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A "game-changing" technology platform enables **McNamara Financial Group's** financial professionals to devote more time and energy to serving clients' long-term interests. page 98



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A “game-changing” technology platform enables **McNamara Financial Group’s** financial professionals to devote more time and energy to serving clients’ long-term interests.

by **BILL DONAHUE** photograph by **STACY CRESCITELLI**

IN THE YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR II, when Raytheon brought the microwave oven to market for commercial use, the company knew it had a tiger by the tail. By simplifying meal preparation, the product would enable consumers to achieve an elusive goal: more time to spend with family or on other enjoyable, meaningful, or more important pursuits.

Charles J. McNamara III, LUTCF, CMFC, knows the feeling. As the founder and managing partner of McNamara Financial Group in Doylestown, McNamara has spent the past 20-plus years helping clients plot out and prepare for their futures. The technology his firm has adopted over the past four years has been, in his words, “game-changing.”

“Heavily investing in technology to streamline the process has helped us be more efficient and spend more time with clients,” says McNamara. “We used to spend a lot of time on the administrative tasks associated with financial planning, but technology has



Technology allows us to focus more time working on portfolios, doing asset allocations, and staying on top of clients' investments. We're spending more time than ever working directly with clients, and that's what's most important.”

— *Charles J. McNamara III, LUTCF, CMFC, McNamara Financial Group*

enabled us to perform a lot of those changes instantaneously. Because we've been able to cut down on a lot of the tasks we used to have to do manually, we're able to devote more time to working with clients face to face. We've also cut down on costs and fees, which people really appreciate.”

McNamara Financial Group's technological embrace began in 2017, when the firm parted ways with its prior affiliate and linked arms with LPL Financial. The transition not only gave the firm greater independence, but also provided access to enhanced trading and financial planning software, robust analytical programs, and other dynamic tools designed to streamline operations and further enrich the client experience.

“We didn't have access to a lot of these tools through our previous firm,” McNamara says. “Since we've become independent with LPL, I'd say our clients have noticed a big dif-

ference in terms of efficiencies and the way they view their financial picture.”

For example, the financial planning software provides clients with an online dashboard that offers a centralized view of their account assets and information for the purpose of tracking progress against their goals. Put simply, the web-based tool offers an aggregate view of all assets in one place, with real-time asset values, so clients can see exactly where they stand, financially speaking.

“The program is a window into your entire financial picture,” McNamara says. “You can adjust your risk tolerance, see if anything is out of whack with your 401(k), and see how any planned changes to your lifestyle—getting a part-time job in retirement—might affect your plan this way or that. It's an amazing tool.”

Without such tools, the firm's financial professionals would need to spend their time on busywork, not thinking intently about a client's future.

“In years past, we used to do a big financial plan—an enormous report—and print it out for the client, but by the time you printed it out, it was already obsolete,” McNamara adds. “Now, the tools we have are dynamic, and it's all online. For anyone who's concerned about security, these tools use 256-bit encryption, the same as the National Security Agency.”

McNamara believes being “technology rich” helps his firm better tend to an underserved portion of the investor base—namely, millennials, including the children and grandchildren of current clients. It also extends the firm's reach considerably, by enabling its advisors to connect with clients far beyond the Philadelphia area.

“With LPL, we choose who we want to work with,” he adds. “We've already done quite a few accounts for younger millennials who have smaller amounts of money to contribute to investments. We can easily set them up for automatic contributions, which they love and their parents love. Everyone knows that if you start saving at 20 or 25, it makes a dramatic difference compared with waiting until you're 40. We're happy to start working with them now, and we'll be here to help them as their needs change over time.”

While the firm's adoption of technology

may have changed, McNamara Financial Group's hands-on approach to understanding each client's needs remains the same. The two go hand in hand, McNamara believes; in fact, he says the “bells and whistles” have enabled Ricardo J. Ferreira, CMFC, the firm's founding partner and portfolio and planning strategist, to better customize asset allocation based on a client's financial goals, risk tolerance, and timeline. The team can also make changes more quickly and purposefully, which is especially important given the uncertainty and volatility of the past few years.

“Ninety percent of returns come from asset allocation, and about 10 percent comes from security selection,” he says. “A lot of our research and analytics revolve around strategic asset allocation, which can change at a fast rate. The old 60/40 allocation still works to a point, but what makes up that 60/40 is very important, and that is what we are hyper focused on: what type of bonds—inflation protected, floating rate, corporate, or treasuries—how much commodities, value versus growth, etc.”

Technology isn't the only thing that has evolved in recent years. The team has grown, too. Jonathan Childs, ChFC, RICP, a West Point graduate and former officer in the U.S. Army who enjoys working closely with military veterans, joined the firm in 2018. He works alongside fellow team members, including McNamara and Ferreira, as well as Phil Rose-nau, ChFC, financial advisor; Charles J. McNamara Jr., director of business development; and Lori Carroll, director of operations.

In the not-too-distant future, McNamara intends to expand the advisory team by two or three people to accommodate increasing demand. Given the technology already in place—and “because Lori is so good at what she does,” he says—the firm likely would not have to hire additional support staff, thereby keeping overhead costs low.

“We already had the human talent, and our software is now comparable to the larger houses,” he says. “Technology allows us to focus more time working on portfolios, doing asset allocations, and staying on top of clients' investments. These are all good things. We're spending more time than ever working directly with clients, and that's what's most important.” ■



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