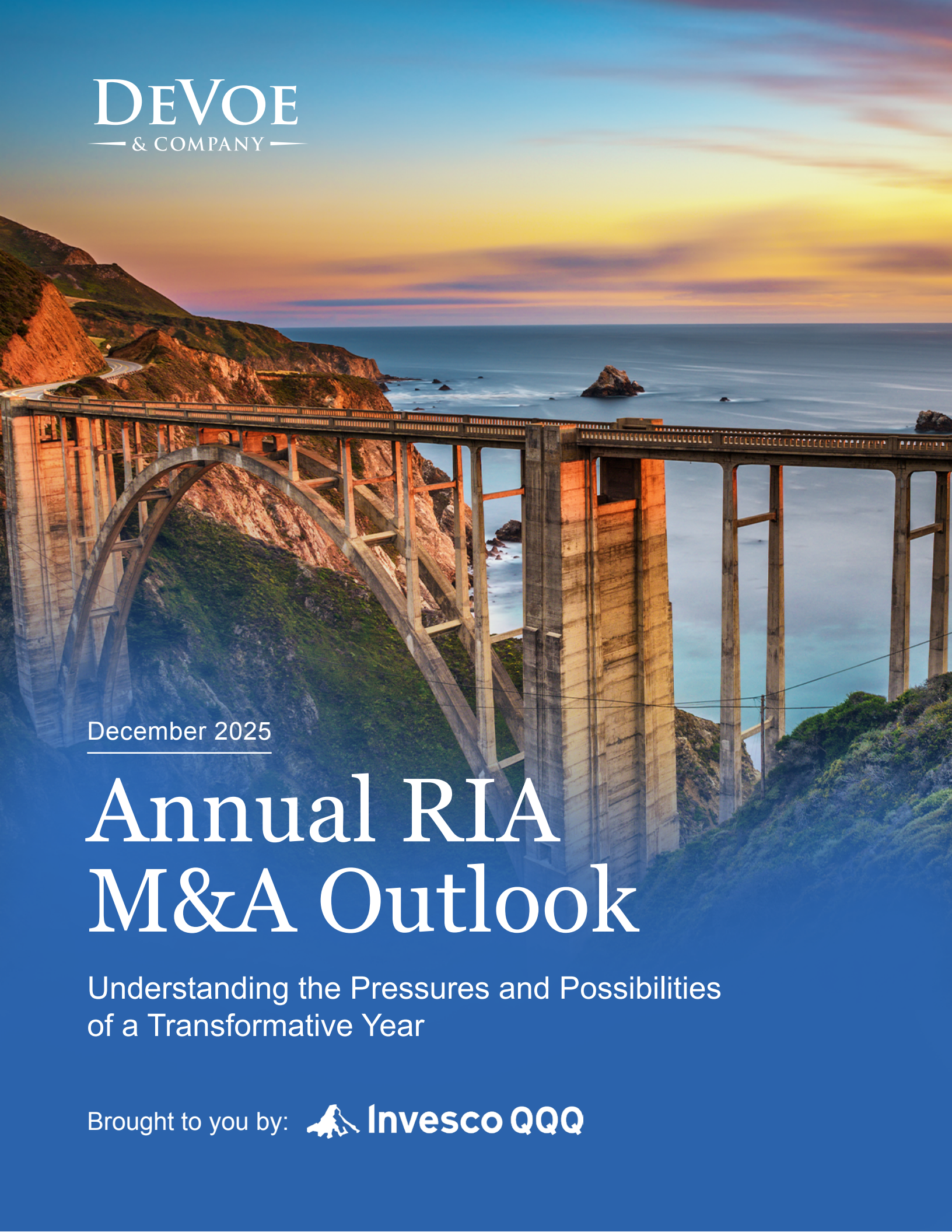


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a large concrete arch bridge spanning a deep canyon. The bridge has multiple tall, rectangular piers supporting its deck. The scene is captured at sunset or sunrise, with a sky transitioning from blue to orange and yellow. The ocean is visible in the distance, and the surrounding cliffs are rugged and green.

DEVOE
— & COMPANY —

December 2025

Annual RIA M&A Outlook

Understanding the Pressures and Possibilities
of a Transformative Year

Brought to you by:  **Invesco QQQ**

Introduction

When it comes to RIA M&A, no year has been quite as impactful as 2025. Going down in history as the most active year on record, 2025 built on more than a decade of steady growth and industry evolution.

Many advisors are benefiting from high valuations, robust private equity interest, and a diverse set of strong buyers. And most expect M&A activity and valuations to increase further. But foundational challenges persist, including succession affordability, leadership readiness, organic growth, cultural alignment, and the responsible integration of technologies such as AI.

Succession sits at the center of this tension. Two-thirds of RIA leaders now view the lack of succession planning as a major issue, yet only one in five believe their next generation can afford to buy them out. Affordability has quietly eroded as valuations climbed and equity concentrated with founders. At the same time, leadership readiness has failed to keep pace with business complexity, leaving many firms unsure whether their future leaders are prepared to run the enterprise they will inherit.

These pressures are becoming more visible in M&A behavior. Organic growth has become the number one concern keeping executives up at night, and it is also the primary driver for both buyers and sellers. Buyers are leaning on acquisitions to accelerate growth and strengthen competitive positioning. Sellers are seeking

partners who can reinvigorate momentum that has proven difficult to generate internally. Around these growth motivations, secondary drivers such as liquidity, succession, and scale help determine when firms come to market and which partners they select.

Cultural fit has surged to the top of buyer priorities, reflecting years of integration lessons and the rising complexity of multi-entity enterprises. At the same time, valuations have stabilized at high levels, private equity capital continues to reshape the competitive landscape, and META-RIAs are raising the bar for capabilities and professionalism. Overlaying all of this is a rapid evolution in technology and AI, which promises new efficiencies but also tests firms' ability to modernize without sacrificing the culture and client experience that define the RIA model.

