



THE TRUTH BEHIND RIA  
INDEPENDENCE

ADVISOR CASE STUDY

## How One Advisor Transitioned in Less Than 7 Days | With Almost No Out-of-Pocket Cost

*A real advisor case study on transition fear, operational preparation, and what becomes possible when the right RIA structure is already in place.*

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### **Most advisors who think about independence run into the same concern**

The economics may look better, but the transition feels too risky. They imagine months of disruption, costly setup, client confusion, paperwork delays, technology issues, and a process they have to manage on their own while still serving clients.

#### ***This case tells a different story.***

Learn how Ray Gettins with United Advisor Group and founder of non-profit RIA Confidential helped an advisor complete a transition into the RIA model in less than seven days with almost no out-of-pocket cost.

The transition was supported by an established structure, a defined sequence, accurate client data, systematic document preparation, and a process designed to reduce manual friction.

Within three days of the advisor's registration being confirmed, 96% of the accounts were on residual sweep, meaning the ACATs had been honored and the assets had transferred.

This case does not suggest every advisor will experience the same timeline or cost profile. Advisor transitions vary based on registration status, current firm structure, custodial requirements, client base, documentation, compliance considerations, technology, timing, and operational readiness.

***But it does prove something important: transition may be far more manageable than many advisors assume when the right structure, preparation, and support are already in place.***

## WHY THIS CASE IS IMPORTANT

**Advisors want stronger economics, control, and flexibility. The hesitation is about the move itself.**

Advisors ask us this all the time: How long will this take? What's it going to cost? Will my clients get confused? Will I lose revenue along the way? Who actually handles the paperwork? What about compliance? What if something gets missed? How much of this am I going to have to figure out myself?

Those are fair questions. But often, advisors are answering them with assumptions, not with what actually happens.

***This case pushes back on one of the biggest assumptions in the industry: that transition has to be slow, expensive, and chaotic.***

Here, the speed came from preparation. The low friction came from structure. And the result came from a process that was organized long before the clock started.

## THE STARTING POINT

**Moving into a different structure made sense**

Like a lot of advisors weighing independence, this advisor wanted clarity: how long it would take, what it would cost, how to talk to clients about it, what documentation was involved, and what kind of support they'd actually have.

The real question wasn't "Can I transition?" It was: *what would this actually look like with the right structure behind it?*

Transition can feel like one giant, overwhelming event. It gets a lot easier to evaluate once you break it down into a sequence you can actually see.

## WHAT MADE THE TRANSITION POSSIBLE

### **The speed came from calculated preparation.**

Here's what made the speed possible.

#### **1. The data was cleaned up before the transition even started**

About three weeks out from the planned transition date, the team sat down with the advisor to get client data updated. The fields that mattered most were email addresses and phone numbers, since those would drive the DocuSign process. The advisor spent roughly a week confirming and updating that information.

That mattered more than it sounds. Outdated emails or phone numbers slow down DocuSign. Incomplete records delay paperwork. Inaccurate data turns a clean process into a manual one.

#### **2. Client information went into the CRM**

Once the data was current, the spreadsheet was uploaded into the United Advisor Group's CRM, where it could feed custodian paperwork automatically. Nobody was rebuilding client paperwork by hand. The CRM did the heavy lifting, populating the required documents in a structured, repeatable way.

#### **3. The paperwork process ran on a system**

Once the data was loaded, the team used it to build out custodian documentation. That took about three days, including a full quality check.

The quality check mattered because speed without accuracy just creates risk somewhere down the line. The goal was to be able to move fast because everything was already organized, checked, and ready to go.

#### **4. Fee information was collected for every client account**

After the paperwork and quality check were done, the team gathered the fee information needed for the investment advisory agreement, making sure it reflected the right fee details at the account level.

#### **5. The advisor's registration was the trigger for everything client-facing**

From there, it was a matter of waiting for the advisor's registration date. Client documents couldn't go out until the advisor was officially registered under the RIA as an IAR. Once that was confirmed, everything that had already been prepared went out through DocuSign.

#### **That client package included:**

- Investment advisory agreement
- Custodian documentation
- Compliance paperwork
- Privacy policy
- ADV documents
- Additional required transition documents

Everything was prepared ahead of registration, but nothing went to clients until the advisor was properly registered. That's what let the transition move so quickly the moment the green light came.

**6. Very little of it was manual**

The biggest reason this transition moved so fast was that almost none of it required someone manually pushing paper through. Because the process was systematic, there were very few exceptions that needed extra attention.

The result: a cleaner, faster path through every required step.

**THE TRANSITION TIMELINE**

**Three phases, organized before the clock started**

<b>Phase 1</b>	Preparation Before the Transition: client data readiness (~3 weeks out), CRM upload, custodian documentation, and quality checks (~3 days)
<b>Phase 2</b>	Registration and Document Release: advisor registration confirmed under the RIA as an IAR, document package sent to clients via DocuSign
<b>Phase 3</b>	Transition Execution: within three days of registration confirmation, 96% of accounts were on residual sweep (ACATs honored, assets transferred)

*That's the real proof point here: the less-than-seven-day transition came from preparation, sequence, and a process built to cut out manual friction.*

**WHAT “ALMOST NO OUT-OF-POCKET COST” MEANS**

**Advisors often assume transition requires a major upfront budget**

It's easy to picture legal fees, compliance costs, new technology, staffing, branding, operational systems, document prep, platform changes, and consulting fees all stacking up.

