

The Successful Retirement Advisor:

Quantitative Research Analyzing Plan
Sponsors' Needs and Experiences

Authors:

Steven LaValley, Second Vice President of Marketing, MassMutual Retirement Services

Foreword By: Brightwork Partners, LLC.

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Foreword

This research among sponsors of 401(k) plans with assets between \$10 million and \$300 million was commissioned by MassMutual and conducted in August 2006 in order to answer the following key questions:

- What is the marketplace looking for in an advisor?
- What advisory services are plan sponsors looking for?
- How satisfied are sponsors with their current service providers?
- Why are certain plan sponsors not engaging the services of advisors?
- Would unadvised plan sponsors consider using an advisor, and if so, what services would they hire the advisor to perform?

The most striking findings from this study:

- **Advisors are doing a great job for their clients:**
83 percent of plan sponsors who use an advisor are “very satisfied.”
- **There are certain opportunities for improvement:**
 - Smaller plans are less well-served by advisors.
 - Plan sponsors with commission-based advisors are significantly less satisfied.
- **Forty-two (42) percent of plan sponsors do not report a current relationship with a third-party advisor of any type.**

Our hope is that this report will arm advisors with specific findings that will help them to gain greater insight about the vital role that they can play – and the valuable services they can provide – in today’s increasingly competitive retirement marketplace.

Merl W. Baker & Ronald L. Bush
Principals – Brightwork Partners, LLC

Brightwork Partners is a research-based consultancy focusing on product, service and distribution issues in retail and institutional financial services. Best known for its work among advisors, Brightwork Partners supports clients who distribute retail investment and retirement services products through non-proprietary advisor channels.

Brightwork Partners’ research is based on work among business owners, high-net-worth individuals, retail advisors, participants and former participants in qualified plans, plan sponsors, advisors who sell retirement services, and TPAs who administer retirement plans. The firm’s clients include most of the leading mutual fund companies, insurance companies and broker/dealers active in these product areas.

Brightwork Partners LLC was founded in 1999. The firm is based in Stamford, Connecticut.

Executive Summary

MassMutual Retirement Services strives to provide retirement plan advisors with a wide array of tools designed to help them enhance their retirement business.

We are committed to:

- Helping advisors build their practices;
- Helping advisors maximize their relationships with plan sponsors; and
- Assisting plan sponsors in their efforts to ensure that more working Americans save for retirement.

To that end, in 2006, MassMutual commissioned “The Successful Retirement Advisor: Quantitative Research Analyzing Plan Sponsors’ Needs and Experiences” study – because we felt that it is important for advisors to gain some insight into the current thinking of plan sponsors, and because we knew of no other study that explores this topic in this fashion. By reading this report, you can learn more about what today’s plan sponsors both expect and demand from their advisors.

Our study findings show that not all plan sponsors have the same level of knowledge with respect to retirement plans. The bottom line is that plan sponsors’ needs, outlooks and satisfaction levels vary across market segments. MassMutual believes that advisors should understand the mind set of the plan sponsors whom they are serving so that they can address their specific concerns and thus help to ensure their ongoing satisfaction.

What our study revealed

After the study results were compiled, we were gratified to learn that the findings confirmed our basic beliefs concerning how advisors earn the confidence of plan sponsors.

MassMutual believes that today’s successful advisors understand that:

1. **Today’s servicing demands are changing:** Advisors need to provide the services and service levels that are most meaningful to sponsors – and clearly define *in advance* the services provided, both by the advisor and other involved service providers. The sun is setting for transaction-focused financial professionals.
2. **They need to assume the “quarterback” role:** Today’s advisors need to take the lead in the advisor/plan sponsor/provider relationship.
3. **They need to foster the trust and confidence of the plan sponsor:** Successful advisors know that by adhering to a policy of full fee transparency and always keeping the plan sponsor’s best interests at the forefront, they can build stronger, longer-lasting relationships.

Opportunities in the marketplace

There are some excellent opportunities for advisors looking to build their retirement business. Approximately 42 percent of all plan sponsors do not engage an advisor and most of these unadvised sponsors feel that they possess the skills and knowledge necessary to manage their own plans. Of those unadvised:

- Sixty (60) percent acknowledge that advisor services would be helpful with respect to shopping for plan providers; and
- Fifty-four (54) percent acknowledge that an advisor could be valuable in helping them strengthen their investment line-up.

Beware the competition

The retirement plan advisor industry remains very competitive and there is a substantial amount of turnover – evidenced by the fact that 62 percent of advised plans have had their current advisor for six years or less. Plan sponsors are approached by competing advisors an average of nearly four times a year. Furthermore, approximately one plan sponsor in six (16 percent) who uses an advisor's services has taken the initiative to contact other advisors with an eye toward displacing the incumbent. The bottom line is that this is a competitive market and advisors must maintain good relationships with their clients, or risk losing the business to another advisor.

The good news

Plan sponsors' overall satisfaction with advisors and their primary investment providers is extremely high – 83 and 77 percent, respectively, were “very satisfied.” This tells us that overall, advisors are doing an excellent job for their clients.

