P&A Behind the Scenes – Service Advisors

By Blake Anderson

This article is the first in a multiple part blog series that goes behind the scenes of P&A and highlights our team and how the work gets done. Today, we will kick off the series with a look at the Service Advisor role at P&A and the integral part it plays in delivering outstanding service to our clients. The Service Advisors at P&A are a critical part of the engine that keeps our day to day moving. They work side-by-side with an Advisor on each client relationship and possess a breadth of knowledge valuable to the firm as a whole.

You have most likely met or interacted with some or all of our Service Advisors, but to start we want to highlight a bit about each one:

Elizabeth Sydzyik is our Lead Service Advisor and has over 16 years of experience at P&A. So far, there hasn't been a complex issue that she hasn't been able to tackle! In addition to her Service Advisor duties, Elizabeth is a Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor℠ and a Certified Nebraska SHIP/SMP counselor that helps evaluate Medicare options for our clients.

Kristin Kliewer just hit her 10-year mark at P&A. She was also an intern at P&A before coming back to us in 2014. Kristin serves as our Chief Compliance Officer in addition to her Service Advisor duties. It seems she effortlessly transitions from the various roles she plays at P&A and keeps us all in line!

Soren Schwan has been with us over two years after joining us from the Insurance industry and we are so fortunate to have her. Soren is spectacular at working with our support team at Schwab to make sure service requests get done correctly and efficiently. She is currently studying for her CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ certification, which will enable to her to deliver even more value and service to our clients.

A.J Natter joined P&A a little less than a year ago. He has done an excellent job of getting up to speed and learning about P&A. As a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, he excels at diving into the financial planning work at P&A. He has also spearheaded bringing some new technology tools to P&A to help deliver an even better client experience.

Our Service Advisor team brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the table and is a sharp bunch. Their impact on P&A's operations can't be understated and it is hard to describe all the work they do day in and day out, but here a few highlights:

Client Onboarding: The Service Advisors make sure that new client accounts get set up correctly at Schwab and track account transfers and funding all the way through. If securities are transferring into an account, they reconcile to the outside custodian statements to make sure everything transferred and is in good order. They have embraced the on-line tools (DocuSign), which have helped make the process easier and quicker for our clients.

Technology: If you are a new client, the Service Advisors will set you up with a P&A Online Portal and assist you in getting setup for Schwab online access. Having trouble getting logged into your P&A Portal or Schwab Alliance as an existing client? The Service Advisor are experts at navigating any hoops to get you logged back in.

Money Movements: On a daily basis, our clients have cash needs – either for day-to-day living expenses, paying tax bills, or spending on something fun. Our Service Advisors are key to making sure there is cash ready to go in the account by communicating with our Trading Team. Once cash is ready to go, they will work with the client to facilitate the money movement.

Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs): For clients that must take RMDs from their retirement accounts or inherited IRA accounts, our Service Advisor team is front and center on tracking what these amounts are and helping communicate them to clients. They keep close tabs on the completion of these requirements to make sure they are done by the end of the calendar year. They are well-versed in the rules surrounding RMDs and can be used as a resource for any questions.

Here are a few reflections from our Service Advisors on their work at P&A or some memorable situations they have tackled over the years:

From Kristin - "There is no greater reward than developing a trusting relationship and seeing a client's progress throughout the different phases of life. Being here for our clients during a period of great joy or grief, assisting in a dream transaction, such as the purchase of a new home, or hearing about a once in a lifetime vacation spent with their loved ones that they only felt possible due to careful planning and saving… these moments have provided me a career fulfillment that I never thought possible. I enjoy playing a small role in our client's journey."

From Elizabeth – "One memorable situation that sticks out where I was able to make a difference was with husband-and-wife clients that were just getting ready to enter retirement. Their existing advisor relationship wasn't delivering on their expectations, and they had several concerns, needs, and questions they wanted to get addressed for this next phase of life. It was so rewarding working to deliver advice and guidance to the clients on things such as:

- Counseling on the Medicare enrollment process for both clients now that the husband was retiring.
- Rolling over old retirement accounts from a variety of sources – we were able to help them consolidate accounts together to simplify their financial life.
- Helping consolidate several legacy stock holdings and physical certificates going back decades.
- Coordinating with the client's estate planning attorney to make sure their estate plan and investment accounts were aligned and working together.

It was fulfilling to see the clients at ease after coming over to P&A, knowing that their concerns had been addressed. They were also very grateful that the next generation will now be able to handle their affairs smoothly."

From A.J. – "I've found several rewarding situations within the realm of employer plans and benefits. It's been fulfilling to assist clients in understanding their options related to pension plans, ESOPs, and private employer stock. Breaking down and explaining these plan documents in a clear manner is crucial for helping clients make informed decisions aligned with their financial goals. I love the opportunity to engage with both our clients and other members of the P&A team to help deliver a great client experience."

You will often hear us say that when you hire P&A, you hire our entire team, and you are a client of the firm. The Service Advisors are an important part of that team and fulfilling our mission of being an unwavering advocate in our client's financial lives.

We hope you have enjoyed our initial post in the P&A Behind the Scenes blog series. More to come over the next few months highlighting different areas of the P&A world.

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