In this environment, clarity and execution have become the ultimate differentiators. As firms weigh their next moves—whether to buy, sell, merge, or build—success will hinge on disciplined strategy, deep self-awareness, and the ability to act with conviction. This year's ***DeVoe & Company RIA M&A Outlook Report*** explores the forces reshaping the industry, the decisions advisors are making in response, and the critical capabilities that will separate firms that lead from those that follow. The future of the RIA space is being shaped right now—firm by firm, deal by deal, decision by decision.

The Succession Challenge Comes into Focus

Succession remains one of the most urgent (and most misunderstood) challenges in the RIA industry. Awareness has grown: 67% of RIA leaders now view the lack of succession planning as a major issue, the highest level recorded since DeVoe & Company began tracking the topic. Yet a rising minority (11%) believe the concern is overblown.

This divide reflects a deeper reality. Most firms understand the stakes, but far fewer are taking meaningful action. Succession planning is often viewed as emotional, time-consuming, or something to address “eventually,” which leads even well-intentioned firms to delay. And delay has consequences. As valuations rise and equity accumulates with founders, the math behind internal succession becomes more challenging, not less. Affordability dissipates quietly over time, long before most firms recognize the shift.

At the same time, leadership readiness often lags behind business complexity. Many next-gen advisors are strong practitioners yet have limited exposure to the responsibilities required to run a firm. Without structured development, even capable future leaders may not be prepared to take the reins when needed.

In today’s environment, awareness is no longer the issue. Execution is. Firms that act early (by planning proactively, migrating equity intentionally, and investing in future leaders) preserve their independence and expand their options.

Firms that postpone these decisions risk watching both affordability and readiness deteriorate, reducing the paths available to them.

As the Affordability Gap Widens, So Does the Execution Divide

The economics of internal succession have shifted sharply. What began as a gradual divergence between rising firm valuations and stagnant next-gen buying power has evolved into a challenge that threatens the industry’s long-term continuity.

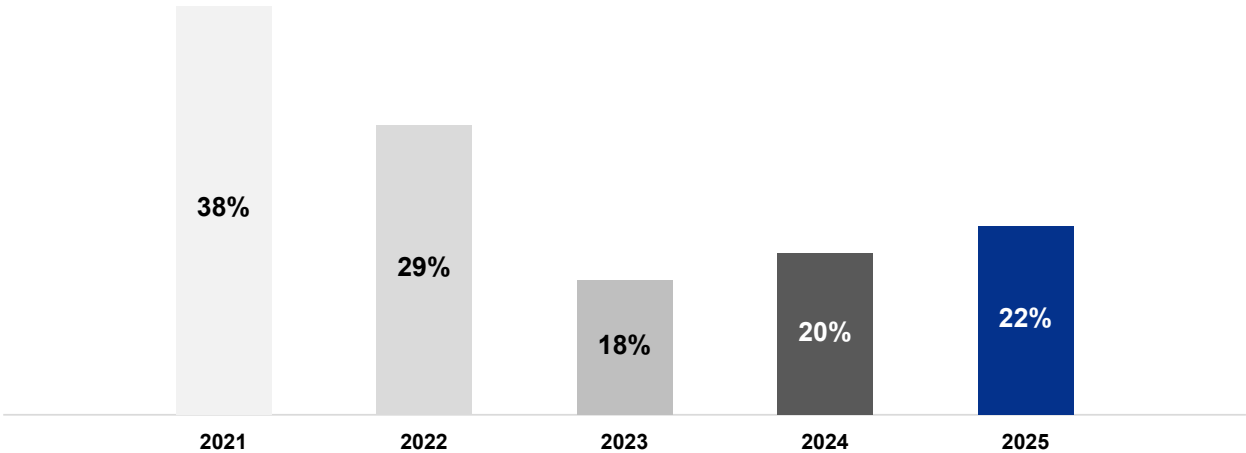
Each year, more founders hope to pass their firms to internal successors. And each year, fewer believe that outcome is financially viable. The result is a widening gap between aspiration and arithmetic—one that shapes everything from career pathing to M&A strategy.

Paradoxically, this issue persists amid record-breaking M&A activity and rising market optimism. But the underlying financial reality remains stark: Only 22% of RIA leaders believe their successors can afford to buy them out.

Today’s **DeVoe & Company Next-Gen Affordability Index** confirms what many advisors already sense: The math behind internal succession has become difficult for the next generation to solve.

Only 1 in 5 Advisors Can Afford to Buy Out Founders

Is the Next-Gen of your RIA able to buy out the founders? (Responses for "Can" Afford).



Affordability Rebounds Slightly but Remains Well Below 2021 Levels

When DeVoe & Company launched the Index in 2021, 38% of firm leaders said an internal transition was feasible. As external valuations surged and high interest rates increased the cost of debt, that number fell to a record low of 18% in 2023. Unfortunately, the modest rise since then doesn't likely reflect improving affordability but instead indicates a shift in the sample: Firms whose next-gen cannot afford to take over are selling externally, leaving a smaller pool where an internal transition remains possible. The trend remains worrisome. Today, only one in five advisors believe their successors can afford to assume ownership from the founders.

The pressures behind that number are only intensifying. This year, 36% of RIA leaders report that their next generation cannot afford to buy them out—a clear indication that internal succession is slipping further out of reach for a significant portion of the industry. For founders, this statistic should serve as a cautionary tale: The longer a firm waits to begin the planning process, the less likely an affordable internal path will remain. Rising valuations

