COACHING ONBOARD QUESTIONNAIRES & INSIGHTS REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From the beginning of Q4 2025 through Q3 2026, Pareto Systems utilized its Coaching Onboard and Team Questionnaires to gather detailed insights from 173 advisor and team submissions across 107 firms and practices.

The purpose of this analysis was to identify the most common challenges advisors are facing, the areas where they are seeking support, the operational and enterprise-level issues that may need to be navigated, and the outcomes they hope to achieve both now and in the future.

The findings provide a clear view into the current state of participating practices, including their growth priorities, team structure, client service models, referral activity, technology usage, operational processes, capacity constraints, succession plans, and longer-term business goals.

The analysis reveals a consistent pattern: most advisors do not lack ambition, opportunity, or strong client relationships. Their primary challenge is building the structure, processes, team accountability, and capacity required to translate those strengths into a more organized, scalable, and transferable business.

While growth is the most frequently stated objective, growth itself is not the central issue. Many advisors are already operating near capacity and continue to rely heavily on the lead advisor for client relationships, decision-making, business development, and day-to-day execution.

Overall, the findings point to a broader need than simply helping advisors grow. The opportunity is to help advisors build a more organized, differentiated, team-enabled, and transferable enterprise that creates sustainable growth, delivers a consistent client experience, and provides the advisor with greater control, freedom, and long-term optionality.

TOP FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

Advisors without a formal referral system	79%
Practices without an organizational chart	71%
Advisors working 41+ hours per week	66%
Practices without a procedures manual	62%
Advisors without a written business outline	61%
Advisors without a branding strategy	60%
Advisors considering hiring or replacing staff	58%
Advisors without complete FORM data for best clients	58%
Advisors not regularly reviewing personal goals	56%
Advisors receiving strategic-partner referrals	51%
Practices without job descriptions	48%
Advisors regularly reviewing business goals	53%
Referrals clearly matching the ideal-client profile	45%
Advisors saying service is not delivered consistently	41%
Advisors taking two weeks of vacation or less, or none	39%
Advisors interested or potentially interested in a more scalable investment methodology	95%
Advisors not using a CRM	5%

THE CENTRAL CHALLENGE: ADVISOR-DEPENDENT BUSINESSES

The strongest theme is that too much work still flows through the lead advisor.

Common statements included:

- Everything has to flow through me.
- The business is running me.
- It is difficult to take a day off.
- The team cannot operate without my involvement.
- I am spending too much time on reactive work.
- I do not feel in control of my calendar.
- Processes fall apart or are not followed consistently.
- Staff wait for direction rather than independently moving work forward.

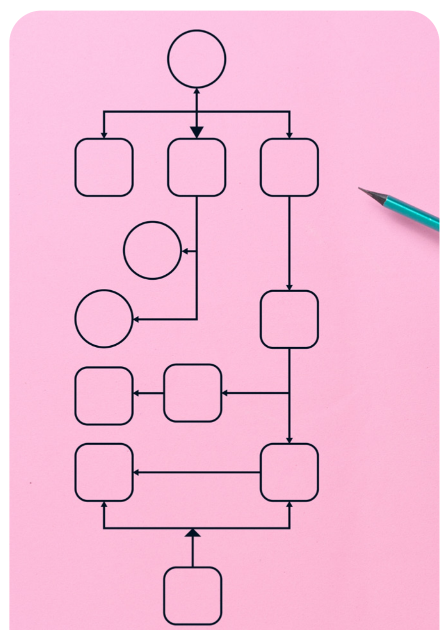
This is more than a time-management issue. It is an **operating model issue.**

THE MOST IMPORTANT OPERATIONAL GAP: SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Systems, processes, workflows, and **consistency** were the most frequently mentioned gaps and the most common definitions of program success.

Typical needs included:

- A consistent client onboarding process
- Standardized review meetings
- Better prospect qualification
- Follow-up processes that do not stall
- Documented team workflows
- Recurring CRM activities
- A client contact schedule
- Consistent meeting preparation and follow-up
- Clear service standards by client category
- Repeatable business development activity
- Processes that continue when the advisor is unavailable



RECOMMENDED COACHING AND ENTERPRISE FOCUS AREAS

Priority 1: Build the operating foundation

- Organizational chart
- Role descriptions
- Procedures manual
- KPI scorecard

Priority 2: Create capacity before accelerating growth

- Activity audit
- Client segmentation
- Delegation plan
- Calendar redesign

Priority 3: Standardize the client experience

- Client classification
- Service standards
- Review meeting process
- Family engagement

Priority 4: Build a proactive growth playbook

- Ideal-client definition
- Value proposition
- Client advocacy
- Referral process
- Strategic-partner process
- Prospect qualification
- Onboarding
- Conversion tracking

Priority 5: Improve CRM utilization and client data

- CRM cleanup
- Mandatory data standards
- FORM completion
- Workflow configuration

Priority 6: Develop the team and future leaders

- Role clarity
- Hiring plan
- Onboarding
- Coaching for team members

Priority 7: Prepare for succession and acquisitions

- Continuity plan
- Successor positioning
- Client transition roadmap
- Acquisition readiness

WHAT ADVISORS HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH IN THE FUTURE

The five-year responses show a significant shift from personal production toward enterprise building.

1. Acquire books and expand through inorganic growth

Purchasing a book of business was the most frequently selected future direction.

2. Partner with other advisors

Many respondents anticipate:

- Building a multi-advisor structure
- Combining complementary capabilities
- Creating succession through partnership

3. Build a transferable business

Long-term respondents repeatedly described wanting a business that:

- Can operate without the founder
- Is attached to the firm rather than one individual
- Has sustainable recurring revenue

4. Transition leadership and ownership

Future goals include:

- Family succession
- Internal partner buyouts
- Junior advisor ownership
- Founder retirement

5. Create lifestyle flexibility

Advisors want the freedom to:

- Work fewer days
- Retire gradually
- Focus only on best clients
- Avoid tax preparation or lower-value work
- Remain involved strategically without carrying daily operations

OVERALL CONCLUSION

The advisors in this dataset are generally not asking for isolated tactics. They are asking for help changing how their businesses operate.

They want to move:

- From reactive to intentional
- From advisor-dependent to team-enabled
- From informal to documented
- From passive referrals to proactive advocacy
- From generic service to a defined client experience
- From technology ownership to technology utilization
- From growth at any cost to scalable growth
- From a personal practice to a transferable enterprise
- From vague future succession to an actionable transition plan
- From professional success alone to success with control, freedom, and optionality

The strongest overarching positioning for the engagement is:

Help advisors **build a more organized, scalable, differentiated,** and **transferable** business that consistently serves ideal clients, creates capacity for growth, empowers the team, and gives the advisor greater control over both the business and their future.

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