In this case, the advisor experienced almost no out-of-pocket cost, because most of the transition was already supported by the existing structure and process.

The real lesson here: evaluate your actual transition economics instead of relying on assumptions. Some transitions do cost more. Some are more complex. Every advisor's situation is different.

But this case shows the upfront financial burden can look very different when you're moving into an established structure with real support behind it.

### What This Means for Advisors

“In this case, the advisor's out-of-pocket transition cost was minimal because the advisor was able to move through an established platform and support process. Individual results will vary based on the advisor's situation, current firm, client base, custodial requirements, documentation, registration timing, and transition complexity.”

## THE ROLE OF UAG

### UAG's role in this case was central

This advisor didn't have to build their RIA infrastructure from the ground up. They had access to a structure that already supported the transition sequence, the client documentation process, the operational coordination, and the move into the RIA model itself.

That's what changed the experience. There was no blank-sheet buildout. The path was already mapped around the key steps that needed to happen before, during, and right after the move.

***Speed was the headline. Preparation and Systems were the reason.***

## WHAT ADVISORS USUALLY GET WRONG ABOUT TRANSITION

### Five common myths, and what this case shows instead

<b>MYTH</b> Transition always takes months	<b>REALITY</b> Timing depends a lot on structure, preparation, data readiness, registration timing, documentation, and the custodial process.
<b>MYTH</b> Transition always requires a major upfront budget	<b>REALITY</b> Some transitions do carry real costs, but don't decide based on imagined ones. Run your actual numbers.
<b>MYTH</b> Transition is chaos by default	<b>REALITY</b> It gets chaotic when the sequence is unclear or the paperwork is manual. Preparation and a clear trigger point cut that friction way down.

<b>MYTH</b> The advisor has to figure everything out alone	<b>REALITY</b> The right platform and support team change the whole experience. The advisor's role still mattered, but they weren't carrying the operational load by themselves.
<b>MYTH</b> Staying is always the safer decision	<b>REALITY</b> Staying can feel familiar, but it's worth weighing what a limiting model is actually costing you in economics, flexibility, and long-term business value.

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## WHAT THIS CASE SHOWS

### Transition can move faster when:

- Client data is accurate before the move
- The process is prepared before registration
- Documentation is systematized
- Quality checks happen early
- The advisor is moving into an existing structure
- The support team knows the sequence cold
- Manual friction is cut out wherever possible
- Client documents wait for the right compliance trigger before going out

It also shows advisors tend to overestimate the disruption and cost of transition, usually because they've never witnessed a clear, case-specific path. For UAG RIA partners, advisor's transition got dramatically faster and cleaner because the right preparation, structure, and support were already in place.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ADVISORS

### Seven lessons from this case

- 1. Transition fear usually grows because the process is unclear.** When you can't see the sequence, it feels a lot bigger than it probably is.
- 2. Preparation beats panic.** This moved fast because the key prep work happened before the client-facing part even started.
- 3. Clean data drives speed.** Updated emails and phone numbers mattered because the entire DocuSign process depended on them.

**4. Systematic processes cut out friction.** CRM-driven documentation, early quality checks, and less manual work all helped avoid delays.

**5. Structure changes the whole experience.** This advisor stepped into an existing RIA structure instead of building the operating model from scratch.

**6. Run your real numbers.** Look at the actual economics, potential payout, transition cost, support, and what staying is costing you.

**7. Speed is possible under the right conditions.** This timeline was unusual, and it's case-specific, but it's a powerful proof point of what's possible.

## QUESTIONS ADVISORS SHOULD ASK BEFORE ASSUMING TRANSITION IS TOO HARD

**If you're an advisor considering independence, ask yourself:**

- *What am I assuming about transition that I haven't actually verified?*
- *What do I think this would cost, and where did that number come from?*
- *What would my transition timeline really look like?*
- *What documentation would I actually need?*
- *How clean is my client contact data, really?*
- *What needs to happen before registration?*
- *What happens right after registration?*
- *How much of this would I have to manage myself?*
- *What support would actually be available to me?*
- *What stronger economics could be waiting on the other side?*
- *What is staying in my current model costing me over time?*

**Evaluate transition with facts, sequence, and numbers. Fear is a poor decision-making tool.**

## FINAL THOUGHT

**A real advisor transitioned in less than seven days with almost no out-of-pocket cost.**

That headline gets attention. But the real lesson runs deeper:

***The move was fast because the process was prepared. The cost was low because the structure removed the need for costly custom and manual work. The advisor was able to move because the right support and sequence were already there, waiting.***

If you're curious about independence, this case raises a better question: *what would your transition actually look like with the right structure around you?*

Reach out to Ray Gettins, Your RIA Mentor at: [UAGRIA.com](http://UAGRIA.com), [RIACConfidential.org](http://RIACConfidential.org), or [RIAMentor.com](http://RIAMentor.com)

**Start with a confidential conversation. We'll look at your current structure, your economics, your client base, and what your transition would actually require. Then you can decide based on the real process and the real numbers.**

*Disclosure:*

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