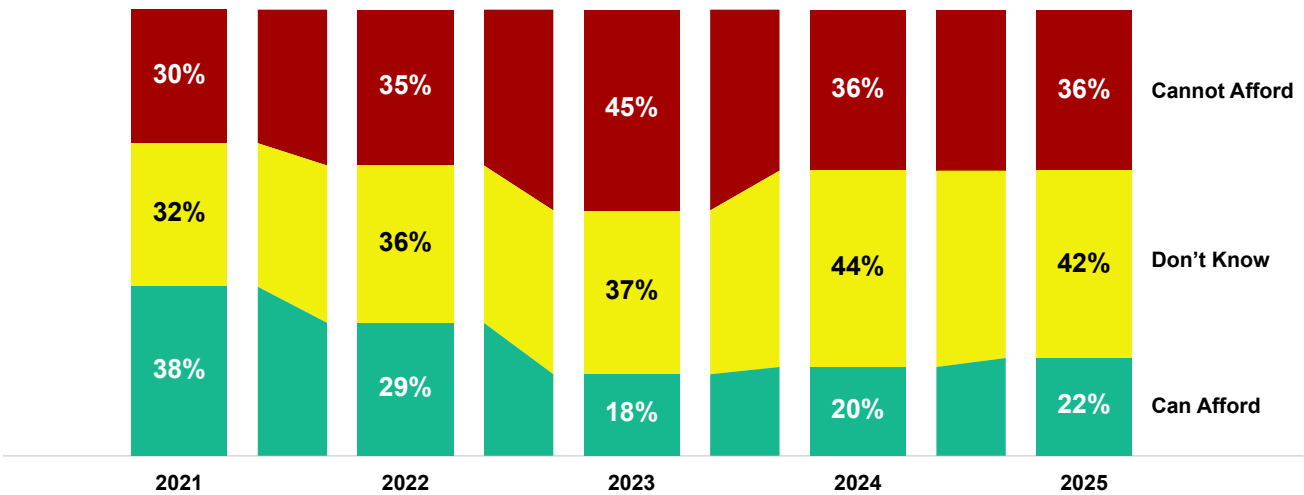
and delayed equity migration combine to erode affordability over time. Early-stage planning, equity modeling, and talent development aren't just good practice, they are essential guardrails that protect the founder's options and preserve independence. And, even more importantly, they help engage and retain RIA's people.

Compounding the issue is a striking level of uncertainty. A record 42% of RIA leaders say they simply *don't know* if their successors can afford to take over, essentially the highest level ever recorded. That figure is particularly troubling given the industry's deep-rooted identity as planners. If the experts in financial planning aren't running the numbers on their own transitions, something is amiss. Whether due to complexity, discomfort, or inertia, too many advisors are avoiding the hard conversations and in doing so, putting their firm's future at risk. Firms that lack clarity on this question should consider engaging a qualified expert. Organizations like DeVoe & Company can provide financial analysis, strategic guidance, and the implementation support needed to gain clarity and create a viable path forward.

The implications are far-reaching. Without viable ownership transitions, firms jeopardize more than just continuity—they risk eroding client trust, employee confidence, and long-term enterprise value.

Affordability Gap Persists

Is the Next-Gen of your RIA able to buy out the founders?



What's Driving the Affordability Gap?

Five years of data point to three enduring forces:

- 1. Delayed planning.** Many firms wait too long to start equity migration. As firm values grow, the affordability gap widens, making transitions harder, not easier.
- 2. High external valuations.** A healthy market has pushed RIA valuations higher but unintentionally priced out next-gen buyers in the process.
- 3. Financing headwinds.** While borrowing costs and lending conditions have recently improved, the compounding effect of prior rate hikes and capital inaccessibility has left a lasting mark.

The outcome? A small minority of firms can support an internal succession. For most, it remains out of reach. This is why DeVoe & Company continues to advocate early, structured planning.

Affordability Is Only Half the Problem

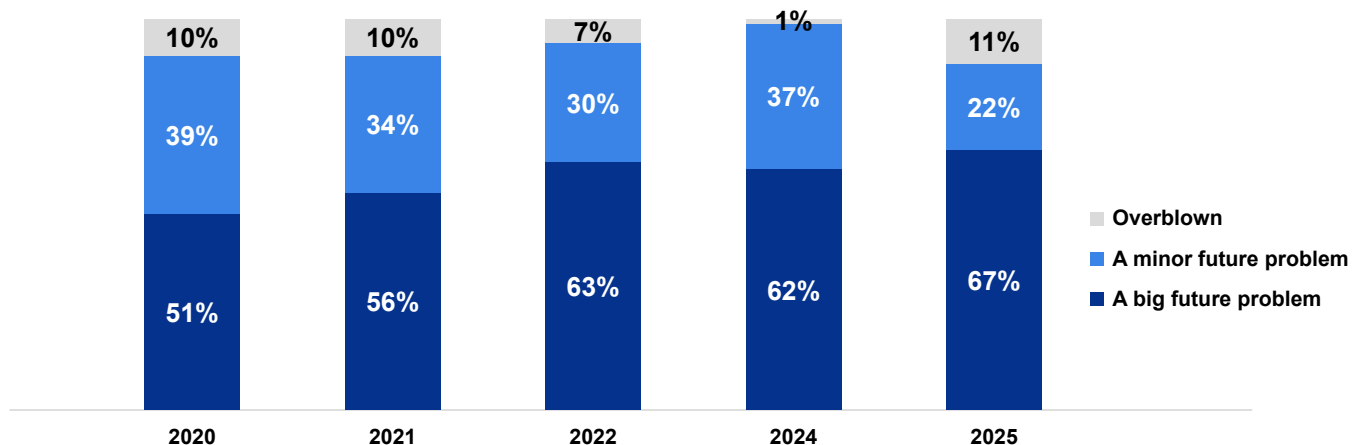
While affordability remains a critical barrier, a second challenge is compounding the problem: readiness. According to the **2025 DeVoe & Company Talent & Growth Survey**, only 27% of RIA leaders believe their next-gen team is ready to lead. Meanwhile, the share of firms anticipating a “bumpy transition” jumped from 34% to 45% year over year.

These numbers underscore a deeper execution gap. While some firms have made progress in planning for succession, far fewer have invested in preparing their successors to actually run the business. Without experience, coaching, and leadership development, even talented future leaders may be unable to step up when the time comes.

At the same time, a surprising 11% of advisors now say succession is an “overblown” concern, up from just 1% a year ago. While some may be distracted by emerging challenges (organic growth, AI, or competitive pressure) dismissing succession now could prove short-sighted. The data continues to show that too few successors are truly ready, and too many firms are underestimating the complexity of transition.