Summary

Today, advisors should stay on top of what various types of plan sponsors both want and need (by asking the right questions), while keeping in mind that strong communication skills are vital for ongoing success. Furthermore, it's imperative that advisors clearly define their value proposition in the areas that plan sponsors consider important. For example, as plan sponsors look to sort out the effects of the Pension Protection Act, advisors can provide solution-based services to help plan sponsors leverage the opportunities this legislation provides.

This paper takes an in-depth look at the findings of this important study as we offer our interpretation of what defines “The Successful Retirement Advisor” based on the expressed needs and experiences of today's plan sponsors.

Background

A look at plan sponsors who engage advisors

Although the retirement market is fairly well penetrated in terms of services provided by financial professionals, the percentage of plan sponsors who engage financial advisors varies by asset level. For example, nearly six in 10 plan sponsors (59 percent) with assets between \$10 million and \$299 million report working with a third-party advisor. This proportion is somewhat higher (66 percent) among larger plans with assets of at least \$50 million or more.

The study revealed that, the higher the average account balance, the less likely a plan is to have a third-party advisor. In addition, among plans with a primary third-party advisor, the current advisor has been in place an average of 6.6 years. Tenure is higher for smaller plans, higher average account balance plans, and among plans relying on Third Party Administrators (TPAs), benefits consultants and Registered Investment Advisors (RIAs).

“Advised” versus “unadvised” plan sponsors: more similarities than differences

Interestingly, our study revealed that advised and unadvised plan sponsors are much more alike than they are different. For example:

- Advised plans have slightly more employees, but slightly lower participation rates and slightly lower average account balances.
- Advised and unadvised 401(k) plan sponsors are about equally likely to offer a defined benefit plan in addition to their defined contribution plan.
- Primary investment provider tenure is slightly higher for unadvised plans.
- The most striking difference is that advised plans are less likely to be bundled by a national provider¹ (and likelier to be bundled by a TPA² or serviced on the TPA interface model³), whereas unadvised plans are more likely to be fully bundled by a national provider.

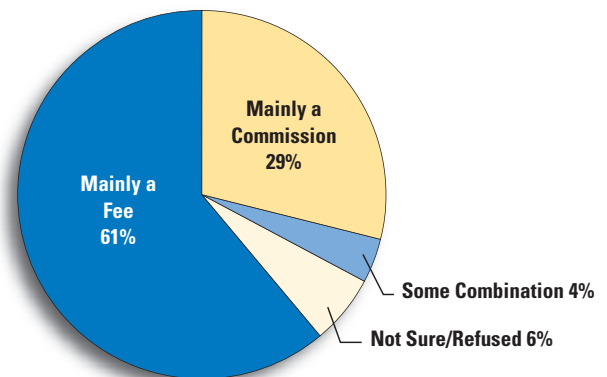
¹ The service model wherein the primary investment provider delivers all recordkeeping and administrative services in a “bundled” package, performing those functions in-house or outsourcing them to a national firm.

² In this service model, all recordkeeping and administrative services are obtained from a national or local full-service TPA firm that the plan sponsor selects – the primary investment provider handles only investments.

³ The service model wherein the primary investment provider delivers certain recordkeeping and participant services in conjunction with a local TPA, which also typically provides compliance and administrative services.

Advisor compensation structure

The study revealed – as the chart below indicates – that about six plan sponsors in 10 (61 percent) have engaged advisors who are mainly fee-based; 29 percent, mainly commission-based; and four percent said their advisor’s fee structure is a combination of the two. (Six percent were unsure or did not answer the question.) This information is important to note, as compensation structure plays a role in the level of plan sponsor satisfaction.



A look at today’s advisors

Our study also looked at the retirement plan advisors themselves. The results revealed that RIAs are the most frequently identified primary advisors, followed by TPAs, specialized fee-based investment selection consultants, unaffiliated financial planners, benefits consultants and planners affiliated with a product provider.

TPAs and financial planners are most typically associated with smaller plans, while fee-based investment selection consultants and benefits consultants are associated with larger plans.

The Brightwork Partners Study

Methodology

This research was conducted in August 2006 by telephone among senior retirement benefits executives at 352 companies sponsoring a 401(k) plan with assets ranging from \$10 million to less than \$300 million. A stratified random sample of such companies was constructed from Form 5500 filings.

Key findings

This section reveals many of our study findings with respect to why plan sponsors select the advisors they do. Specifically, it describes:

- **Selection criteria** that plan sponsors use when looking to employ an advisor (including the attributes they feel the ideal advisor should have) (see page 6);
- **Sponsor satisfaction** – by market segment, based on specific criteria and based on compensation structure – i.e., fee- versus commission-based advisors (see pages 7-9); and
- **Specific services** that plan sponsors believe they need from advisors (see pages 10-11).

