Financial Advisor Interview Checklist

A little homework now can save you a lot of headaches later. After all, when it comes to your money it’s important to find someone you can trust, right?

Track your progress by filling out this interactive checklist as you go

In the First Interview

- What is your firm’s philosophy?
  - It’s important to find an advisor who matches your goals, aspirations, risks, and fears before making any recommendations.
- Are you associated with any broker-dealer?
  - The success of independent advisors, who have no association with large broker houses, are more aligned with the interests of their clients.
- What is your approach to investment planning?
  - The most important thing you want your advisor to have is a well-thought-out, evidence-based process.
- Can you give me an example of a time when you helped a similar client make progress?
  - A good indicator of a financial advisor’s expertise is whether they have past experience in helping other, similar clients.
- What financial planning services do you offer?
  - Your ideal advisor is one who matches your financial sophistication in the areas in which you need the most help.
- Based on what you know about me, why do you think I am a suitable client?
  - Their answer should not only show that they have a good understanding of your situation, but also how they can help improve it.
- How often will we review our plan to make sure we’re making the right kind of progress?
  - Knowing where you stand financially is important, and you want an advisor who keeps you in the loop along the way.

In the Second Interview

- Do you have a sample financial plan you can send over?
  - While you should have covered this during your first meeting, it’s a question you don’t want to have any doubts about. A true fiduciary financial advisor is solely focused on your best interests.
- Who is your custodian?
  - A big red flag here is if the advisor is his or her own custodian. If your financial advisor is independent, they are likely to work with a large reputable custodian such as Schwab, Fidelity, TD Ameritrade, or Pershing.
- If I hire you, will I have to sell my current investments?
  - Look for a very well thought out process for onboarding you as a client. If they talk in circles, it’s clear they’re trying to “close” you instead of entering into a fruitful relationship.
- What would the process look like if I decide to hire you?
  - If you own investments outside of an IRA or other tax-qualified account, ask if the advisor requires you to sell everything and purchase selected investments. If so, ask about the tax implications.
- Will there be tax implications from transitioning my assets to you?
  - If they’re unable to provide examples of other potential experts for you to refer to, you may find yourself grappling with finding another expert should the situation arise.
- What other types of professional services do you offer?
  - (i.e. accountants, estate attorneys, insurance representatives, etc)
- If I hire you, what are my all-in costs?
  - The most important thing you want your advisor to have is a well-thought-out, evidence-based process.