Succession Planning Remains a Significant Industry Challenge

How big a challenge you feel the lack of succession planning is in the RIA industry?



This isn't just a leadership gap. It's a strategic risk. And for firms hoping to remain independent, it's a challenge that can no longer be deferred.

"M&A may be booming, but succession planning is falling behind," says David DeVoe, CEO of DeVoe & Company. "The independent RIA segment is now in a succession crisis. The traditional path of internal succession is slipping out of reach for the majority of SEC registered firms."

What Separates Firms That Evolve From Those That Stall?

There is a clear and growing difference between firms that acknowledge the issue and firms that act on it.

Firms that are navigating succession successfully tend to share three core behaviors:

- 1. Early Planning:** They begin years in advance, mapping equity paths and building leadership pipelines. Many engage external experts to support structure and execution.
- 2. Transparent Dialogue:** They discuss valuations, affordability, and financing openly with next-gen leaders, removing ambiguity and building trust.
- 3. Professional Execution:** They treat succession as a strategic process, not a personal milestone. They allow ample time to iterate and refine the plan.

In short, succession today is no longer about awareness or intent. It is about resolve.

With valuations stabilizing and META-RIAs reshaping the landscape, the question is no longer *whether* to act—but *how soon*.

For some, the right next step will be confronting the affordability gap head-on: Calculating the numbers, initiating equity migration, and investing in leadership development. For others, success may mean transitioning externally—to a partner that can deliver continuity, liquidity, and growth. There is no single blueprint. But one truth is universal: Firms that act will shape their own future. Firms that don't may watch that future shaped for them.

The Growing Challenge of Growth

Organic growth has become one of the most persistent challenges for RIAs. As advisors struggle with how to grow, an increasing number are considering an external sale as a way to solve the problem. From advisor concerns to buyer strategies, to seller motivations, growth is not just an aspiration, it is the central pressure point shaping how firms think about M&A.

Organic Growth Emerges as the #1 Executive Concern

What keeps advisors up at night? Organic growth—or their firm's lack thereof. Over half of respondents (53%) identified organic growth as the number one concern—20 percentage points more than the #2 answer. Despite years of strong market returns and high valuations, leaders continue to be reminded of an uncomfortable truth: The industry is underperforming on the fundamentals of growth.



Recent benchmarking reinforces this reality. Nearly every industry report on growth statistics indicates that RIA organic growth is in the low single digits. This recognition is influencing the mindset of both buyers and sellers. Firms that once believed they could grow through effort and expertise alone are now acknowledging that their internal engines are sputtering. Organic growth has become a source of strategic vulnerability, not strength. That realization is pushing more leaders to view M&A as a necessary complement (or, in some cases, a required alternative) to the growth they have struggled to produce on their own.

Buyer Motivations: Growth Drives the M&A Playbook

Given industry-wide stagnation, buyers continue to anchor their acquisition strategies firmly in growth. 79% cited growth as their primary motivator for acquiring, a reflection of how critical inorganic expansion has become for achieving scale and competitive positioning.

For many buyers, M&A is not merely opportunistic, it is essential. Acquisitions offer a more immediate path to add clients, advisors, capabilities, and revenue.

Buyers are pursuing growth not for growth's sake, but to strengthen market position, expand strategic reach, and build organizations capable of meeting rising expectations from clients, talent, and capital partners.

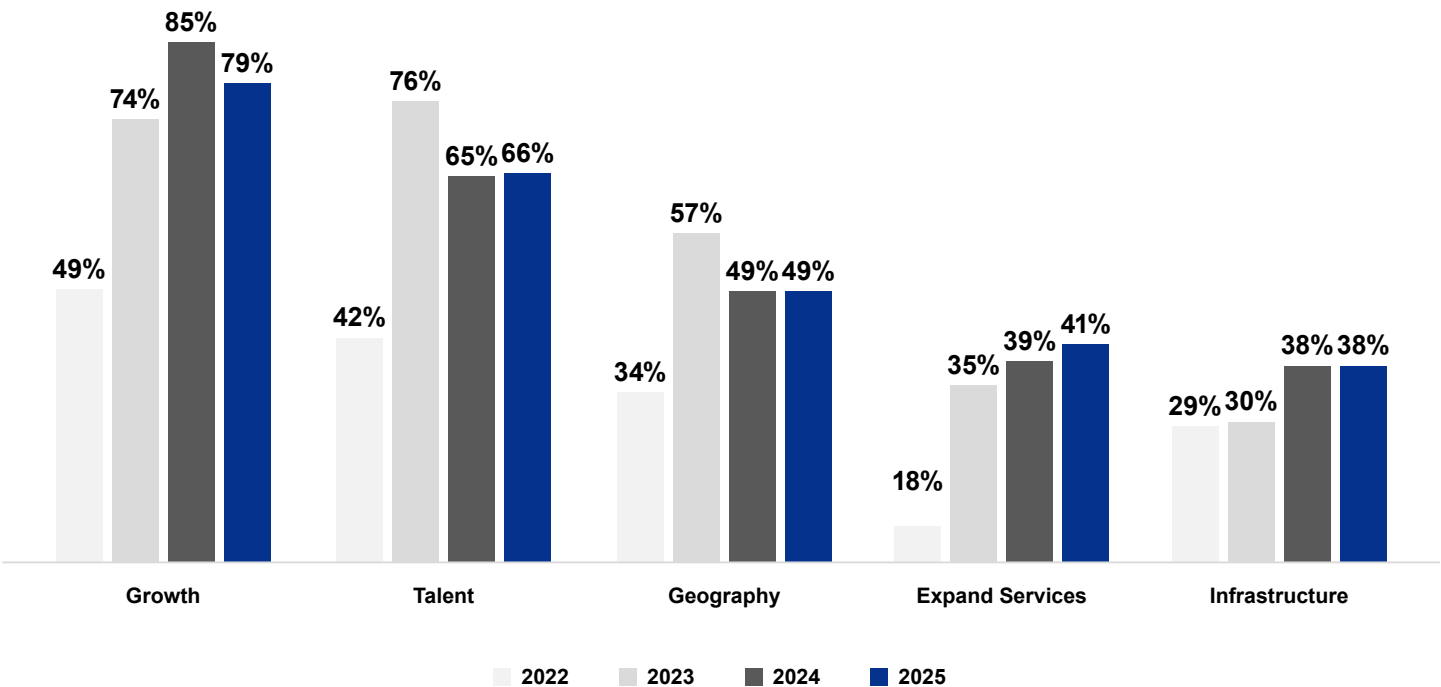
Seller Motivations: Growth Remains the Top Driver—But Many Have Hit a Limit

Growth is also the leading motivator for sellers. 49% say it is the top reason they would pursue an external partnership. For firms considering a sale, the emphasis on growth reflects the reality that previous approaches to achieving meaningful organic growth often fall short. Many are exploring external partnerships to reignite momentum.