Advisor selection criteria

What plan sponsors look for: emerging trends

The reasons for plan sponsors' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their advisors vary by market segment, although certain issues resonate throughout the marketplace. For instance, plan sponsors are increasingly looking to advisors for: (1) full, up-front disclosure of their fees and commissions; and (2) guidance with respect to the plan sponsor's fiduciary responsibilities and their corresponding exposure.

Fees & Commissions

In the Brightwork Partners survey, with respect to criteria for advisor selection, plan sponsors indicate that the second-most-important attribute that an advisor can bring to the table is the ability to provide a high level of value for the fees or commissions paid. (Forty-three [43] percent report that it is a characteristic that is "absolutely essential." Fifty-two [52] percent of respondents say this is "very important.")

Similarly, plan sponsors also place a high level of importance on advisors' transparency with respect to the fees and commissions they charge: 33 percent indicate that it is "absolutely essential" to them; 39 percent reply this is "very important."

Guidance on fiduciary responsibilities/assumption of fiduciary role

Plan sponsors vary with respect to advisors' assumption of the fiduciary role. For example, some firms, particularly the large national broker/dealers, do not ordinarily allow their advisors to assume the role of a fiduciary. Plan sponsors in general, nevertheless, do place a high importance on advisors' ability to provide certain plan-level services, such as fiduciary review. They often seek their advisors' input on both their fiduciary role as plan sponsor, and the exposure that they have as a fiduciary.

With respect to the survey results, 26 percent of plan sponsors report that an advisor's ability to accept fiduciary responsibility for the investments in their plan is "absolutely essential" to them in the advisor selection process; 37 percent indicate that it is "very important."

The two most important selection criteria

One of the focal points of the study centered on the category entitled Advisor Selection Criteria and Satisfaction. With respect to the importance of various advisor attributes, two advisor characteristics clearly emerge as being the most important to plan sponsors:

- With regard to advisors being responsive to the plan sponsor (senior executive) and his or her colleagues, 46 percent indicate this is "absolutely essential" to them; 49 percent state that it is "very important."
- Concerning advisors providing a high level of value for the fees or commissions they are paid, for 43 percent of the respondents, this is an "absolutely essential" characteristic; 52 percent categorize it as "very important."

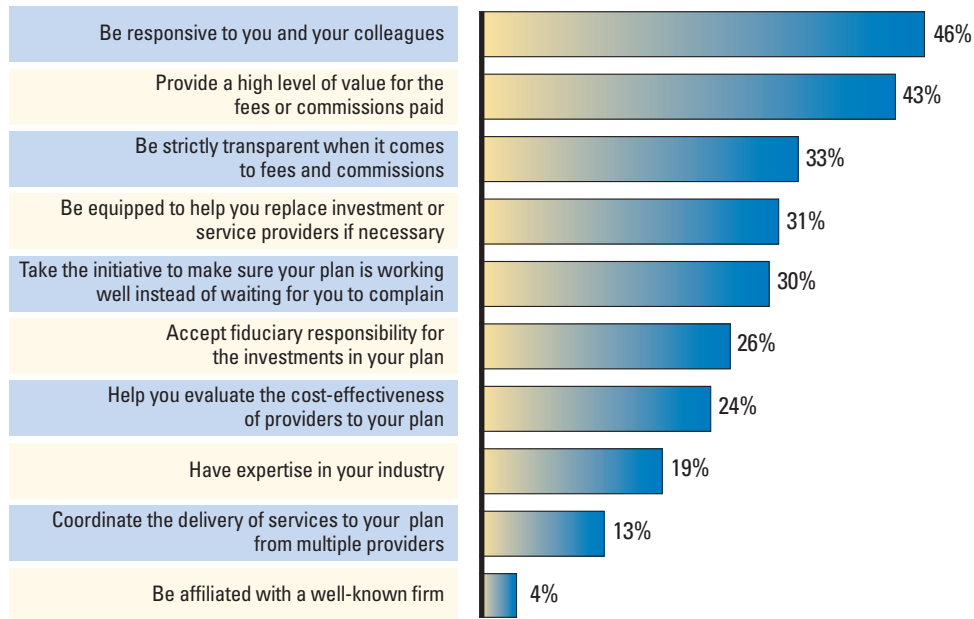
These key findings show that plan sponsors hold advisors to a high standard – expecting them to provide meaningful services at a reasonable, clearly defined price. Above all, plan sponsors expect advisors to provide the most fundamental service of all – being highly responsive.

The following chart illustrates the importance plan sponsors place on several advisor attributes, including the top two noted.

Importance of Advisor Attributes

“Absolutely essential” Base: has advisor

In selecting an advisor to work with on your 401(k) plan, how important is it for that advisor to...



Satisfaction on selection criteria

When analyzed by market segment, plan sponsors in the \$25 million - \$50 million market are most satisfied overall with their advisors, followed by plan sponsors in the greater than \$50 million, \$15 million - \$25 million, and \$10 million - \$15 million markets, respectively.

