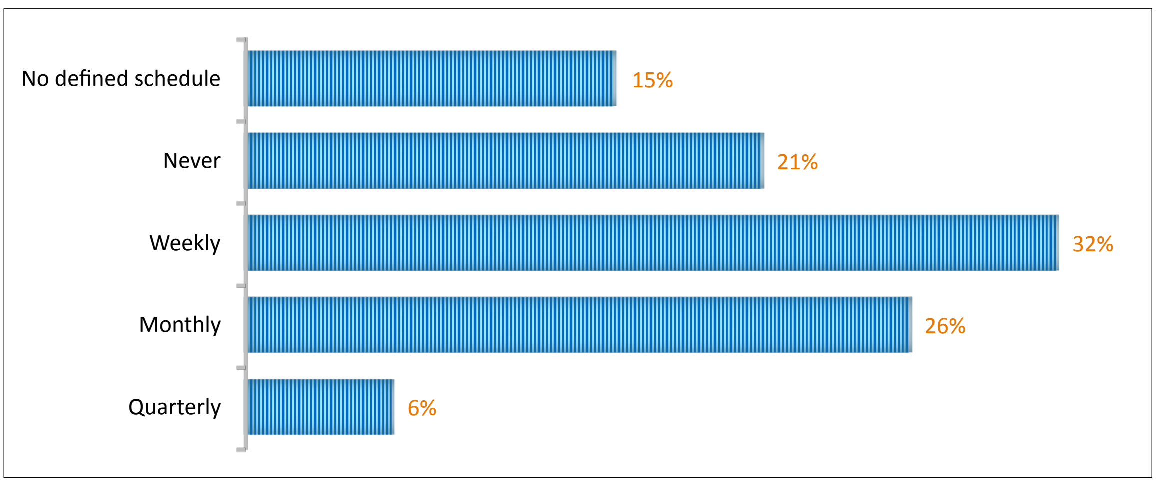
Concerns about effectiveness, compliance, complexity, and cost hinder advisors from fully utilizing paid advertising and lead generation.

deter advisors, who may feel overwhelmed by the intricacies of platforms like Google Ads or Facebook Ads. Finally, the cost of third-party lead generation services can be a barrier, as advisors may be hesitant to invest in solutions with uncertain returns.

Client Communication

As discussed earlier, client communication is critical to a practice's stability and growth. Happy clients are more likely to refer business to their advisor. However, not all advisors see client communication as essential. The results varied from a small group allocating 0% of their marketing mix budget to client communication, while a similar sized-group only focus on client communication. Advisors were asked how frequently they send emails to clients, which is the preferred communication method that is not a 1-on-1 meeting.

Despite its importance for client retention and referrals, client communication is undervalued, with some advisors neglecting it entirely.



More than one of every three responding advisors either do not have a schedule or never sends content via email. This lack of consistent communication or complete silence can have serious implications. Clients and prospects may perceive a lack of engagement, potentially leading to a diminished sense of connection with the advisor. In a competitive landscape, staying top-of-mind is crucial, and irregular

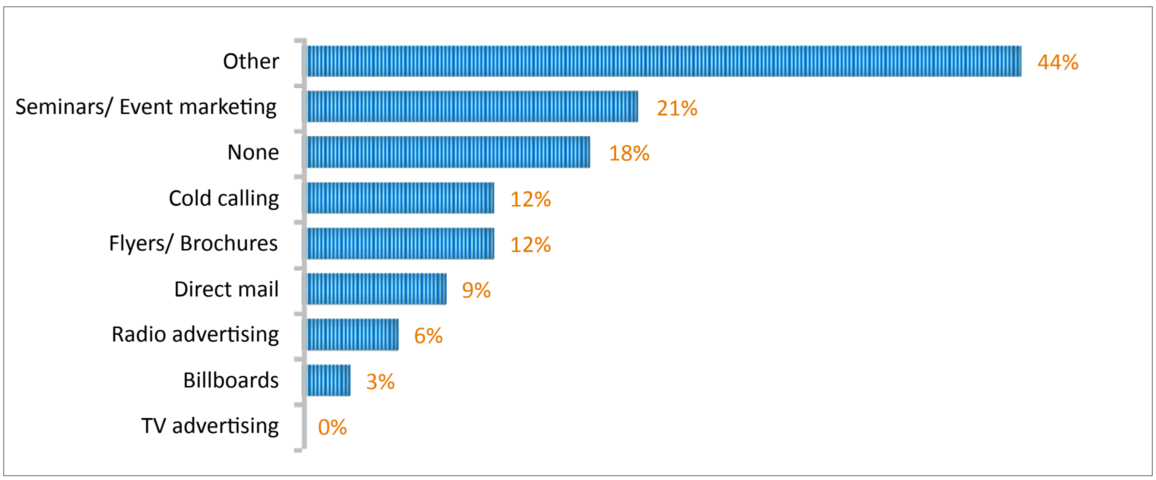
Inconsistent or absent email communication from advisors can lead to clients feeling disengaged and seeking other advisors.

or absent communication can create an opening for competitors to fill the void.

Execution: Traditional and Digital Marketing

While digital marketing has undeniably become a dominant force, traditional marketing methods still maintain a presence in the marketing mix of financial advisors. The survey reveals that a notable portion of advisors continue to utilize traditional tactics, with seminars and event marketing being one of the more common approaches. This suggests that face-to-face interactions and community engagement remain valuable for building trust and fostering relationships, particularly in an industry where personal connection is paramount.

Despite digital's dominance, traditional marketing (like seminars) remains valuable for trust and relationships in financial services.



