

eMoney | EBOOK

3 Pillars of an Exceptional Client Experience

Building Lifelong Relationships with Financial Planning Clients

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Here’s what separates good financial planners from great ones: Great planners understand that financial planning is an ongoing process—one that changes and evolves with the lives of their clients.

Today’s clients expect more than quarterly reviews and a binder full of projections. They want an ongoing, interactive partnership. One where they can see their full financial life in one place, understand how their goals are prioritized, and trust that their planner genuinely understands them.

This eBook is designed for financial planners who already believe in delivering a great client experience and are ready to sharpen their approach. The focus here is not on the why, but on the how. How to personalize advice in a scalable way. How to invite clients into the process without overwhelming them. How to use technology to create stronger, more transparent relationships.

We’ll explore three essential pillars of client experience:

1. **Personalization** that reflects the client’s full financial and personal picture
2. **Collaboration** that builds buy-in and keeps clients engaged long after meetings
3. **Transparency** that makes the planning process easier to understand and trust



Pillar 1 —Personalization
Making Every Plan Feel Customized

Clients want a planning experience that feels tailored to their lives—one that evolves as their goals, priorities, and circumstances change. Yet many clients still say their current experience isn't fully aligned with what they want.

Our research highlights a key gap: While **86 percent of financial professionals recognize the importance of personalization, only 27 percent of clients report experiencing a genuinely personalized process.**[1] That disconnect is an opportunity that technology can help close.



How to Personalize the Planning Experience

To meet rising expectations, financial professionals need to go beyond broad goals and dig into the full context of a client's financial life. That includes lifestyle preferences, risk tolerance, family dynamics, and even past financial experiences. These aren't always easy conversations, but they're crucial to shaping advice that clients trust and act on.

While behavioral and financial psychology can help guide these conversations, personalization doesn't require you to become a therapist. What it does require is **a planning process that captures meaningful context and a tech stack that supports it.**

Use Client Data Strategically

Personalization starts with data beyond just balances and holdings. Our research shows that **clients are more likely to share personal information** (like money history, personality traits, and financial anxiety) when they see that data being used meaningfully in their plan.[1]

This creates a positive feedback loop: Better data leads to better advice, which builds more trust, which encourages deeper sharing over time. To support that cycle, planners can:



Use **demographic analysis** to tailor planning strategies across generations



Track **engagement patterns** (e.g., portal logins, plan views) to identify what matters most to each client



Monitor clients' **self-guided scenario** modeling in their client portal



Analyze **held-away assets** to uncover new planning or consolidation opportunities

Just as important is what happens during the discovery and fact-finding process. This is where personalization truly begins—by listening closely, asking deeper questions, and encouraging clients to articulate not just their goals, but the "why" behind them. Vision card exercises, qualitative prompts, and open-ended conversations during early meetings can help uncover life priorities that might otherwise remain unstated.