Specific criteria: satisfaction levels

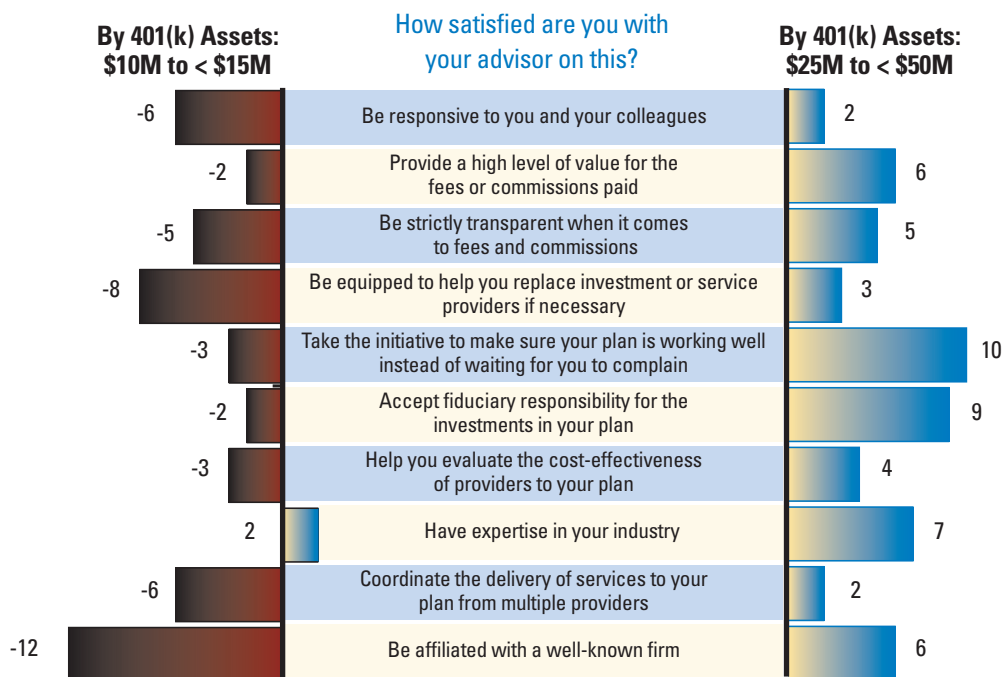
The study findings pointed to two key drivers of plan sponsor satisfaction:

- Plan size (the size of the plan correlated directly with the level of satisfaction that plan sponsors had with their advisors); and
- The advisor's compensation structure (generally speaking, sponsors were far more satisfied with fee-based advisors than they were with commission-based advisors).

The charts below compare overall satisfaction of plan sponsors in two market segments – the \$10 million to \$15 million plans (the least satisfied group from the study), versus the \$25 million to \$50 million plans (the most satisfied group):

Satisfaction with Advisor Attributes

Base: has advisor. Points off market average, "Very Satisfied"



MassMutual's Observation on Satisfaction Levels:

Logic dictates why the plan sponsors in the \$25 million to \$50 million marketplace appear to be the most satisfied. This is the market segment where a good advisor has the ability to form the strongest relationship with the plan sponsor – without being too heavily encroached upon by the other involved service providers, such as a national bundled provider. On the other end of the spectrum, the smaller plans (in the \$10 million to \$15 million segment) tend to employ advisors who are more interested in obtaining participant-level business. This may diffuse their attention to the detriment of their plan sponsor clients.

The following chart summarizes (based on the preceding chart data) some of the study’s key findings, and MassMutual’s observations, with respect to the specific advisor criteria with which plan sponsors are most satisfied – and least satisfied – within each market segment covered by our study:

Market size (\$ millions)	Most satisfied	Least satisfied	MassMutual’s Observations
\$10 - \$15	Have expertise in the client’s industry	Responsiveness; capacity to provide investment and service provider selection assistance	This market is relatively less satisfied with virtually all criteria. This is likely due to the majority of this market’s advisors being selected based on a relationship – rather than expertise in servicing retirement plans.
\$15 - \$25	Coordinate multiple provider plan services; be affiliated with a well-known firm	Have expertise in client’s industry; willingness to accept fiduciary liability	Advisors servicing this market appear to be doing a good job of coordinating multiple plan services. Unfortunately, many of the advisors servicing this market work for organizations that are reluctant to allow them to assume the fiduciary role.
\$25 - \$50	Proactive approach to plan improvements; willingness to accept fiduciary liability.	<i>(yet still above-average in satisfaction)</i> – Responsiveness; coordinate multiple provider plan services	This market is more likely to be serviced by advisors who are retirement specialists that recognize the need to provide proactive services. This is a more demanding market segment and even “responsiveness” can be improved upon in the eyes of the plan sponsor.
Over \$50	Capacity to provide investment and service provider selection assistance; responsiveness	Proactive approach to plan improvements; fee transparency	In this market, the advisors tend to be more focused on either investment analysis services and provider selection project-based work, rather than participant services. Plan sponsors in this segment also tend to be very knowledgeable and are acutely aware of fee transparency issues. They continue to be skeptical.

