

Case Study:

Bronfman E.L. Rothschild



AT A GLANCE: Bronfman E.L. Rothschild

- Founded: 1997
- Headquarters: Rockville, Md.
- Website: www.belr.com
- Services Offered: Wealth management, financial planning, retirement plan advisory services, retirement plan consulting and administration
- AUM: Approximately \$4 billion
- Clients: About 1,300 individual accounts
- Staff: 70 team members, including 31 advisors
- Primary Custodians: Charles Schwab & Co., Fidelity Investments
- Portfolio Management/Reporting: Advisor View™
- CRM: Advisor CRM®

Bronfman E.L. Rothschild: A Case Study in Harnessing Tamarac's Software to Facilitate Long-Term, Scalable Practice Growth

Bronfman E.L. Rothschild has grown exponentially in under a decade. The RIA has completed seven acquisitions in the past six years, expanding its national presence from three offices to nine, and the industry has taken notice. Bronfman E.L. Rothschild was named No. 2 in Financial Advisor magazine's 2016 list of the fastest-growing RIA firms in the U.S., and over the next five years, it plans to more than double its assets under management from approximately \$4 billion to about \$10 billion. To accomplish this goal, and streamline and integrate operations across nine offices in multiple states, Bronfman E.L. Rothschild (BELR) relies on Envestnet | Tamarac's technology solutions.

Last year, BELR acquired Rockville, Md.-based RIA Highline Wealth Management, through which it was introduced to Tamarac. Jill Lizzi, CFP®, Wealth Advisor at BELR, who was an Associate at Highline at the time of the acquisition, had worked with Tamarac's solutions for three years at Highline and an additional four years at her prior firm.

"We were using reporting software at Highline which gave us what we needed at the time, but the vendor wasn't developing their solution in a way that would give us the most leading-edge technology for our clients over the long term," she says. "What we were using was also rather expensive, and the data wasn't always reliable. So we began looking at other options, and Tamarac was a customizable alternative that gave us what we wanted in a format that we were able to make our own."

Ms. Lizzi and her colleagues were also impressed by Tamarac's ongoing product developments, which are rolled out every six to eight weeks.

"The Tamarac reports weren't cookie-cutter reports—we could make them our own—and they were consistently coming up with new technology outputs and advancements that we felt would make them a great partner five to 10 years down the line, and after that," says Ms. Lizzi.

Highline was acquired by BELR three years after it adopted Tamarac's Advisor View™ portfolio management and performance reporting application and the enterprise-level Advisor CRM® system. After the acquisition closed on July 31, 2015, BELR evaluated 15 areas of integration between the firms, including performance reporting and CRM. Ms. Lizzi showed her new colleagues at BELR how Advisor View and Advisor CRM had helped streamline workflows and strengthen client engagement at Highline, and the BELR leadership decided to stick with Tamarac for the combined company.



“At its core, our business is about two things—investment management and client service. I don’t want our wealth advisors to spend time focusing on whether or not our technology and performance reports are okay,” says Neal Simon, CEO and Principal of BELR, who founded Highline. “We’re not a technology or a performance reporting company, so Tamarac is a good partner because they help our team focus on the things that are making an impact on our clients.”

Mr. Simon feels his firm’s two strongest assets are its team of professionals and its relationships with clients, and “one of the roles that Tamarac plays for us is helping us manage that second asset.”

“Advisor CRM® enables us to keep track of all our clients—all of our communications with clients, in all forms, are securely archived and easy to get to,” he says.

Mr. Simon has also been impressed by the way Envestnet | Tamarac’s extensive integrations have enabled BELR wealth advisors to enhance their investment management capabilities, further strengthening client relationships. Not only do Advisor View and Advisor CRM talk to each other through deep integration, but Advisor View is also integrated with BELR’s primary custodians, Charles Schwab & Co. and Fidelity Investments, and its main financial planning tool, MoneyGuidePro®. These integrations, along with Tamarac’s ongoing integration with the Envestnet | Yodlee personal finance data aggregation and analytics platform, empower BELR’s wealth advisors to provide a holistic wealth management experience for clients that reinforces the value they offer.