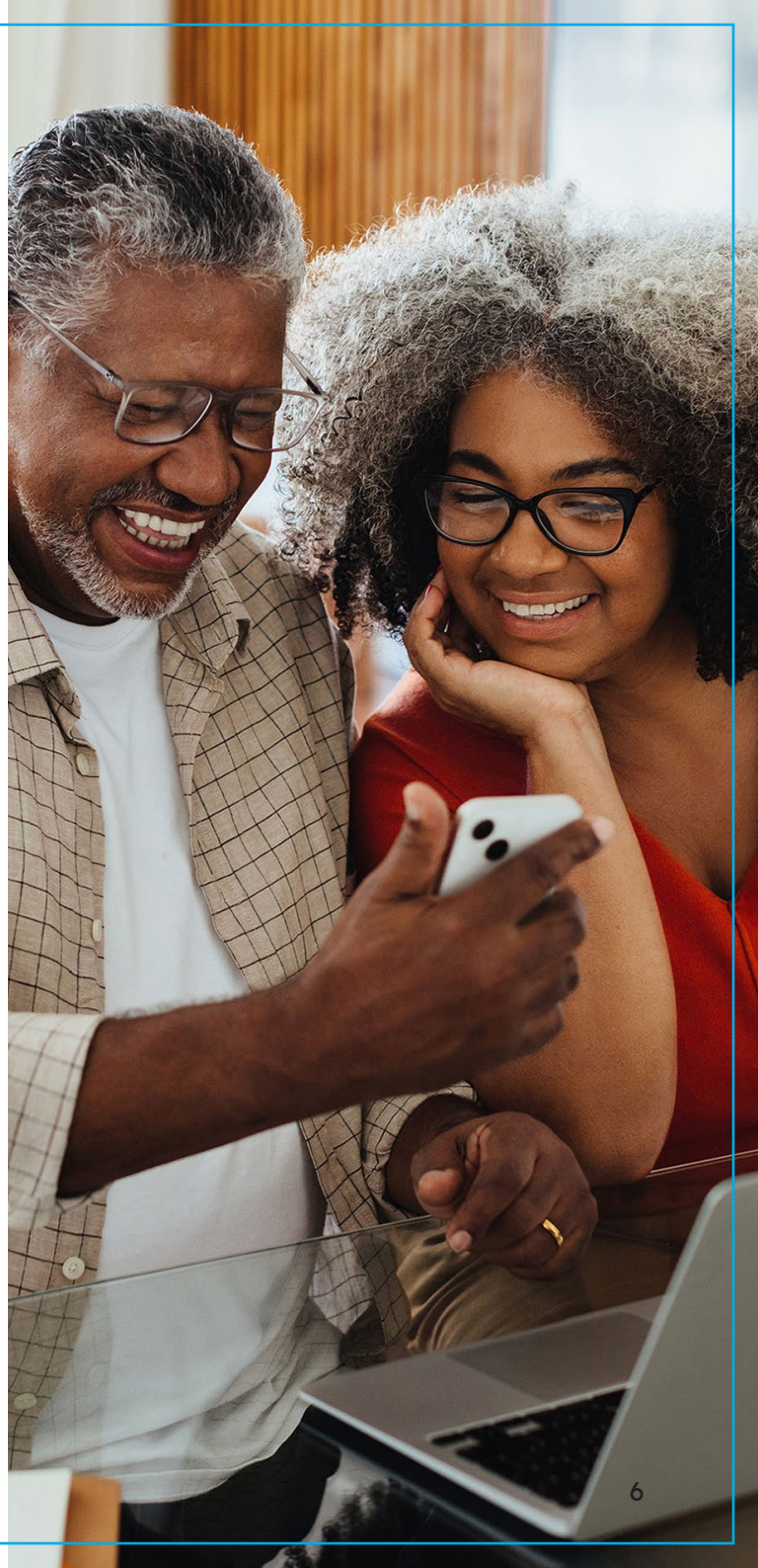
Activate the Client Portal as a Personalization Hub

As clients' needs evolve, the right portal keeps them involved and strengthens their relationship with you.

Here's how to use a portal to personalize at scale:

- **Goal setting and tracking:** Invite clients to set and update personal goals within their portal, then use those inputs to guide planning discussions.
- **Communication:** Use secure messaging to stay connected, answer questions, and flag updates between meetings. This keeps the relationship active even when you're not face to face.
- **Budgeting and cash flow tools:** For clients looking to improve day-to-day money habits, budgeting tools offer transparency and real-time feedback. Financial planners can use this data to offer encouragement, course corrections, or spending guidance.
- **Access to the financial plan:** Give clients access to key plan information, interactive scenarios, and visualizations so they can see their progress and understand the "why" behind recommendations.
- **Secure document sharing:** Use the portal to exchange tax forms, estate documents, and other sensitive materials without resorting to email. It saves time and boosts client confidence in your process.

These capabilities not only make the experience feel personal—they help clients stay engaged between meetings and reinforce the sense that they are active participants in their financial journey.



Personalization That Scales

One of the biggest myths about personalization is that it's only possible for top-tier clients. In reality, technology makes it easier to scale personalized experiences across your entire book of business.

By automating routine tasks like data collection and document delivery, you can spend more time on high-impact conversations that build trust and differentiate the experience. A tiered service model, supported by tools like client portals and digital onboarding, lets financial professionals meet clients where they are without compromising quality or attention.