The plan size difference

Market segment – i.e., plan size – plays a role in which plan sponsors hire retirement plan advisors – and which ones don’t. Our study findings indicate that:

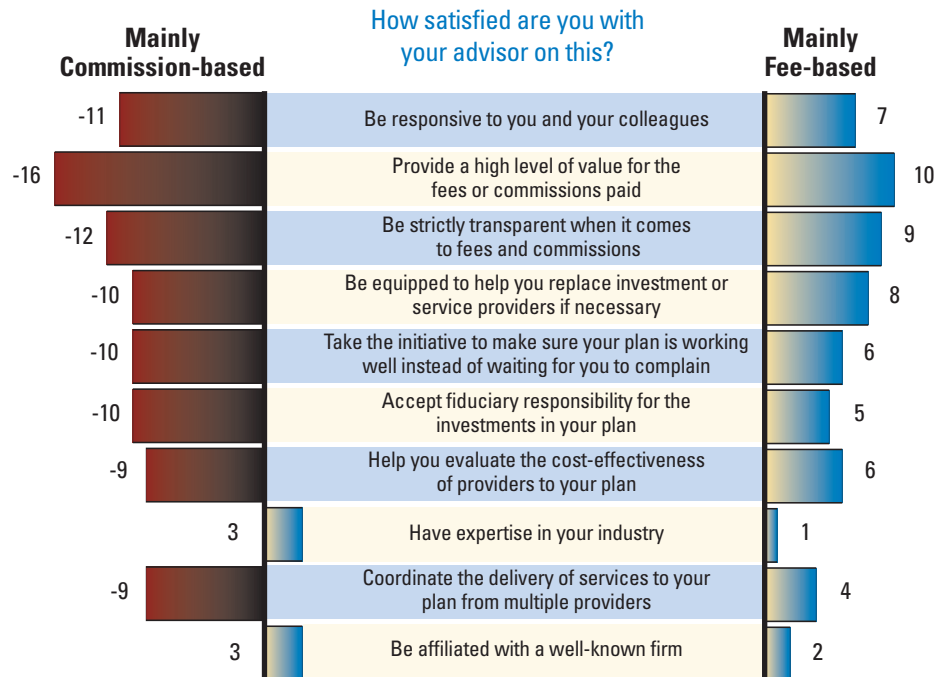
- **Larger plans** are more likely to hire a highly professional advisor to focus on overall program oversight and investment due diligence.
- **Plan sponsors in the smaller plan market** are more likely to hire a financial planner based more on their relationship with that advisor rather than on the advisor’s industry expertise.
- **High average-account-balance plan sponsors** (which would typically include professional practices, such as law firms and doctors’ practices) are more likely to believe they can manage their plan assets without the assistance of a financial professional.

Satisfaction levels with fee-based vs. commission-based advisors

Interestingly, satisfaction is above average on every dimension for fee-based advisors, especially with respect to fee transparency. Conversely, satisfaction is below average on virtually every dimension for commission-based advisors, especially with respect to value for fees or commissions paid.

Satisfaction with Advisor Attributes

Base: has advisor, attribute is at least somewhat important. Points off market average, “Very Satisfied”



To summarize, our study reveals that plan sponsor satisfaction with advisors is much higher among larger plans (\$25 million and up) than with smaller plans; much higher with fee-based rather than commission-based advisors; much higher with advisors representing a bundled rather than an unbundled service model; and somewhat higher with advisors engaged more recently than with those of a longer tenure.

Specific services

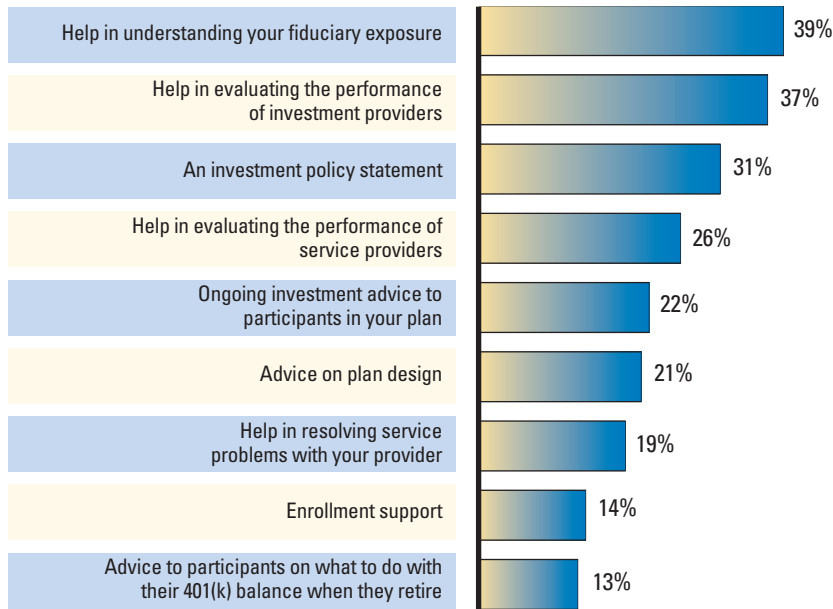
After exploring the general attributes that plan sponsors look for from their retirement plan advisors, the study questions then asked plan sponsors to reveal their expectations with respect to the specific services that are important to them.