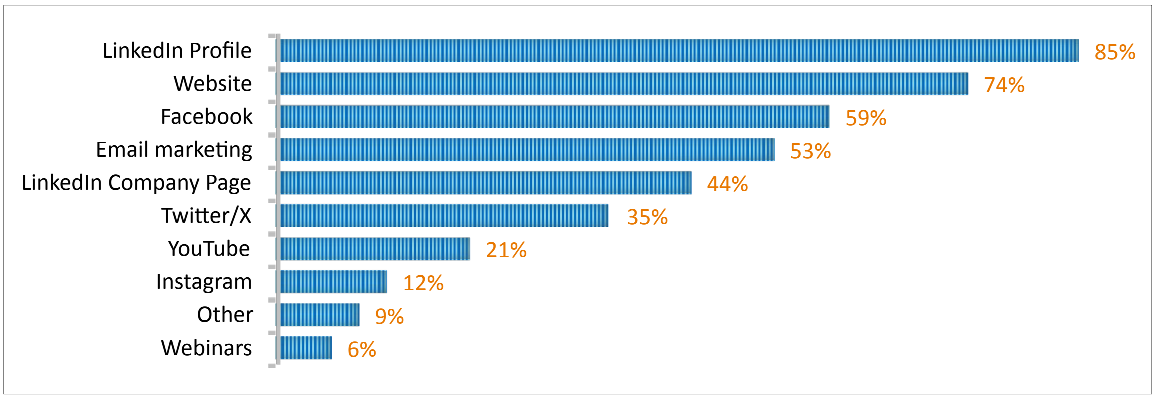
Direct mail and flyers/brochures also appear in the data, indicating that some advisors still see value in tangible marketing materials for reaching specific demographics or geographic areas. However, it's important to note that cold calling is also present, a tactic that, while direct, can be perceived as intrusive and may not align with the relationship-focused approach many advisors prioritize. Overall, the data suggests that while traditional marketing has not disappeared, it likely plays a supporting role in a

Some advisors still use direct mail, but digital channels are increasingly important in a broader marketing strategy.

broader marketing strategy that increasingly emphasizes digital channels.

The survey data paints a picture of increasing digital adoption among financial advisors, with a wide range of tactics being employed. LinkedIn profiles and websites appear to be foundational elements of advisors' online presence, serving as essential tools for establishing credibility and providing information to potential clients.

Websites and LinkedIn profiles are essential for advisors' credibility in the expanding digital marketing landscape.



Email marketing is also widely used, highlighting its importance for client communication and nurturing leads. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, and Instagram are also utilized to varying degrees, indicating an effort to engage with clients and prospects across different online communities.

Webinars are employed by some advisors, showcasing a commitment to providing educational content and establishing thought leadership. Interestingly, the data also reveals that some advisors utilize "other" digital marketing tactics, suggesting a degree of innovation and experimentation in the digital space.

Digital marketing for advisors includes email, social media (Facebook, X, YouTube), and webinars, with some also experimenting with "other" tactics.

According to [3]Michael Kitces's 2022 report, referrals are a significant source of new clients for financial advisors, accounting for approximately 50-53% of new clients, according to industry reports. Even for advisors who heavily depend on referrals, a robust digital footprint is crucial in today's environment. Referred potential clients rarely make contact without conducting online research first. This often involves searching for the advisor's website, social media profiles, and any other online presence to validate their credibility and expertise.

Even with high referral rates, advisors need a strong digital presence, as potential clients research them online.

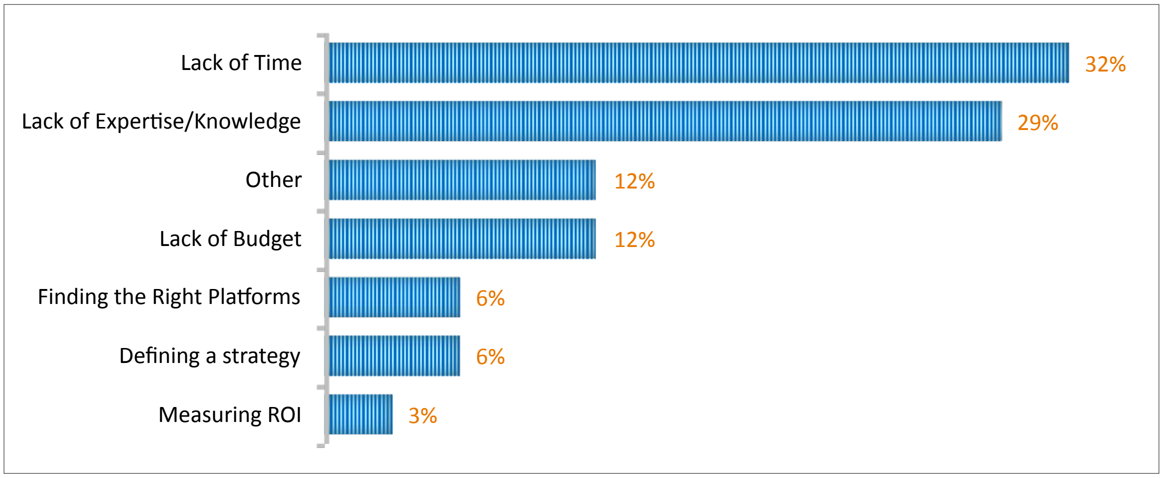
A well-designed website with clear information, active and professional social media profiles, and positive online reviews can significantly influence a prospect's decision to schedule a meeting or pick up the phone. Conversely, a weak or non-existent online presence can create doubt and lead potential clients to choose a competitor who appears more established and accessible online. In essence, in the digital age, being easily findable and having a positive online representation is essential for converting referrals into new clients.