When planning feels personal, clients commit more fully—to their goals, to the process, and to you. Technology makes it possible to deliver that level of service at every stage of the relationship.



Pillar 2 —Collaboration
Planning *with* Clients, Not *for* Them

Financial planning shouldn't be a presentation; it should be a conversation. The moment you shift from "here's what I think you should do" to "let's figure this out together," everything changes. Suddenly, you're not selling a plan, you're building a partnership.



According to our research, **only 19 percent of financial planners consistently implement the following five key collaborative planning activities despite strong evidence that these activities** lead to better outcomes for planners and clients. Financial planners who prioritize collaboration report nearly double the assets under management, a 33 percent increase in referrals, and significantly higher client retention and satisfaction rates.[2]

Collaboration sounds simple—engage the client, work together. But what does that really mean in a planning relationship?

Five Activities That Define Collaborative Planning

Through research and real-world feedback, we have identified five activities that set collaborative planners apart. Each one presents a structured way to involve clients in the planning process while reinforcing the financial planner's value:

1. **Comparing Plan Options and Stress Testing**
   Walk through different paths side by side—like saving more now versus retiring later—and test how resilient each option is under market stress. Tools like Monte Carlo simulations bring clarity to complex trade-offs and help clients make confident decisions.

2. **Analyzing the Current Course of Action**
   Use technology to assess whether the client's existing strategies are still aligned with their goals. Comparing past and present Monte Carlo scores can help pinpoint trends or vulnerabilities, prompting smart, timely adjustments.

3. **Demonstrating Scenarios and Competing Action**s
   Clients often ask, "What if?" What if I work two more years? What if I downsize? Modeling these options visually gives clients a clearer sense of control and allows them to weigh outcomes in real time.

4. **Reviewing Assumptions and Estimates**
   Clients don't need to become experts in capital market projections, but they do want to understand the logic behind your recommendations. Transparent discussions about return assumptions, inflation expectations, and other plan inputs build confidence and reduce anxiety.

5. **Reviewing and Refining Recommendations**
   Life changes fast. Plans should, too. Revisit assumptions, adjust goals, and fine-tune strategies together regularly. When clients see that their plan evolves with them, they're more likely to stay engaged.

How Technology Enables Deeper Collaboration

A conversation during a meeting is just one moment in the client relationship. The tools you provide determine how engaged clients stay in the weeks and months that follow.



Read More about Using Monte Carlo Analysis for Collaboration

Client Portals as a Collaboration Hub

While client portals are an essential tool for personalizing plans, they're also a highly effective way of fostering collaboration. With a client portal, clients can engage with their plan whenever and however they choose, from reviewing account data to exploring potential strategies. According to our research, clients who actively use their portal report **higher satisfaction, stronger trust, and greater motivation to follow their plan.**

Key portal features that support collaboration include:

- **Interactive scenario tools** so clients can explore trade-offs on their own
- **Secure messaging** to keep dialogue going outside of meetings
- **Meeting scheduling and task tracking** to promote shared accountability
- **Data aggregation** to ensure the plan reflects the client's full financial picture

Monte Carlo Simulations: Bringing Clients Into the Conversation

Monte Carlo simulations belong in the room with your clients. When they see you model their actual scenarios—market downturns, job changes, that dream house purchase—they move from passive observers to active decision-makers.

Features like the **Confidence Age metric** make these insights even more digestible. Rather than interpreting an abstract 75 percent probability of success, clients can understand that their plan remains solid until age 85, for example—making financial risk feel real and relevant.

Why Collaboration Works

When you involve clients in the planning process, they feel heard. And when they feel heard, they become more invested—in the plan and in the relationship.

Collaboration leads to:



Peace of mind

Clients can see that their plan is designed to weather uncertainty



Confidence through understanding

They grasp the “why” behind your advice



Financial security

They know they’re making informed decisions with your guidance

These aren’t just nice-to-haves. According to our research, collaborative planning leads to a[2]:

20-point increase

in clients feeling peace of mind

17-point increase

in referrals

14-point increase

in motivation to achieve financial goals

Making Collaboration a Habit

If collaboration is going to be a strength, it can't be reserved for annual reviews. Build it into your workflow by using a client portal to assign follow-up tasks after every meeting, keeping assumptions transparent and inviting feedback, and setting up regular checkpoints.