However, sellers should be discerning. Growth capabilities vary widely across buyers, and acquisition activity alone is not proof of a durable growth engine.

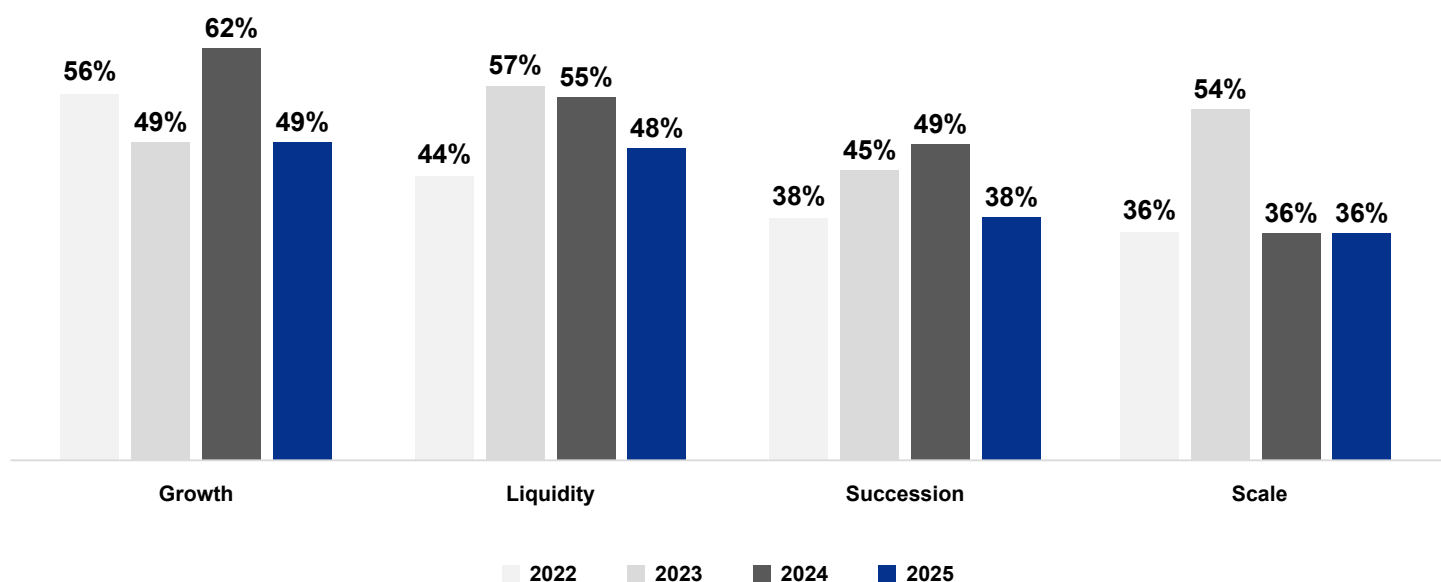
Growth Remains the Top Driver for Buyers

If you were to acquire an RIA, what would be the main drivers?



Growth and Liquidity are the Top Drivers for Sellers

If you were to sell your firm (or a partial stake), what would be the main drivers?



While many sellers are seeking partners that have “cracked the code” on growth, industry data suggests caution is warranted. Cerulli estimates organic growth for most RIAs at roughly 3%, compared to approximately 4% for consolidator platforms. Even that modest gap requires context. Many large consolidators benefit from institutional referral channels, particularly custodial networks, that are largely unavailable to smaller and midsize firms. When adjusted for these structural advantages, the organic growth differential largely disappears.

The implication is not that prioritizing organic growth is misguided. It is rational and becoming even more essential. The challenge is that truly differentiated growth strategies remain scarce. Sellers evaluating potential partners should look beyond headline scale and transaction volume and assess whether a buyer has demonstrated repeatable, organic growth that can be extended across platforms.

Across both sides of the negotiating table, growth has become the currency of competitiveness. But as growth expectations rise, so does the need for rigor in defining what real, sustainable growth actually looks like.

Other Motivations Behind M&A Decisions: Supporting but Secondary

While growth is the dominant force shaping M&A activity, other motivations continue to influence how buyers and sellers approach the market.

For buyers, talent acquisition continues to play a meaningful supporting role, cited by 66% of respondents as a motivation. Many firms use M&A to strengthen leadership benches, address advisor capacity constraints, or gain access to next-generation talent that has become difficult to recruit in a competitive labor market. Acquisitions also offer buyers a practical way to expand the capabilities of their organizations. Whether through upgraded technology, deeper compliance and operations expertise, or service models that would be costly or slow to build organically. Geographic expansion remains a consideration for select firms, with 49% of respondents listing it as a key driver. Although it trails behind growth and talent as a primary motivator.

On the sell side, 48% of leaders cite liquidity as a top driver, nearly matching growth. Founders view partial or full liquidity as part of long-term wealth planning, especially amid high valuations and internal affordability constraints. Succession remains pressing, with 38% citing it as a factor, reflecting the challenge of transferring ownership to leaders with the financial capacity or readiness to take over. Scale also matters, with 36% motivated by growing demands in technology, compliance, and operations.

Together, liquidity, succession, and scale shape M&A timing and partner choice, but growth remains the industry's central priority.