Advisors with a robust online presence are more likely to convert prospects, while a weak presence can deter potential clients.

Common Marketing Challenges

The survey data indicates that financial advisors face a multitude of challenges in their marketing endeavors, with lack of time emerging as the most prominent obstacle. Advisors were asked to select the top marketing challenge. While they undoubtedly would have selected multiple options, time is the biggest factor. This finding underscores the demanding nature of the profession, where client management, financial planning, and administrative tasks often consume a significant portion of advisors' time, leaving limited capacity for marketing activities.

Lack of time is the most significant marketing challenge for financial advisors due to their demanding profession.



An interesting correlation exists between the top challenge and who executes the marketing vision for the firm. There is a strong connection between advisors citing "lack of time" as their primary marketing challenge and their approach to marketing execution. A significant 90% of those who identified "lack of time" as their biggest hurdle handle their marketing themselves, rather than hiring or outsourcing these functions.

A strong correlation exists between advisors citing "lack of time" and handling marketing themselves.

This suggests that advisors who are already stretched thin with client management and other responsibilities may be reluctant to relinquish control or invest in external marketing support, even though it could ultimately free up their time. The DIY approach, while seemingly cost-effective in the short term, can exacerbate the time crunch, creating a vicious cycle where marketing becomes increasingly neglected.

The DIY approach can worsen time constraints, creating a negative cycle for marketing.

Following closely behind is the lack of expertise/knowledge, highlighting the fact that many advisors, while highly skilled in finance, may not possess the specialized marketing skills required to develop and execute effective campaigns. This skills gap can lead to uncertainty, inefficiency, and a reluctance to invest in marketing initiatives.

Lack of marketing expertise is another major challenge, hindering effective campaign development.

Other notable challenges include defining a strategy, lack of budget, and finding the right platforms, which collectively paint a picture of an industry grappling with both the practical execution and the strategic planning of marketing.

Advisors are challenged by defining a strategy, budget limitations, and platform selection, indicating struggles with both execution and planning.

Advisors who View Marketing as "Essential"

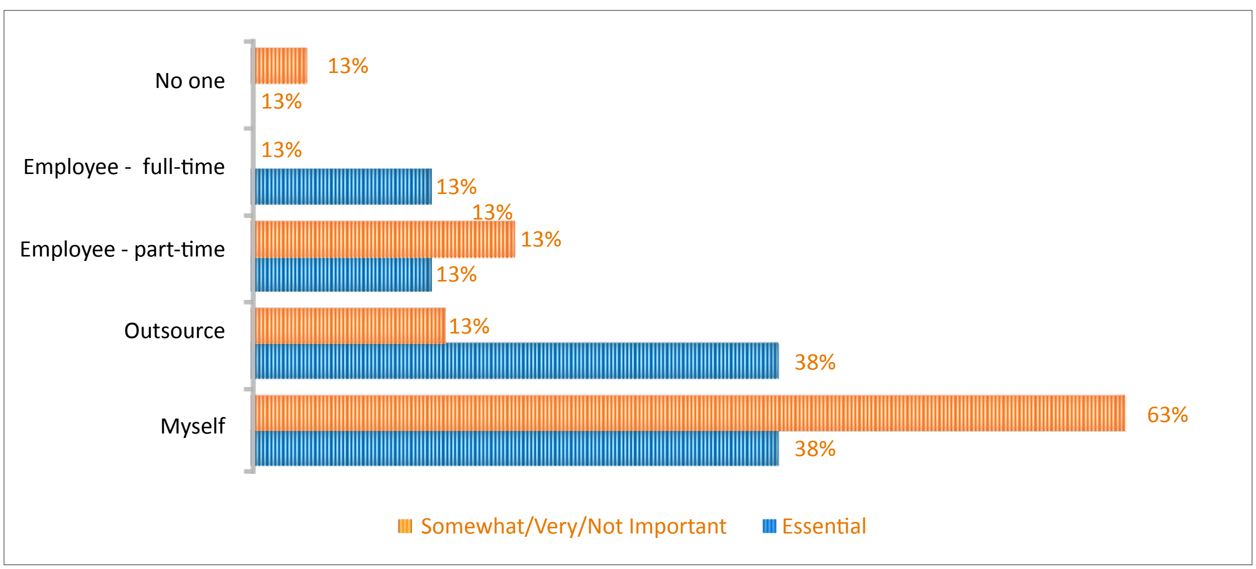
The survey reveals that only 24% of advisors consider marketing "Essential" to their business growth. This indicates that many advisors undervalue marketing, leading to underinvestment and missed opportunities. If marketing is not deemed essential, it will not be prioritized. Consequently, it will not receive adequate budget allocation, strategic planning, or consistent execution. Comparing advisors who view marketing as "Essential" with those who view it as "Somewhat Important," "Very Important," or "Not Important" reveals striking differences in marketing behavior.

Advisors who see marketing as "Essential" differ significantly in their marketing behavior from others.

Embracing Support

A significantly higher percentage of advisors who deem marketing "Essential" outsource marketing functions (38%) compared to those who do not (14%). This underscores that prioritizing marketing leads to a greater reliance on professional marketing support.

Advisors who deem marketing "Essential" outsource marketing functions more often.