The chart below delineates which services plan sponsors felt were important to receive from the advisors – and which were less important.

Importance of Advisor Services

“Absolutely essential” Base: has advisor

Whether or not your advisor currently provides this, how important is it to your organization to receive... from an advisor?



MassMutual's Observations:

Clearly, plan sponsors are primarily turning to advisors to tap into their investment expertise. But a trend seems to be evolving whereby plan sponsors are also seeking a wider range of plan-level services, such as fiduciary review and plan design assistance.

Important steps for advisors who want to enhance plan sponsor satisfaction:

1. Clearly state the services you will provide.
2. Align your services to the fees you charge – and disclose them appropriately.
3. Execute well on the services you provide.

Services provided by market sector

The services that are provided to plan sponsors can vary by both market segment and advisor type:

Findings: Service issues by plan size/advisor type	MassMutual's Observations/interpretations
The smaller plan sponsors (\$10 to \$15 million) are much likelier than the largest plan sponsors (\$50 million+) to receive a wide array of services from their advisors – including advice on plan design, help in resolving service problems, ongoing and rollover investment advice to participants, and enrollment support.	Smaller plan sponsors are more likely to have limited retirement plan-related resources and are consequently more dependent on the advisor to provide more services. Also, many advisors who service this market are interested in ancillary individual business and they provide the services that will give them access – such as enrollment support, rollover counseling, etc.
Plan sponsors served by commission-based advisors are much likelier to receive participant-based services than those served by fee-based advisors.	Advisors who operate under this compensation structure are interested in individual ancillary business and therefore want access to participants.

Relationships in the \$50 million+ market

There is significant evidence that advisors who service larger plans are more seasoned professionals who provide specialized services. These advisors' services are often complemented by the services of a bundled provider (most prevalent in the large plan space), and as a result, there tends to be a stronger-than-average provider/plan sponsor relationship with these plans.

A Profile of Today's Most Successful and Influential Advisor

Bringing leadership to the client relationship

In the retirement plan world, the best relationships tend to be formed when the right people are performing the right tasks. Similarly, an effective working relationship often results when the retirement plan provider allows the advisor to assume the relationship management leadership role.

Communication

One of the most important steps today's successful advisor can take is to effectively assume a leadership role in the client relationship. *How?* Excellent communication is, of course, key to fostering this relationship. As our study revealed, it is vital that advisors disclose their compensation structure to the plan sponsor, making sure that he/she understands how it will operate and the reasons why the selected type of payment structure benefits the plan sponsor. Setting and reinforcing service expectations up front can also be key to the longevity of the relationship.

Advisor vs. Investment Provider: Who enjoys a stronger relationship with the plan sponsor?

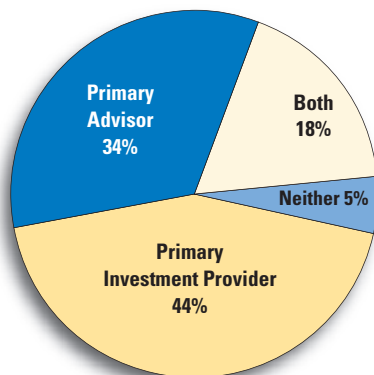
When it comes to who has a stronger bond with the plan sponsor – the investment provider or the retirement plan advisor – nothing is as simple as it seems, although plan size and length of advisor tenure seem to play critical roles. Here are some revealing statistics from our study:

- Overall, 43 percent of plan sponsors surveyed say their relationship is stronger with the primary investment provider than with their advisor, but this is sharply polarized by plan size. Smaller plans (under \$25 million) say the advisor relationship is stronger, while larger plans associate themselves more strongly with the investment provider.
- The advisor is much likelier to “own” the relationship in the first five years of an investment provider's tenure; after that, loyalty shifts to the investment provider.

Strength of 401(k) Provider Relationship

Base: has advisor and primary investment provider

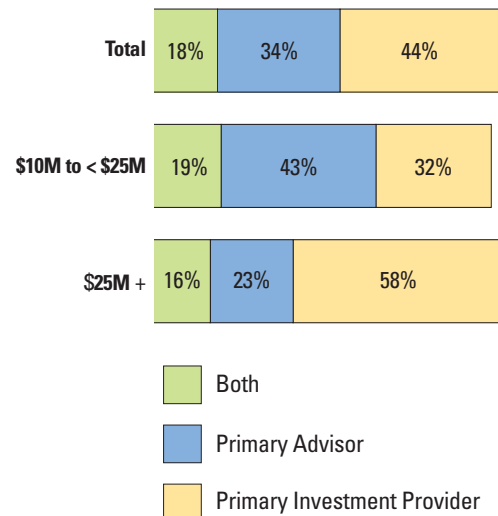
In general, who would you say has the stronger 401(k) relationship with your organization – your advisor or your investment provider?