Cultural Fit Emerges as an Important Characteristic for Acquirers

Perhaps most striking is not simply what buyers and sellers prioritize, but how those priorities are evolving. For years, culture has been widely cited as important, yet it rarely surfaced as a defining factor in transaction decision-making. That is beginning to change.

This shift is evident in the characteristics buyers seek when evaluating a seller. Cultural fit has surged to the forefront as a defining criterion in acquisition decisions. The shift is not subtle; it is dramatic. Cultural fit rose more than 50 percentage points, selected by 69% of buyers, nearly four times last year's rate. For the first time in the history of the DeVoe & Company M&A Outlook Survey, it is the single most important characteristic buyers look for when evaluating an acquisition.

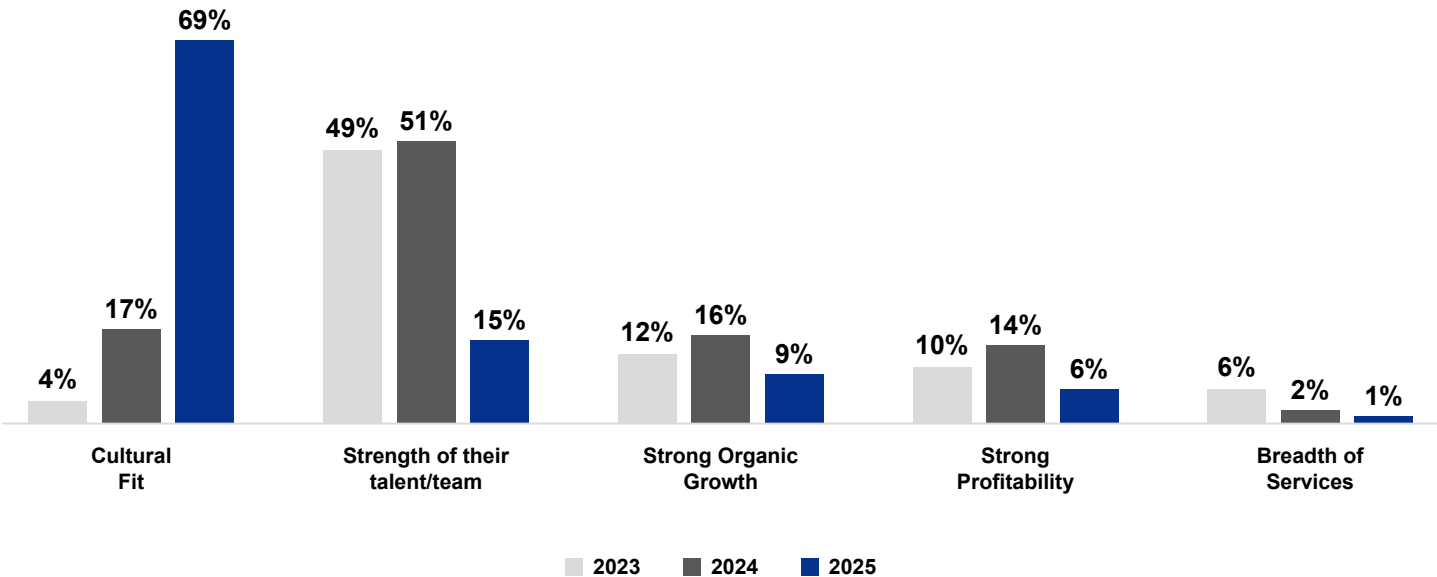
This represents a profound reordering of priorities. Three years ago, culture ranked last among the list of five buyer characteristics. Last year, it sat in the middle of the pack, roughly on par with organic growth and profitability, while talent strength was the dominant consideration by a wide margin.

But in 2025, culture stands alone at the top. The magnitude and speed of this shift reflect how deeply culture now sits at the center of sustainable growth.

For many RIAs, culture has always been a point of pride. Sellers have long emphasized values, philosophy, and client-experience philosophy when considering a partner.

Culture Prioritized Over Talent

If you were to acquire an RIA, what would be the most important characteristic in a firm?



They routinely describe culture as a “non-negotiable” component of any transaction. What is new is the degree to which buyers now place culture above all other attributes.

Several forces are driving this change.

First, many buyers have learned through experience that culture does not simply “transfer” in an acquisition. Early assumptions that the acquirer’s culture would naturally cascade across the organization have proven optimistic. When two firms combine, culture evolves, and in some cases, shifts in unexpected ways. Leaders now recognize that misalignment at the outset can create friction that is costly, persistent, and difficult to unwind.

Second, as more firms participate in M&A each year, the advisor community is sharing its experiences more openly. Stories of both successful integrations and challenging cultural mismatches circulate widely. These shared narratives have made firms acutely aware of the risks associated with cultural incompatibility and the downstream effects on advisor retention, client continuity, and leadership cohesion.

Third, the rise of complex, multi-entity RIA enterprises has raised the stakes. Larger organizations now oversee a mix of legacy systems, service models, operational philosophies, and leadership teams. Cultural cohesion across these environments is not automatic. It requires intentional design and nurturing. As the scale and sophistication of buyers increase, so too does the importance of cultural alignment as the backbone of long-term organizational health.

The decline in emphasis on other characteristics underscores this shift. Talent strength, which topped the list in 2024 at 51%, fell sharply to 15%. Profitability and organic growth, long viewed as indicators of firm health, barely register this year. Buyers increasingly understand that these attributes cannot be fully leveraged without a strong cultural foundation to support integration and collaboration.

Collectively, these forces have pushed cultural alignment to the forefront, surpassing talent as the defining priority for a successful acquisition. For many, talent alone is no longer the differentiator it once was. Great people can only thrive in the right environment. After years of integrating high-performing teams, firms have learned that sustainable success depends less on who joins the organization, and more on *how well they fit within it*.