Advisors who view marketing as "essential" are more likely to hire or outsource their marketing. 63% of nonessential responders execute marketing themselves. However, despite the demonstrated benefits of outsourcing, many advisors remain hesitant to take this step. Several factors contribute to this reluctance:

- Cost Sensitivity: Some advisors, particularly those at smaller firms or with tighter margins, may perceive outsourcing as an expensive undertaking. They might be wary of committing to ongoing fees for agency services or even the cost of hiring a part-time marketing specialist. The perceived return on investment (ROI) might not be immediately clear, leading to a cautious approach.
- Control and Trust: Advisors often value having direct control over their messaging and brand. Outsourcing marketing can feel like relinquishing some of that control, which can be uncomfortable. There might also be trust concerns – a fear that an external party won't fully understand the advisor's business, values, or target audience, leading to ineffective or misaligned marketing efforts.
- Past Negative Experiences: Unfortunately, some advisors may have had negative experiences with marketing vendors or internal hires in the past. If they've worked with agencies or freelancers who failed to deliver results or provided poor service, they might be discouraged from outsourcing again. This can create a bias towards handling everything in-house, even if it's not the most efficient or effective approach.
- Lack of Awareness: Some advisors might simply be unaware of the full range of marketing

63% of non-essential responders execute marketing themselves, while essential responders are more likely to hire or outsource.

Advisors are concerned about perceived expense and uncertain ROI.

Advisors may be reluctant to relinquish control over messaging and brand, fearing misalignment.

Negative past experiences with marketing vendors can create a bias against outsourcing.

services available or the potential benefits of outsourcing. They may not fully grasp how professional marketing support could streamline their processes, improve their marketing outcomes, and free up their time to focus on client relationships and other core business activities.

As previously stated, if marketing is not deemed essential, it will not be prioritized. Consequently, it will not receive adequate budget allocation, strategic planning, or consistent execution.

To illustrate the perception gap:

- Advisors who label marketing as "Essential" spend on average $38,000/year on marketing, compared to $9,200 for others.
- They outsource marketing 2.7x more often.
- They publish content weekly (64% vs. 28%).

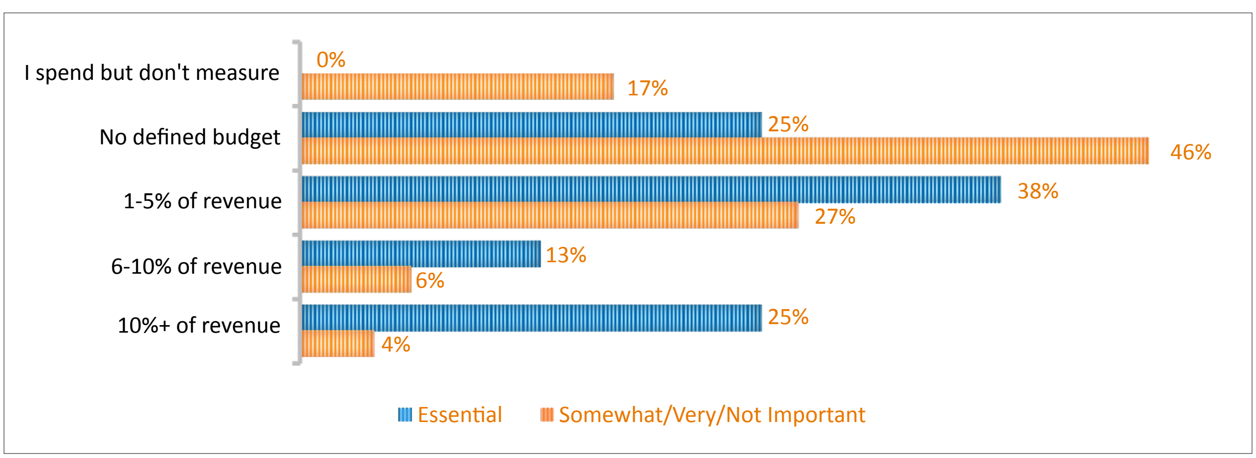
This difference in behavior highlights a key psychological distinction:

- "Essential" advisors treat marketing like a revenue center ("Every $1 in marketing brings $5 in AUM").
- Others view it as a cost ("I'll post when I have time").

Some advisors are unaware of the full benefits and potential of professional marketing support.

"Essential" advisors invest more in marketing, outsource more frequently, and publish content more consistently.

"Essential" advisors view marketing as a revenue center while others see it



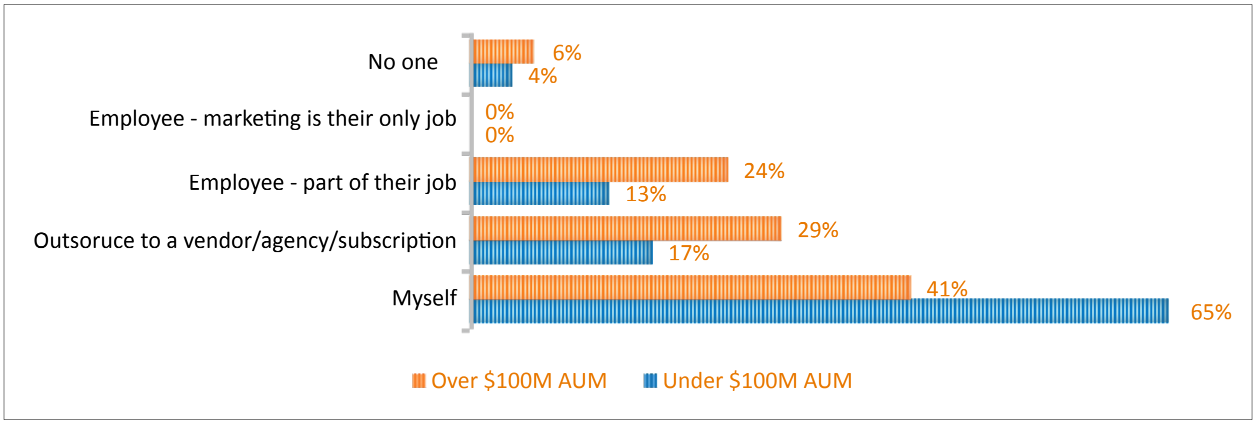
$100M AUM: Over vs. Under Advisors

The survey data reveals some interesting distinctions in marketing practices between advisors with over $100 million in AUM and those with under $100 million. The responding advisors were split nearly equally to the $100M threshold.