By 401(k) Assets Strength of 401(k) Provider Relationship

Base: has advisor and primary investment provider

In general, who would you say has the stronger 401(k) relationship with your organization – your advisor or your investment provider?



Setting service expectations

As noted earlier, another important aspect of developing the plan sponsor relationship relates to service definition – particularly with respect to roles and responsibilities. It's important that the advisor have a frank discussion with the plan sponsor to learn what his or her service expectations are. Only when there is an understanding between the plan sponsor and the advisor on this important issue can the advisor hope to gain the plan sponsor's approval and continued loyalty.

Frequency of interactions

Finally, our study revealed that frequency of interactions with plan sponsors is another important component in the plan sponsor relationship that is critical for today's successful advisor.

The average plan sponsor receives 4.5 in-person visits from his or her advisor in the course of a year – and an average of 3.4 telephone calls per month – about one call per week and one visit per quarter, on average. These statistics don't vary much by plan size, average account balance, service model or advisor type – but commission-based advisors are in more frequent contact with their clients than are fee-based advisors.

Meaningful Touchpoints: Observations from MassMutual

With respect to having meaningful client touchpoints, MassMutual recommends a "Three-T" approach:

- **Timing** – Try to schedule your client meetings to coincide with those times when you can provide the most value – and immediately initiate action steps.
- **Topics** – Assess each client's needs and select meeting agenda topics that will lead to meaningful plan improvements.
- **Teamwork** – Team up with key associates from your client's service provider to make sure all the decision-makers are present at your meeting. Immediate issue resolution can lead to a more satisfied client.

Where the Opportunities Lie

As stated earlier, our study revealed that about one in six plan sponsors has initiated contact with other advisors in the past 12 months – with an eye toward replacing their incumbent. This is especially true of those plan sponsors who are served by commission-based advisors.

Fire away!

It's fairly safe to say, from statistics cited earlier, that commission-based advisors tend to be the most vulnerable. But they're not alone. Plan sponsors choose to discharge their advisors for a host of reasons. See the graph below for the reasons they cite in our study – with the corresponding percentage of plan sponsors who indicated that each reason had been responsible for their discharging one or more advisors in the past.

Advising the unadvised

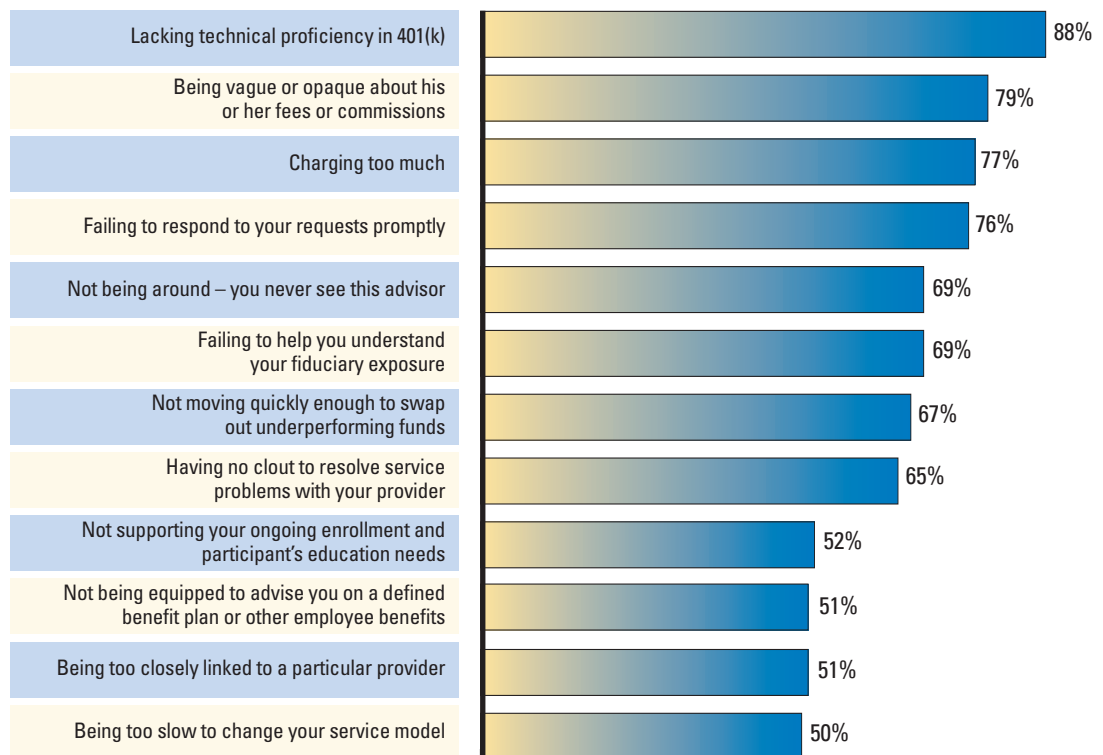
As noted earlier, unadvised plan sponsors comprise 42 percent of the plan sponsors population. These individuals are torn in several directions when it comes to advisors. You may recall that, while six in 10 agree that advisors could help them shop for the most appropriate provider for their plan, 59 percent of the unadvised assert that they have the skills and knowledge to manage their plan themselves.