Think of collaborative planning not as an event, but as a rhythm. A continuous loop where clients feel included, planners stay informed, and financial strategies evolve in real time.

Pillar 3 —Transparency
Building Understanding, Earning Trust

If you want clients to trust your guidance, bring them into the process. Clients want to understand how recommendations take shape—where the data comes from, how decisions are made, and what's driving each part of their plan. The more visibility they have, the more confidence they build.

Transparency makes that possible. When clients can follow the logic behind your advice and see their full financial picture, they stay engaged, and trust grows with every interaction.

According to research by Cerulli Associates, **transparency ranks as the single most important factor in how affluent clients choose and evaluate an advisor.**[3] When clients feel in the loop, the entire planning relationship strengthens.

How Transparency Drives Better Outcomes

Clients crave visibility into both their current financial picture and the "why" behind your advice. Delivering that transparency has clear business benefits:

- **Stronger trust:** When clients understand how recommendations are formed, they're more likely to follow through
- **Deeper engagement:** Transparent processes encourage clients to take a more active role in their plan
- **Higher loyalty:** Clients who feel their financial planner operates openly and collaboratively are more likely to stay and refer others

Transparency is about both showing data and creating an ongoing, two-way dialogue that builds clarity and trust over time.



How to Use Technology to Enhance Transparency

Transparency doesn't require more meetings or more reports. The right technology can bring transparency to life in scalable, sustainable ways across your entire client base.



Client Reporting Tools

Modern client portals give clients real-time access to their investments, goals, and progress. This eliminates guesswork and ensures clients always know where they stand. Planners can go further by using interactive reports to show how plans evolve over time and how new decisions will affect future outcomes.



Account Aggregation

Account aggregation is one of the most effective ways to provide a complete, transparent view of a client's financial life. When clients can see all their assets and liabilities in one place, they gain clarity—and so do you. Aggregation also streamlines onboarding and updates, providing a richer data set without extra manual work. Clients highly value the ability to see all of their accounts in one place, and this transparency builds trust and engagement.



Streamlining the Onboarding Experience

Transparency starts from day one. Financial professionals should be clear about what services they provide, how fees are structured, and what clients can expect throughout the process. Using a client portal to collect data and track onboarding progress adds another layer of clarity and accountability.



Secure Communication and Document Sharing

Secure messaging through a client portal helps ensure that key communications happen transparently and that sensitive documents are shared safely. This not only enhances convenience; it signals to clients that their information is being handled responsibly.

Your Clients Are Ready. Are You?

Clients can sense when their financial planner is making the effort to deliver a more personalized experience that reflects a genuine commitment to addressing complex needs and concerns.

The strategies in this eBook reflect how leading financial professionals are evolving their approach:

- They personalize financial plans by turning client data into meaningful insights
- They cultivate true collaboration, not just during scheduled meetings, but continuously, through interactive planning tools and always-on engagement
- They prioritize transparency, helping clients understand both their financial picture and the process behind every recommendation

Through it all, the client portal acts as the foundation, giving clients a window into their financial plans, encouraging ongoing participation, and reinforcing the sense that they are partners in shaping their futures.

Of course, client expectations will continue to shift. Tools will evolve. But what won't change is the value of delivering an experience where clients feel informed, included, and supported every step of the way. As you refine your own client experience, look for opportunities to put these strategies into action, starting with how you use your client portal to engage clients in new and better ways.

For a deeper look at how technology can help you elevate the client experience, explore The Advisor's Complete Client Experience Playbook.

Learn More →

Sources:

[1] "Beyond the Plan" Research, eMoney, June 2023.

[2] "Planning Better Together" Research, eMoney, June 2024

[3] Rep. *The Cerulli Edge U.S. Advisor Edition The Trends for 2025 Issue 86.* Boston, MA: Cerulli Associates, 2025.