Under $100M AUM: The Scalability Struggle

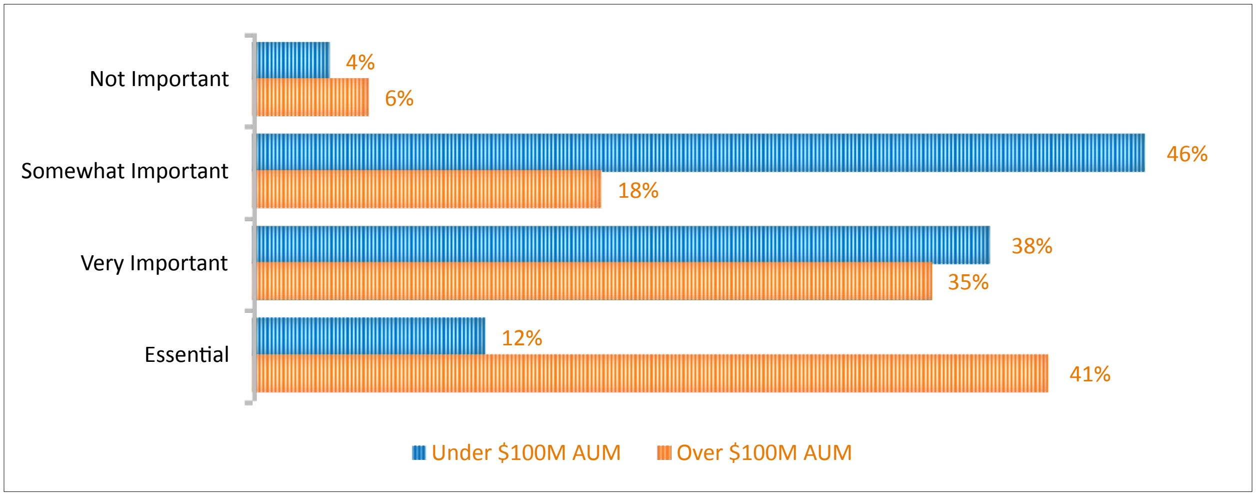
Growing firms, defined as those with under $100 million AUM, often encounter distinct challenges in their marketing efforts. A significant 65% of these firms handle their marketing activities themselves, compared to only 41% of larger firms. This DIY approach can be attributed to limited resources and budget constraints, forcing advisors to wear multiple hats and manage marketing alongside client servicing and business operations. Consequently, marketing may take a backseat, leading to inconsistent execution and a lack of strategic focus.

Growing firms (under $100M AUM) often face marketing challenges.



Furthermore, only 12% of these smaller firms view marketing as "Essential" to their growth, suggesting a potential undervaluation of its importance. This perception can translate into underinvestment and a failure to fully leverage marketing's potential. Notably, just 4% of these firms utilize paid advertising, indicating a missed opportunity to generate high-intent leads and accelerate growth.

65% of firms under $100M AUM handle marketing themselves due to limited resources.



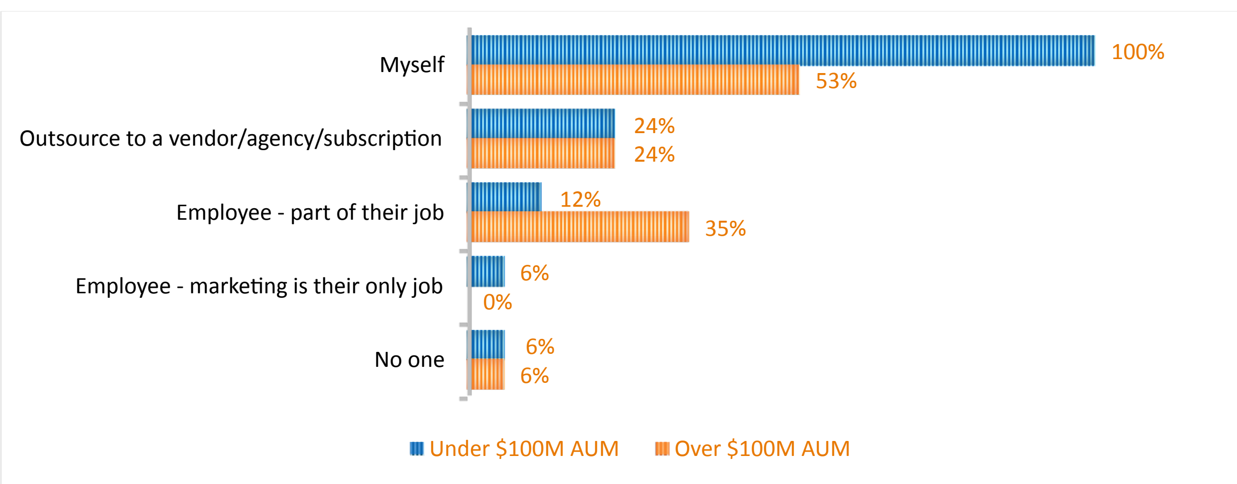
The core bottleneck for these firms lies in the lack of dedicated resources, both in terms of time and personnel. Advisors are stretched thin, attempting to juggle marketing with their primary responsibilities, often leading to the "DIY trap" where they spend time on tasks outside their expertise instead of focusing on client relationships and revenue-generating activities.