Concerns about the expense of an advisor and suspicion about the motivations of an advisor (looking out for themselves first and their client second) further cloud the outlook. But by presenting a clear value proposition and having frank discussions with respect to fees and commissions, advisors may just find doors opening that had been closed to them in the past.

Major Drivers for Firing Advisors

Base: has advisor

I'm going to read a list of reasons why plan sponsors sometimes fire advisors. Whether or not you've ever fired one, please indicate whether it would be a major reason to fire an advisor, a minor reason, or not a reason at all.



Specific opportunities to explore

The chart below outlines, by market size and service model structure, where some of the best opportunities may be in the marketplace today. The column on the left explains each study finding. On the right are some observations based on that finding.

Key Study Findings	MassMutual's Observations
<p>In general, larger unadvised plan sponsors are more receptive to considering an advisory relationship.</p> <p>The smaller plan sponsors (\$10 million to less than \$15 million) are deeply skeptical about the value an advisor can bring; 52 percent say they wouldn't hire an advisor under any circumstances (vs. 32 percent of all plan sponsors).</p> <p>The largest plan sponsors (\$50 million or more) are quick to acknowledge that an advisor could help with the investment line-up and are somewhat likelier than all plan sponsors to say they would hire an advisor if the right one came along.</p>	<p>It appears that the less experienced advisor (without retirement industry-specific expertise) that has historically serviced the small plan market has done some substantial damage regarding plan sponsors' opinion of advisors. Only the best of the best advisors will be able to sway these plan sponsors.</p> <p>Conversely, there does appear to be opportunity in the large plan market, but of course, this market demands excellence from the advisors who service them, especially with respect to investment selection. The important thing for advisors to keep in mind with this market segment is that they should not try to be a "jack of all trades" (especially in the early stages of the relationship).</p>
<p>Plans bundled by a national provider, by far the largest segment of unadvised plans in the marketplace, are also very skeptical of advisors, likely as they are to feel that they have the skills and knowledge to manage their plans themselves. They feel advisors add more expense than value; consequently, they are less likely than all plan sponsors to consider hiring an advisor.</p>	<p>This, coupled with the prior point, suggests that large plans that are serviced in some sort of TPA-based model may be a prime target for advisors to uncover plan sponsors who are receptive to their services.</p>
<p>Nine percent of unadvised plan sponsors have approached a third-party advisor about an ongoing relationship in the past 12 months, especially those with assets of \$25 million or more.</p> <p>Nine percent of unadvised plan sponsors are absolutely certain or very likely to approach an advisor about an ongoing relationship in the year ahead, especially plans with assets of \$50 million or more.</p> <p>About one-quarter (26 percent) of unadvised plan sponsors have had an advisor on their 401(k) plan in the past five years.</p>	<p>These three points show evidence of receptivity and opportunity for advisors to gain new business. This is a skeptical group, so the approaching advisor must exhibit high value and be able to fully justify their compensation.</p> <p>Asking the right questions – such as why any prior relationship dissolved – is key.</p>

There is a substantial amount of new business opportunity within the group of plan sponsors that is currently unadvised, particularly in the larger plan markets. However, in order to penetrate the larger plan market, advisors may need to initiate the relationship based on a limited roster of services, such as investment analysis and provider selection projects, as this is what interests these plan sponsors most. More holistic relationships can evolve from there.

Conclusion

For advisors in today's competitive marketplace, the news is relatively good. As noted earlier, plan sponsors' overall satisfaction with advisors and their primary investment providers is extremely high – and four out of five plan sponsors surveyed are at least very likely to recommend their advisor to a counterpart at another company.

Are there some underlying problems and issues? Of course. But advisors who are looking to preserve their book of business can, with the right effort and sharp communication skills, uncover their clients' objections and concerns and address them – in many cases preserving the business, while raising their clients' overall level of satisfaction.

This report has revealed numerous opportunities for conscientious retirement plan advisors. The bottom line is that today's plan sponsor is looking for a **solutions-based** financial professional: they are now moving away from those advisors or consultants who operate under a traditional transactional model. Rather, they are looking for an advisor who can provide a holistic approach to their retirement services needs.

MassMutual is dedicated to helping advisors provide the very best services possible to plan sponsors and their participants. Consequently, the information contained in this report will be made available in several formats in an effort to educate the advisor community about the current needs of plan sponsors. Watch for this study to be presented via:

- Industry conferences,
- MassMutual-sponsored events,
- Web-based seminars,
- MassMutual published newsletters, and
- Other publications.

We are proud to offer a vast array of other tools and resources to support retirement plan advisors. For more information, go to www.massmutual.com/powertogrow, contact your local MassMutual representative, or call 1-888-877-7084.

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