

Advisor Highlight Series

Featuring Heather Rohrs

The Advisor Highlight Series features the unique insights and successes of advisors who use the AssetMark platform. In this series, we sit down with advisors to get their professional views on practice management, industry trends, and what they have learned over the course of their work to help clients reach their personal and financial goals. We hope you enjoy this chance to learn from your peers!



How did you decide to get into the business?

I was supposed to go to Boston College for law school, but I met my wife, Aimee, in undergrad and instead got a job with a nonprofit; six months later I was the interim director. I learned I was good at talking with large donors and philanthropic planning, but I was 21 and looked 12 years old, so the board asked me to get a master's degree. I focused my MBA on finance and accounting because math came very easy to me. So much so that a board member suggested I could have a career in finance. Shortly thereafter I opened my practice.

How has your business evolved over the years?

Initially, I just needed to survive. Then I amassed clients but didn't have a lot of direction and my business was inefficient. I was overwhelmed by the idea of servicing more clients. Then I began working with AssetMark; they helped me streamline things and focus on attracting a more strategic client base. Now I have two working business models: a Midwest practice with the average investable assets around \$400,000, and a national practice that caters to LGBTQ clients that requires a million-dollar minimum, for traveling to client meetings. Both businesses have a purpose in my life, and I enjoy hanging out with our LGBTQ clients who often become friends. It's the best of all worlds.

Ironically, the second business stemmed from an advisor that [Carrie Hansen](#) introduced me to when I attended my first [Gold Forum](#). We had a great conversation and I mentioned wanting to give back to my community. We kept in touch and eventually started the business. We thought there would be a lot of competition but there is so much demand. Now we're competing against huge firms and I just landed a large client. I was the only one who brought in a female portfolio manager and in my initial meeting I pulled out a blank sheet of paper and simply asked, "Where do we start?" Everybody else came in with a circus. It doesn't matter if you're dealing with a \$100,000 or a \$40 million case, people want to be heard and treated with respect. It's amazing how much you can pick up if you just listen.

What are some of the challenges you help your clients navigate?

As a fiduciary I have a legal and a moral responsibility of putting the client's needs in front of mine and I practice that every day with each one of my clients – even the ones who challenge me the most. I have one client who suffers with mental health and is very vocal about her aversion to the gay community. But I'm the only person she trusts, and she calls me before anyone else. She once

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called me instead of the police. That's the level of trust she has in me. Sure, we don't always agree, but it's also about being the bigger person and doing the right thing for my client.

For my LGBTQ practice, adoption and estate planning can be challenging. Certain states are more conservative than others, which can be a barrier to adoption. When I meet with clients, factoring their beneficiaries into their overall financial plan and navigating the legal hoops regarding their estate can be challenging. For example, some same-sex couples may or may not be able to legally adopt their own children, and for estate planning, it's incredibly important that a child be considered a child of both parents. This process can be very time consuming and expensive and has significant impacts to their estate and family. Unless you're part of the community or dealing with a similar situation, you can't get your arms around it.

How do you give back to your community?

My wife Aimee and I are deeply involved with [Camp Lightbulb](#), a summer camp offering LGBTQ youth a happy and safe environment. When our son came out to us there weren't any local resources for him, so I was thrilled to find a safe place with a strong community where he could talk openly. It's meaningful for me and my clients that AssetMark acknowledged and supported this endeavor by awarding us with the Community Inspiration Award and recognizing us in their [video series](#).

Aimee and I have been together for 24 years and have raised our children during our time together. When you have young children there's not a lot you can hide, and you're always going to find people who don't agree with how you choose to live your life - I choose to navigate around that. AssetMark has given me a home where I feel like a valued and meaningful member of the community; it's a very refreshing culture. Advisors have been incredibly kind; I've made great friendships. It's an interesting time. I'm making a living being out and open. A lot of people laid the groundwork for me to do what I do today, and there's still a lot of work to do, but it's a pretty cool place to be.

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