Over $100M AUM: The Delegation Advantage

Larger firms, defined as those with over $100 million in AUM, tend to adopt a different marketing approach. All responding advisors with less than $100 million AUM execute marketing tactics personally. This group supplements by outsourcing or delegating, but they all have a hand in marketing to some degree.

This DIY approach can lead to inconsistent execution and a lack of strategic focus.

Only 12% of firms under $100M AUM see marketing as "Essential," potentially undervaluing its importance.

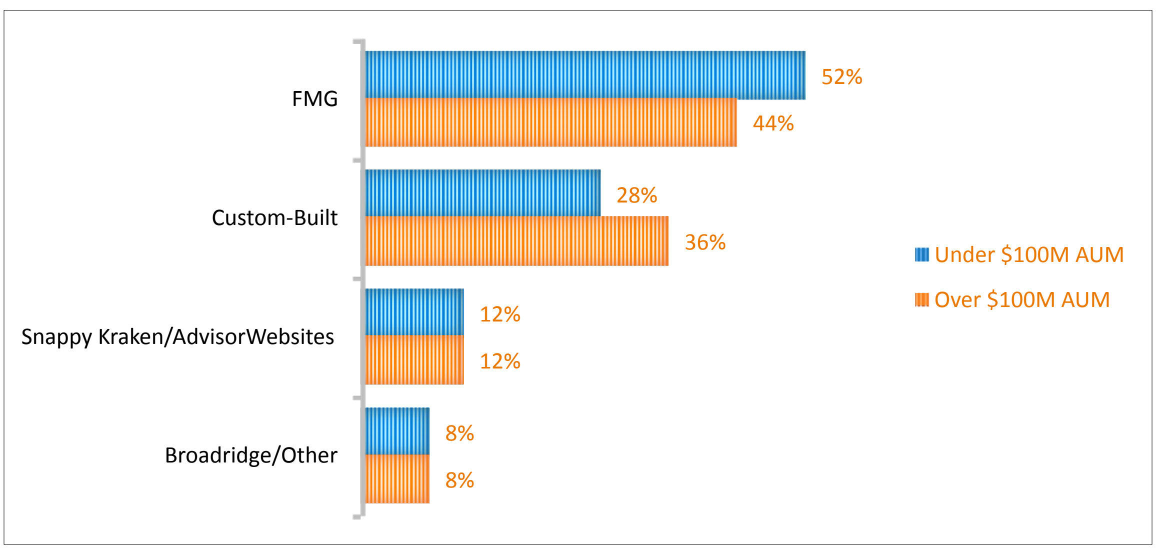


This delegation allows advisors to focus on their core competencies while entrusting marketing to specialists. These larger firms also invest substantially more in marketing, with an average expenditure of almost 5x as much. This increased investment reflects a recognition of marketing's value as a growth driver. Moreover, larger firms are 2x more likely to use AI tools for marketing (24% vs. 8%), suggesting a greater adoption of technology to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. This data highlights a trend: as advisory firms grow, they are more likely to professionalize their marketing efforts through outsourcing, increased investment, and the adoption of technology.

Larger firms invest more in marketing, recognizing its value as a growth driver.

Another interesting difference between advisors on either side of the $100m AUM divide is their selection of digital marketing platforms, specifically their website. Advisors under $100m AUM tend to use industry-specific platforms that have robust content libraries, email automation and social media campaigns. 72% of advisors use the popular website providers, which is higher than the higher producers. Advisors over $100m AUM tend to use more custom solutions, such as a developed WordPress website.

Advisors over $100M AUM tend to use more custom solutions like WordPress



There are considerations for all website options. Advisors who prioritize cost and automation tend to utilize industry-specific platforms while others that prioritize personalization will use custom solutions. There are trade-offs with either choice. For example, FMG Suite bundles their website platform with its content. Moving off an FMG Suite website means the advisor will have to supply their own content on their website, social media and email. On the other hand, custom websites tend to have better search engine optimization (SEO) results. The choice is up to the advisor based on what they prioritize.

Industry-specific platforms offer cost savings and automation, but custom solutions provide greater personalization and SEO benefits.

In the Year 2030...

A popular recurring skit on Conan O'Brien's original late-night show featured Conan and a guest wearing futuristic, metallic clothing while holding a flashlight under their faces while making absurd predictions about what life would be like in 2000. "In the year 2000, due to advances in genetic engineering, squirrels will be able to fly, and they will use this ability to steal hats directly off of people's heads." In this section, we will predict what the future of financial services marketing will look like in 2030.

The Evolving Marketing Landscape: The Successful Advisor in 2030

The financial advisor's marketing strategy in 2030 will be defined by a hyper-personalized, data-driven, and technologically integrated approach. The days of generic marketing blasts will be long gone, replaced by sophisticated systems that anticipate client needs and deliver tailored content across multiple touchpoints. Successful advisors will have mastered the art of leveraging AI and machine learning to analyze client data, predict behavior, and automate personalized communication. Imagine a system that not only sends a client a birthday greeting but also proactively offers

Marketing in 2030 will be hyper-personalized, data-driven, and technologically integrated.

relevant financial planning advice based on their life stage and financial goals. This level of personalization will be table stakes, not a differentiator.

