

CUSTOMER STORY

How DESMO Wealth Advisors built a lean, thriving RIA on an all-in-one custodian

With a finance PhD, years of academic research, and experience at Dimensional Fund Advisors, Massimiliano De Santis knew exactly what a well-executed practice looked like. When it came time to launch his own firm, he chose Betterment and unlocked the infrastructure he needed to run a lean and successful firm.

FIRM SNAPSHOT

Firm

DESMO Wealth Advisors, LLC

Founder

Massimiliano (Massi) De Santis, CFP®

Location

Austin, TX

Year Founded:

2019

AUM:

\$14–15M

Firm Type:

Independent RIA, Solo Practitioner,
Lifestyle Practice

Betterment Advisor Solutions client since:

2019

Client. Views may not be representative.
See [G2](#) reviews.

TLH



Tax losses harvested \$2,839.48

Tax impact preview

Est. realized gains/losses \$6,346.20

Remaining gains allowance \$3,653.80

Est. tax impact \$2,354.44

Image is hypothetical

Create a billing plan.

Plan name

What type of billing plan would you like to use?

- Asset based
- Fixed
- Tiered

How should advisory fees be billed?

- Cash first, then taxable, then tax-advantaged

Pain points

The blank-page problem

Launching a firm from scratch means making consequential technology decisions before you have a single client. For DESMO Wealth Advisors, choosing the right custodian was essential to creating a strong foundation.

Running a practice without back office support

Without a team to lean on, DESMO Wealth Advisors risked spending more time on day-to-day busywork than on financial planning—the higher-value work that builds client relationships and drives growth.

The cost of a fragmented tech stack

Many startup advisors cobble together separate tools for portfolio management, rebalancing, and reporting, driving up costs. For DESMO Wealth Advisors, every unnecessary platform was overhead that could go back into the practice instead.

The challenge

Launching a firm from scratch means wearing every hat at once: compliance, financial planning, back-office operations. For many startup and breakaway advisors, the complexity of standing up a practice can be paralyzing, and the cost of getting the tech stack wrong is steep.

Massi had an edge. His time at Dimensional had given him a clear picture of what a well-run practice actually requires. He set out with the belief that a lean team, backed by the right technology, could run a complete practice and deliver holistic planning.

The solution

Built lean and to last. Massi had crossed paths with Betterment years earlier while at Dimensional, visiting their New York City headquarters around 2015. When Betterment began offering Dimensional funds on its platform, the decision to make them his custodian wasn't a leap of faith.

"Betterment offers services that others don't," he said. The platform gave Massi the ability to outsource the day-to-day execution of investment management—rebalancing, tax-loss harvesting, compliance record-keeping—without outsourcing the investment thinking. He still builds his own models, informed by decades of academic research and the factor-based philosophy he honed at Dimensional. The operational burden is managed by Betterment.

Paired with RightCapital for financial planning and Airtable as a no-cost CRM, Massi built a three-tool tech stack that runs the entire practice. No redundant



Massimiliano De Santis

platforms. No unnecessary overhead. "I save thousand of dollars by using Betterment Advisor Solutions," he said. "I don't need anything else in my tech stack."

The impact

A practice centered on planning

Today, DESMO Wealth Advisors serves a focused book of mass-affluent clients—primarily Austin-area tech professionals and pre-retirees—with a comprehensive planning-first approach. With Betterment as his foundation, that's exactly where his attention stays.

Compliance, simplified

When the Texas state regulator came calling for an audit, Massi was ready. Trade blotters, account statements, fee reports, portfolio holdings—all downloadable quarterly from Betterment, no third-party reporting tools required.

Hands-off operations

The practice is intentionally sized and entirely self-sustaining while Betterment handles the operational heavy lifting. That freedom allows Massi to also teach finance at the University of Texas at Austin and serve as assistant director of their Wealth Management Center.