As firms sharpen their focus on growth, cultural alignment, and long-term competitiveness, their view of the broader market is shifting as well. Leaders recognize that their ability to achieve these goals will be shaped not only by internal strategy, but also by the external forces driving today’s RIA M&A environment. Private-equity-backed platforms, valuation dynamics, and the rise of META-RIAs are all influencing how firms see their path forward. These realities are prompting firm leaders to look beyond their own walls and assess the momentum of the market itself, setting the stage for a renewed sense of confidence in where M&A activity is headed next.

Industry sentiment has shifted in ways that provide a clearer picture of how M&A activity, valuations, and private equity may shape the year ahead. Expectations for M&A volume, valuation stability, and the broader economic backdrop have increased, though leaders appear to be approaching the environment with more discipline than in prior peaks.

Expectations for M&A Activity

After two years of recalibration, more RIA leaders expect M&A activity to rise. 54% of firms anticipate transaction volume to increase over the next 12 months, a meaningful jump and notable change in outlook. This marks a multi-year progression. Expectations rose from 18% in 2023 to 42% in 2024. Today, more than half believe the momentum of RIA M&A is here to stay. Only 2% foresee a slowdown.

The recovery began in late 2024, as a series of interest rate cuts and market stabilization reignited transaction momentum. Combined with improving market performance and continued inflows into advisory firms, these macro shifts helped restore confidence that the industry’s long-term fundamentals remain intact.

Still, this resurgence carries a distinctly different tone than prior peaks. The exuberance that defined 2021’s record-breaking wave has given way to experience-driven discipline. Firms are pursuing growth with keen focus and more measured expectations about valuations, capital, and strategic fit. The outlook for increased volume in activity has returned, but it is tempered by the lessons learned during a volatile two-year cycle.

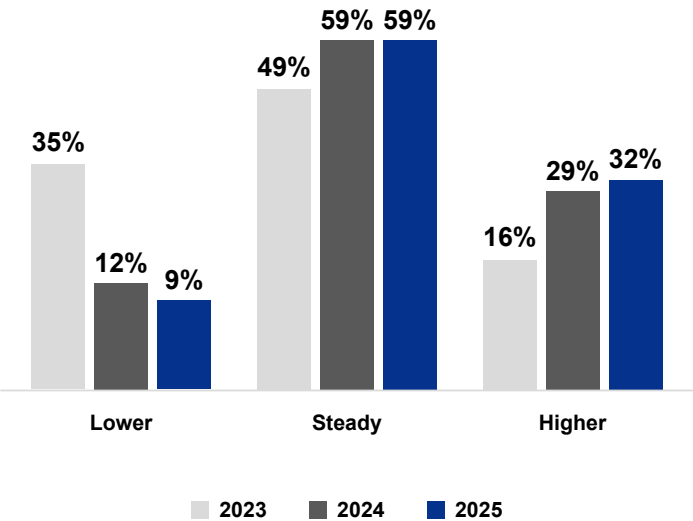
Valuations Stabilize After a Period of Adjustment

After a year of volatility in 2023, valuation expectations have stabilized. 59% of respondents expect valuations to hold steady over the next 12 months, in line with expectations from 2024. At the same time, 32% anticipate valuations will rise. This is double the share recorded two years ago in 2023. Only 9% of respondents expect valuations to decline, one of the lowest levels recorded.

Rather than signaling a sharp directional shift, these responses suggest that many leaders expect a more stable environment. Following the rebound that began in 2024, the interest rate cuts and strong market performance of the past year have reinforced confidence that RIA fundamentals remain robust. However, rather than fueling another surge in multiples, these forces have produced an environment of sustained stability—valuations remain high, but growth in pricing has tempered.

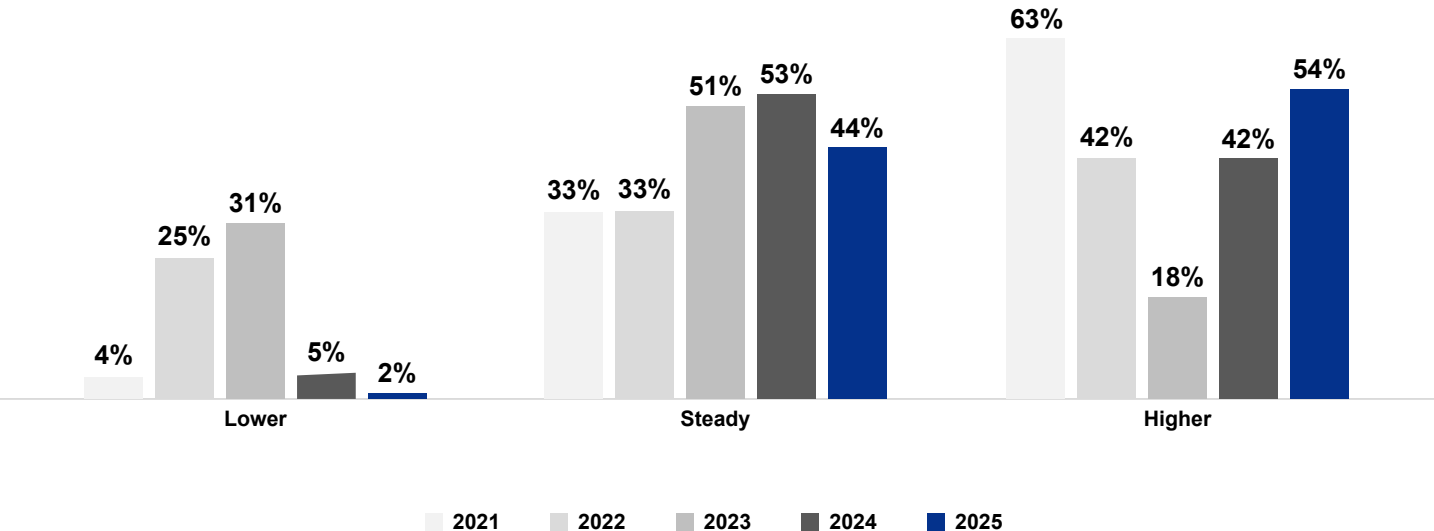
Valuation Expectations Remain Steady as Confidence Returns

Over the next 12 months, how do you think valuations for RIA firms will trend?