Technology as an Enabler: AI, Automation, and Immersive Experiences

Technology will no longer be just a tool but an integral part of the advisor's marketing DNA. Automation will streamline routine tasks, freeing up advisors to focus on high-value interactions. AI-powered chatbots will handle initial inquiries, schedule appointments, and provide 24/7 support. Furthermore, we'll likely see the emergence of more immersive technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR), to enhance client engagement. For example, a client might use VR to "walk through" different retirement scenarios or visualize the impact of various investment decisions. Advisors who fail to embrace these technological advancements will struggle to compete with those who offer seamless, efficient, and engaging experiences.

Technology, including AI and automation, will be integral to marketing, enabling personalized communication and streamlined tasks.

Content and Communication: Building Trust in a Noisy World

In 2030, content will remain king, but its form and delivery will continue to evolve. Advisors will need to create highly valuable, educational, and engaging content that cuts through the noise of an increasingly crowded digital landscape. Video will likely dominate, with short-form, personalized videos becoming a primary means of communication. Authenticity and transparency will be paramount, as clients will demand to know the "why" behind the advisor's recommendations. Communication will be omni-channel, with seamless transitions between various platforms and devices. The successful advisor will be a master of building trust and fostering strong

Content will remain crucial, but its form and delivery will evolve, with video and authenticity becoming paramount.

relationships through consistent, personalized, and value-driven communication.

Data and Analytics: The Foundation of Success

Data will be the lifeblood of the 2030 advisor's marketing strategy. Sophisticated analytics tools will provide real-time insights into client behavior, campaign performance, and market trends. Advisors will use this data to refine their targeting, personalize their messaging, and optimize their marketing ROI. A deep understanding of data will be essential for making informed decisions and demonstrating accountability to clients. Advisors who fail to embrace a data-driven approach will be operating in the dark, making it difficult to achieve sustainable growth.

Data and analytics will be essential for informed decision-making, optimization, and demonstrating accountability.

The successful financial advisor of 2030 will be a tech-savvy, data-driven, and client-centric marketer. They will leverage technology to personalize experiences, build trust through authentic communication, and use data to optimize their strategies. Adaptability and a willingness to embrace change will be crucial for navigating the ever-evolving marketing landscape. Only time will tell if any of these predictions come true or if they are pure madness.

The successful advisor of 2030 will be tech-savvy, data-driven, and client-centric, embracing change and personalization.

Takeaways and Suggested Actions

The survey data yields several key takeaways and actionable recommendations for financial advisors seeking to optimize their marketing efforts and drive sustainable growth.

> Marketing Is an Investment, Not an Expense: Advisors must fundamentally shift their perspective on marketing. It should not be viewed as a cost to be minimized but rather as a strategic investment with the potential to generate significant returns. Think of it like planting seeds: you have to invest in the seeds (marketing) to eventually reap a harvest

Marketing must be viewed as an investment, not an expense, to drive growth.

(new clients, increased AUM). Skimping on seeds or refusing to plant them will yield meager results, no matter how fertile the soil (market) may be. By embracing this investment mindset, advisors are more likely to allocate adequate resources, prioritize marketing activities, and track their return on investment (ROI).

Consistency Is Key: Consistent marketing efforts, even on a smaller scale, are far more effective than sporadic bursts of activity. Imagine trying to get in shape: an intense workout once a month won't yield the same results as consistent exercise a few times a week. Similarly, consistent marketing—whether it's regular social media posting, email newsletters, or content creation—builds brand awareness, maintains engagement with potential clients, and reinforces your expertise over time. Sporadic marketing is like a flickering light; it's easily forgotten, while consistent marketing is a steady beacon that attracts and guides clients.

Consistency in marketing efforts is crucial for building awareness and engagement.

Embrace Digital Marketing: Digital channels offer powerful and cost-effective opportunities to reach and engage with potential clients. In today's digital age, many people turn to the internet to research financial advisors. A strong online presence is no longer optional; it's essential. Think of your website and social media profiles as your digital storefronts. They need to be attractive, informative, and easy to navigate. Embracing digital marketing allows you to target specific demographics, track campaign performance, and communicate with clients in a way that's convenient for them. Ignoring digital marketing is like refusing to open your store to customers who prefer to shop online—you're missing out on a huge segment of the market.

Embracing digital marketing is essential for reaching and engaging with today's clients.

Outsource Strategically: Delegating marketing tasks to specialists can free up valuable time and improve the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Advisors are often experts in financial planning and client relationship management, but not necessarily in marketing. Trying to handle all marketing tasks in-house can lead to burnout and mediocre results. Outsourcing allows advisors to focus on their core competencies while entrusting marketing to professionals who have the expertise and resources to execute effectively. It's like a doctor focusing on patient care and hiring a specialist to manage the clinic's marketing—it allows everyone to work in their area of expertise and maximizes overall efficiency. However, it's crucial to outsource strategically, choosing reliable partners who understand the advisor's business and goals.

Strategic outsourcing can free up time and improve marketing effectiveness.

Data-Driven Decisions: Track marketing metrics to measure ROI and optimize strategies. Marketing is not just about throwing ideas at the wall and seeing what sticks. It's essential to track key metrics— website traffic, lead generation, conversion rates, etc.—to measure the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns. This data provides valuable insights into what's working and what's not, allowing you to optimize your strategies and maximize your ROI. Think of it like navigating with a GPS: you need data to know where you are, where you're going, and how to get there most efficiently. Without data, you're driving blind, and you're likely to waste time and resources on ineffective marketing efforts.

Data-driven decisions are necessary to measure ROI and optimize marketing strategies.

Suggested Actions

To implement these takeaways, financial advisors should take the following actions:

Conduct a Thorough Marketing Audit: Begin by assessing your current marketing efforts. Identify

Advisors should conduct a marketing audit to assess their current efforts.

what's working well, what's not, and where there are opportunities for improvement. This audit will provide a baseline for developing a more effective marketing strategy.