Advice for advisors considering the leap

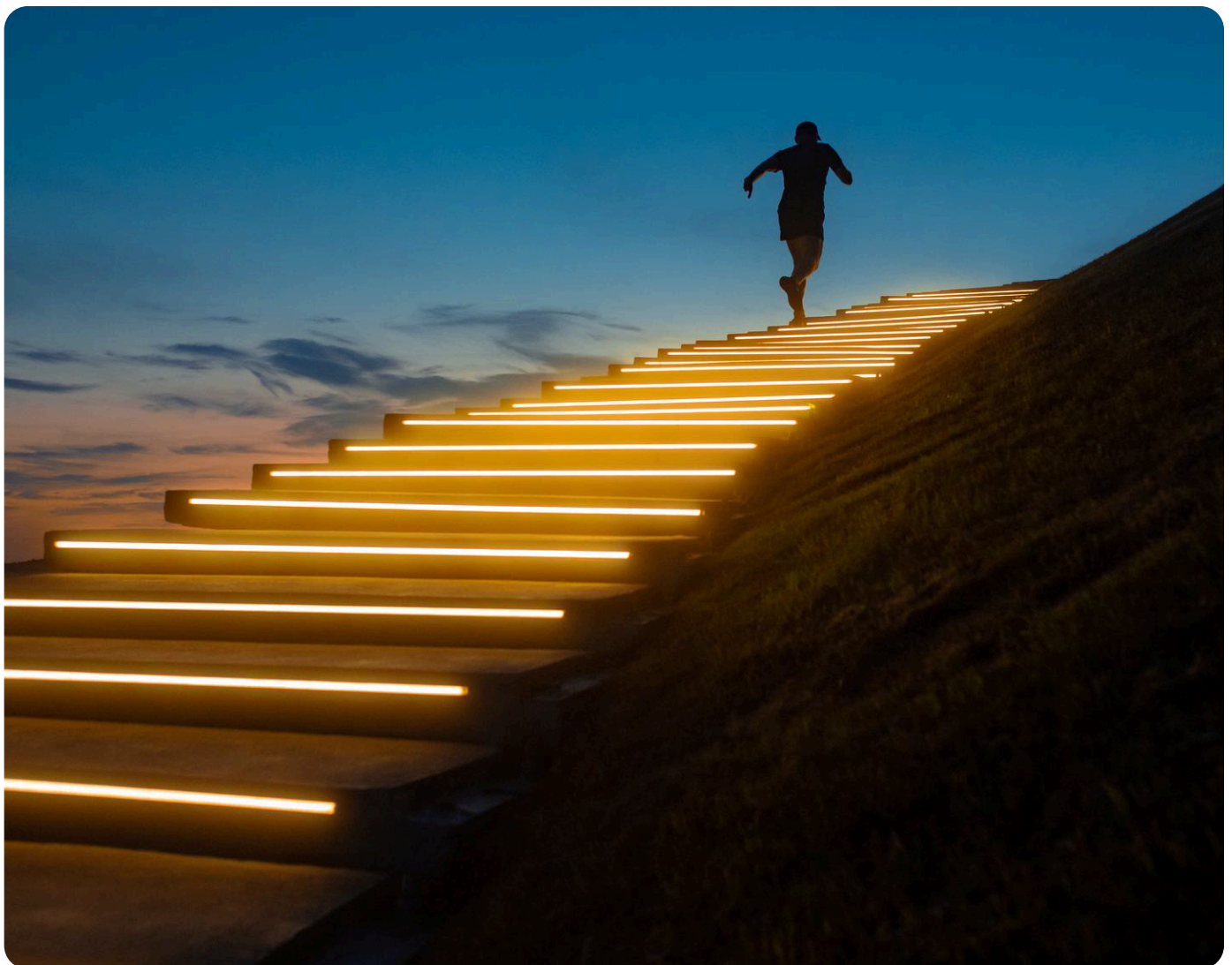
“Start with a vision. Then think about the minimum viable product you can offer—something consistent with that vision, that delivers real value, and that you know you can do well. Even if you have an investment background, it doesn’t mean you have to do everything yourself. Find the tools and partners who do what they do best, and rely on them.”

For Massi, that partner was Betterment from day one.

Ready to take the next step?

“ Even if you have an investment background, it doesn’t mean you have to do everything yourself.”

Massi De Santis
DESMO Wealth Advisors





Ready to take the next step? [Learn more.](#)

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