

Going RIA?

Start With the Right Questions



Going RIA is one of the most significant decisions you can make.

The upside is real: ownership, fiduciary clarity, and the ability to build enterprise value on your own terms. But most advisors skip the questions that determine whether an RIA actually runs the way they imagined. Here are the ten questions worth asking before you make the move.

1. What Do I Actually Want to Own?

Independence means different things to different advisors. Some want full autonomy; others want less operational weight. Clarify what ownership means to you and make sure the model you choose is designed to support that vision in practice.

2. What Do My Real Economics Look Like?

Going RIA shifts the conversation from payout to full business economics. Understand your costs across technology, compliance, custody, and staffing, along with your cash flow during transition, as well as your margins.

3. How Is Compliance Handled, and What Does That Require of Me?

Compliance is a core part of running an RIA. Be clear on who is responsible for filings, oversight, and ongoing management, and what your role will be day to day. Ask exactly what compliance support looks like in practice.

4. What Does My Technology Stack Look Like, and Who Manages It?

Technology sprawl is one of the most common frustrations after going independent. Determine whether you want to manage vendor relationships yourself or have a partner manage those for you. A strong RIA setup delivers portfolio management, trading, reporting, and planning tools within a cohesive framework. Make sure the combined technology stack meets each of the needs required to operate and scale your business effectively.

5. How Custody Work for My Business?

Custodial relationships directly affect both your operations and client experience. Some platforms offer multi-custodial flexibility; others lock you in. Understand the level of flexibility you'll get and whether that can evolve as you grow.

6. What Does the Transition Actually Look Like?

A good transition plan is milestone-based, guided by a dedicated team, and designed to protect the client relationships you have spent years building. Ask how the process is organized and who is accountable for keeping it on track.

7. Who Is Accountable for Helping Me Grow?

Most firms offer resources. Fewer assign accountability. Ask for clarity on how growth is supported in practice, whether through dedicated roles, consistent engagement, or access to a broader network.

8. What Happens As My Business Evolves?

Your needs today are not your needs in five years. Ask what it would take to change your structure, and whether that process is designed to be straightforward or difficult. Flexibility is what protects the investment you are making.

9. How Will Going RIA Impact Long-Term Value?

The RIA can support the creation of enterprise value. Consider how margins, cost structure, and scalability contribute to building a business with long-term potential.

10. How Does This Platform Support Succession Or an Eventual Sale?

Enterprise value only matters if you can realize it. Ask what succession planning resources your prospective partner offers, how they support M&A, and how the platform protects the transferability of your client relationships and firm valuation. The earlier you think about the exit, the more options you have.

The Right Questions Lead to the Right Partner

Going RIA does not have to mean going it alone. Cetera's RIA Network, powered by Blueprint, is built for advisors who want the full benefits of the RIA model without building every component from scratch: two affiliation models, integrated technology, compliance and operations support, onboarding specialists, and a dedicated team accountable for your outcomes.

Ready to pressure-test your questions?

Let's walk through them together.

Email us at RIANetwork@cetera.com



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