Allocate a Specific Percentage of Revenue to Marketing: Determine a realistic marketing budget, ideally as a percentage of projected revenue. This will ensure that you have the necessary resources to execute your marketing plan consistently.

Allocating a specific percentage of revenue to marketing ensures adequate resources.

Develop a Well-Defined Marketing Strategy: Create a comprehensive marketing strategy that outlines your goals, target audience, key messages, marketing channels, and budget. A well-defined strategy will provide direction and ensure that your marketing efforts are aligned with your overall business objectives.

Prioritize Consistent Content Creation and Engagement: Develop a content calendar and commit to creating and sharing valuable content regularly. This could include blog posts, articles, videos, social media updates, and email newsletters. Consistent content creation and engagement will help you attract and retain clients and establish yourself as a thought leader.

Explore Paid Advertising Opportunities: Consider incorporating paid advertising into your marketing mix to reach a wider audience and generate leads. Platforms like Google Ads and social media advertising can be highly effective when used strategically.

Exploring paid advertising opportunities can expand reach and generate leads.

Invest in Marketing Technology: Leverage marketing technology tools to automate and streamline your marketing processes. This could include CRM systems, email marketing platforms, social media management tools, and analytics dashboards.

Continuously Monitor and Adapt: Regularly monitor your marketing performance and adapt your strategies as needed. The marketing landscape is constantly evolving, so it's crucial to stay agile and adjust your approach based on data and trends.

Investing in marketing technology automates and streamlines processes.

Summary and Conclusion

The marketing survey provides valuable insights into the current state of financial advisor marketing. The data underscores the importance of a proactive, strategic, and data-driven approach to marketing. Advisors who embrace this mindset, invest in marketing resources, and adapt to the evolving digital landscape are best positioned to achieve sustainable growth and long-term success. The advisory landscape is dynamic, and those who fail to adapt risk being left behind. As the saying goes, "The speed of change has never been this fast, but it will never be this slow again."

Methodology

A survey was conducted by Visionary Square to its partner firms in Q1 2025. 34 partner firms responded with their survey answers.

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Appendix

Table 1: Marketing Tactic Execution

Tactic Execution	Percentage
Myself	70%
Outsource to a vendor/agency/subscription	22%
Employee - part of their job	22%
Employee - marketing is their only job	3%
No one	5%

Table 2: Marketing Budget

Marketing Budget	Percentage
I spend but do not measure	12%
I do not have a defined marketing budget	47%
1-5% of revenue	26%
6-10% of revenue	6%
10%+ of revenue	9%

Table 3: Marketing Importance Importance

Importance	Percentage
Not Important	12%
Somewhat Important	35%
Very Important	29%
Essential	24%

Table 4: Time Dedicated to Marketing

Time Dedicated to Marketing	Percentage
Less than 10%	65%
10-20%	24%
20-40%	6%
Over 40%	6%

Table 5: Marketing Spend in 2024

Marketing Spend 2024	Percentage
$1-5000	32%
$5,001-$15,000	0%
$15,001-$50,000	15%
$50,000-$100,000	6%
$100,000+	0%

Table 6: Digital Marketing Tactics Used

Digital Marketing Tactic	
Webinars	6%

Other	9%
Instagram	12%
YouTube	21%
Twitter/X	35%
LinkedIn Company Page	44%
Email marketing	53%
Facebook	59%
Website	74%
LinkedIn Profile	85%

Table 7: Paid Digital Advertising Channels

Paid Advertising Channel	Percentage
LinkedIn ads	0%
Display ads	0%
Google Adwords	3%
Other	3%
Facebook/ Instagram ads	6%
None	88%

Table 8: Content Publishing Frequency

Content Publishing Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	47%
Monthly	26%
Quarterly	3%
Rarely	6%
Never	18%

Table 9: Website Platform

Website Platform	Percentage
Broadridge	3%
Snappy Kraken/ AdvisorWebsites	15%
FMG	38%
Custom	44%

Table 10: Marketing Email Platform

Marketing Email Platform	Percentage
MailChimp	0%
Broadridge	6%
Snappy Kraken	6%
FMG	38%
Other	3%
None	24%
Constant Contact	21%

Outlook	21%

Table 11: AI Usage in Marketing

AI Usage	Percentage
Video Creation	6%
Editing	15%
Image Creation	12%
Other	6%
Brainstorming	21%
Content Writing	32%
None	56%

Table 12: Biggest Marketing Challenge

Marketing Challenge	Percentage
Measuring ROI	3%
Defining a strategy	6%
Finding the Right Platforms	6%
Lack of Budget	12%
Other	12%
Lack of Expertise/Knowledge	29%
Lack of Time	32%

Table 13: Traditional Marketing Tactics

Traditional Marketing Tactic	Percentage
TV advertising	0%
Billboards	3%
Radio advertising	6%
Direct mail	9%
Flyers/ Brochures	12%
Cold calling	12%
None	18%
Seminars/ Event marketing	21%
Other	44%

Table 14: Third-Party Lead Generation Services

Lead Generation Service	Percentage
Wealthfeed	0%
WiserAdvisor	0%
Other	3%
Smart Asset	9%
Dave Ramsey SmartVestor Pro	15%
I do not use one	79%

Table 15: Client Communication Frequency

No defined schedule	15%
Never	21%
Weekly	32%
Monthly	26%
Quarterly	6%

Visionary Square is another business name of Independent Advisor Alliance, LLC. Investment advice offered through Independent Advisor Alliance, LLC, a registered investment advisor.