Employees Become ‘Super Users’ at Tamarac University

Five months after the Highline acquisition was finalized, all six of BELR’s Midwestern offices—Appleton, Delafield, Janesville, Madison, and Milwaukee in Wisconsin, as well as Minneapolis—had transitioned to Advisor View and were managing their accounts using Tamarac’s applications. Advisor CRM integration followed in July 2016.

This process was completed in a relatively short amount of time thanks to the “Tamarac University” (also known as “Tam U”) program, in which Tamarac representatives provide classroom-style, hands-on training sessions at the firm’s Seattle headquarters on a monthly basis.

“We selected a couple of people from our Midwest offices for Tam U, and they became the designated ‘super users’ of the software,” Ms. Lizzi recalls. “Instead of us having to train our employees to use Advisor View and Advisor CRM, Tamarac helped us train them, and those super users then went back to their offices and could answer any questions other team members had about the programs.”

In addition to the Tam U sessions, Tamarac also dispatched two representatives to run on-site training at BELR's Midwestern offices. "Our team was able to talk with Tamarac's consultants to make sure we were thinking through every part of the implementation and integration, and then they handed the baton to our Tamarac service team, who is the same team that was responsible for servicing Highline," says Ms. Lizzi. "The service team took the time to understand what the Midwestern offices, and the combined Bronfman E.L. Rothschild, like in terms of data and how it looks on the screen and in reports—and made sure the entire process of transferring to Advisor View and Advisor CRM went smoothly."

BELR's dedicated service team at Tamarac, and Tam U online tutorials, ensure that all BELR professionals—both new and seasoned—can easily get up to speed on understanding and utilizing Tamarac's regular technology updates. "It's a consistent challenge to train 70 people when updates are rolled out every six to eight weeks, so the Tam U online tutorials are very helpful in that regard," says Ms. Lizzi. "We also help new employees learn how to use our systems by having them take the Tam U tutorials because they provide a solid knowledge base."

Tamarac's Customized Reports for BELR Make a Big Difference

To better communicate portfolio performance and management updates to clients, BELR has harnessed Tamarac's robust team of software engineers to produce customized reports and reporting features in Advisor View on both a regular and one-off basis. For example, at BELR's request, Tamarac's engineering team created special report templates with charts that show asset allocation over time.

"This helps us speak to clients in a better way about long-term asset allocation because we can actually show what would happen if changes were made, and why," says Ms. Lizzi. "We can frame our conversations with clients so much better because Envestnet | Tamarac was open to building this for us."

Advisor View also enables BELR to report on external client assets, which allows its wealth advisors to provide more value in their guidance and communications.

"If we're aware that a client has a portfolio at another firm, we can report on that as well as the portfolio they have with us, and talk to the client about those assets if the performance isn't up to par," says Ms. Lizzi. "This allows us to act as a consultant on 100% of our clients' wealth, which a lot of other firms don't have the customization capabilities to do."

Since implementing Tamarac's solutions, BELR has reduced the time it spends on compiling and reviewing quarterly reports by at least 75%, due in large part to the accuracy and reliability of the reporting functionalities in Advisor View.

"We're able to rely on the accuracy of Tamarac's reports a lot more than we could with the reports of our previous provider, so we now have a platform where it's much easier to check reports—and where we can devote hours we used to spend on reports to client outreach instead," says Ms. Lizzi.

Secure Client Portal Makes Paper Reports—and PDFs—Almost Obsolete

BELR's previous technology provider didn't offer a client portal, but after implementing Advisor View, BELR was able to leverage the application's secure client portal to strengthen engagement with clients to the point where paper reports, and even PDF files, aren't required. The firm no longer mails printed reports or emails PDF files of reports to clients. Instead, BELR's wealth advisors save time by emailing clients a link to their reports in the Advisor View client portal, where they can log in at any time to view reports as well as account performance and updates.



“The client portal is very useful for providing clients the information they need to know whenever they want to know it,” says Ms. Lizzi. “They can log in at 2:00 a.m. and see how their portfolio did the previous day, and that is helpful for keeping them informed and engaged. It also saves us time because we no longer have to act as the only medium between our clients and their assets.”

Ms. Lizzi and Mr. Simon divide their clients into two different groups—those who would rather delegate investment management, trusting BELR to provide a high level of service in a small amount of time because they don’t want to focus on managing their portfolios, and those who want to have in-depth discussions with BELR about nitty-gritty details of various investment opportunities, such as the alpha and beta potential of specific funds. The client portal enables BELR’s wealth advisors to effectively and efficiently service both types of clients.

“We’ve seen increased engagement from clients who want to see and discuss details because they can log into the client portal every day, and all the information they need is at their fingertips,” says Ms. Lizzi. “The clients who don’t want to spend a lot of time on wealth management log in every once in a while when we reach out and remind them, but again, any information they need is at their fingertips when they log in.”

Ms. Lizzi notes that the easy access to detailed account data provided by the client portal for both types of clients is very helpful during stressful market conditions, such as the Brexit-related volatility over the summer. “During situations like Brexit, we can reach out to clients, and answer any questions they might have, through the client portal with the push of a button, and they can log into the client portal at any time to see how the markets are doing and how their portfolios are affected,” she says. “This makes it easy for us to have valuable conversations in real time with clients about what they should do protect their assets during volatile markets.”

The client portal is also available on Advisor View’s iPad app, which BELR will be able to offer to clients by the end of this year. When the implementation is complete, the firm’s clients will be able to log into the client portal to view account data and updates anytime from any location. This makes the Advisor View client portal and accompanying iPad app among BELR’s selling points for prospective clients—and Tamarac enables BELR to demonstrate the client portal and iPad app for prospects so they can experience their benefits first-hand.

“Just having a client portal and iPad app that provide our clients with a branded way to access their account data on a daily basis shows that we’re more cutting-edge than most shops,” says Ms. Lizzi. “These are not things that all firms can offer. Also, security breaches are constantly in the news these days, and investors are worried about how their data is secured, so being able to demonstrate how the client portal protects and secures data and documents is a big differentiator for us when we’re talking to prospects.”

The document vault within the Advisor View client portal is another feature that puts clients and prospects at ease with regard to the security of their account information. “Given the security concerns about personal email accounts being compromised, it’s important to have a secure transfer point for sensitive financial documents, and that’s what the client portal provides,” says Ms. Lizzi.

Billing: From Two or Three Weeks to One or Two Days

Not only did BELR’s previous technology provider not offer a client portal, but it also didn’t include a billing module, forcing the firm to manually complete all billing tasks. Every quarter, two BELR team members would have to allot between two and three weeks to billing. However, after the firm implemented Advisor View and Advisor CRM, the timing to complete billing workflows from start to finish was reduced to between one and two days.

“With people manually typing numbers into Excel spreadsheets, errors will happen, but Envestnet | Tamarac has a good billing module and we can be confident that our billing information is accurate,” says Mr. Simon. “We’ve saved so much time on billing and other workflows with Tamarac, which doesn’t just help us—it also helps our clients because we can spend more time doing things for them and communicating with them.”

Creating a Consistent Client Experience with Help from Advisor CRM

BELR has been able to customize its workflows for onboarding new clients in Advisor CRM, which has significantly streamlined the process for turning prospects into clients. At the point when a lead or a prospect becomes a client, a workflow with more than 50 steps must be completed to ensure the new client receives the same quality of service as established clients.

“When a lead or prospect turns into a client, there are literally tens of things happening behind the scenes to make sure the client experiences exactly what the last client who was onboarded experienced,” says Ms. Lizzi. “From ensuring the new client receives a signed welcome letter from Neal or another Managing Director to making sure the client receives a birthday present on time and setting up performance reporting preferences, there are over 50 items in that workflow, and our team has to check that the I’s are dotted and T’s are crossed on every step. Advisor CRM gives us the confidence that all of these things will get done in a timely fashion, and every new client has the same experience when they sign on with us.”

To 2021 (and \$10 Billion in Client Assets) and Beyond

BELR’s growth spurt over the past year isn’t an anomaly for the firm. Over the next five years, BELR expects to more than double its assets under management to approximately \$10 billion.

“We predict that both investment and organic growth will help us reach our goals over the next five years, and thanks to Envestnet | Tamarac, we feel we are on track,” says Mr. Simon. “The efficiencies that Tamarac has facilitated for us, and our clients, will continue to help us grow in a scalable manner over the next five years, and farther into the future.”

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