RIA Leaders Expect M&A Activity to Rise Again

Over the next 12 months, what are your expectations for the volume of RIA M&A?



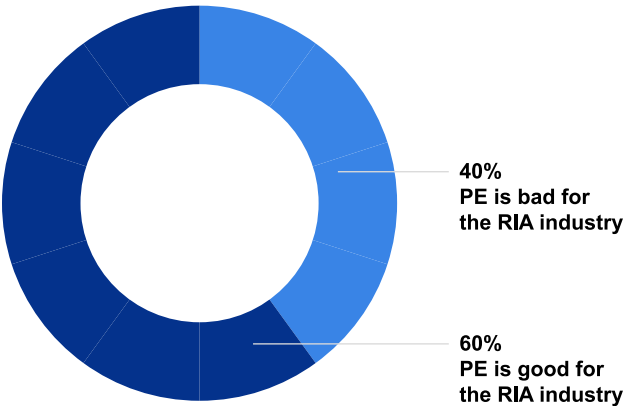
While valuations have been relatively stable over the last three years, there has been a bifurcation of the valuations based on the buyer. PE-backed buyers are willing (and able) to pay materially more than independent RIAs. Backed by deeper capital resources, stronger leverage profiles, and proven post-acquisition growth efficiencies, PE firms have the capacity to support premium pricing. Private equity now drives roughly 70% of RIA M&A activity, reshaping transaction dynamics and competitive positioning.

In this year’s survey, 60% of respondents said PE is beneficial to the industry, while 40% view its influence negatively. This divide captures the growing tension between capital-fueled growth and the preservation of independence.

The influx of private equity has accelerated professionalization, technology adoption, and management sophistication across the industry. Yet it has also intensified competition, pushing smaller independent firms to clarify their own growth strategies. Many now view scale not as a luxury but as a necessity to remain competitive in a marketplace dominated by well-capitalized players.

Private Equity’s Impact on the RIA Industry

Private equity (PE) is driving 70% of the activity in the RIA space. Is PE good or bad for the industry?



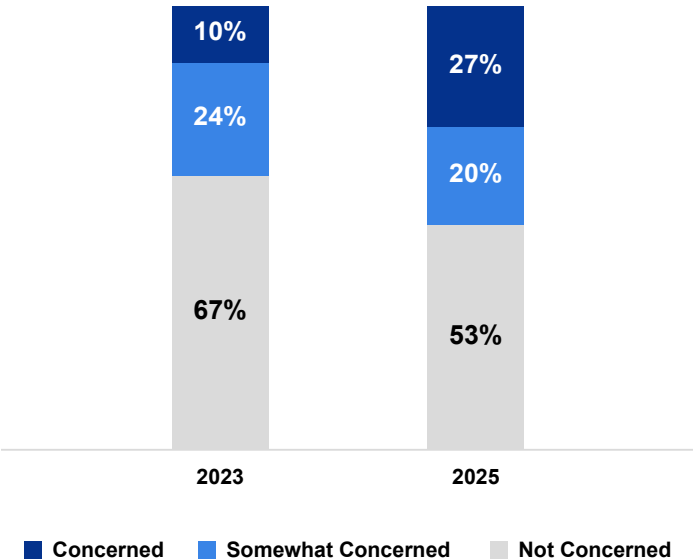
The Rise of the META-RIAs

This bifurcation is especially visible in the rise of the META-RIAs—roughly two dozen large, often PE-backed enterprises that are reshaping the landscape. These firms benefit from advantages in capital access, leadership depth, technology investment, and a broad range of services.

Concern about META-RIAs has increased meaningfully. 27% of advisors now say they are concerned about their impact, more than double the share from 2023. 53% are not concerned, indicating a wide range of perspectives on how META-RIAs will influence the competitive RIA landscape.

Concern About META-RIAs Impact on Firm Success

To what extent are you concerned about META-RIAs impact on your firm's future success?



These RIA enterprises (typically large acquirers) wield significant advantages in capital, infrastructure, talent, and brand. Their breadth of services and ability to invest across technology, planning, operations, and client experience allow them to compete at a level that many midsize firms cannot easily match. As a result, their growing scale is reshaping the competitive landscape and raising the bar for what advisory firms must deliver.

This dynamic mirrors the broader maturity of the industry. Consolidation at the top is accelerating the institutionalization of the RIA model, producing firms with deeper specialization, more sophisticated management teams, and increasingly comprehensive client offerings. DeVoe & Company believes large, medium, and small RIAs will all continue to exist (and thrive) but the disparities between META-RIAs and traditional firms are widening.

Navigating a New Era of Complexity

As the industry achieves new historic milestones, so too is it confronted with a wave of emerging challenges and opportunities. Firms in 2025 have been operating in an environment defined by stable valuations and record transaction volume. Yet that stability is giving rise to a unique set of pressures: maintaining organic growth, developing next-generation talent, and harnessing technology responsibly.

As stated earlier in this report, organic growth is the top concern for 53% of RIA leaders. Beneath that headline figure lies a changing set of worries that signal where the industry is headed next. 33% of RIA leaders cite the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the profession as a top concern, a striking signal of how quickly the technology landscape is shifting. Nearly as many respondents (29%) point to staffing and talent issues, while more than a quarter highlight succession affordability as an ongoing vulnerability. There is a growing awareness that the industry’s challenges are no longer confined to markets and M&A. Additional challenges lie rooted in technology, human capital, and preparedness.

Cultural Alignment and Technology: The Next Competitive Edge

Technology is positioned to be one of the great differentiators for RIAs. As AI, automation, and digital platforms reshape every facet of the industry, firm leaders are grappling with both the promise and the pressure of transformation.

The sentiment is overwhelmingly positive; 80% of advisors believe AI will positively impact the RIA industry, with 42% citing advisor efficiency and 37% predicting transformational benefits. Only a small minority see AI as a potential threat. The optimism is notable and warranted. For the first time, technology is not just about improving processes; it is redefining how advice is delivered.

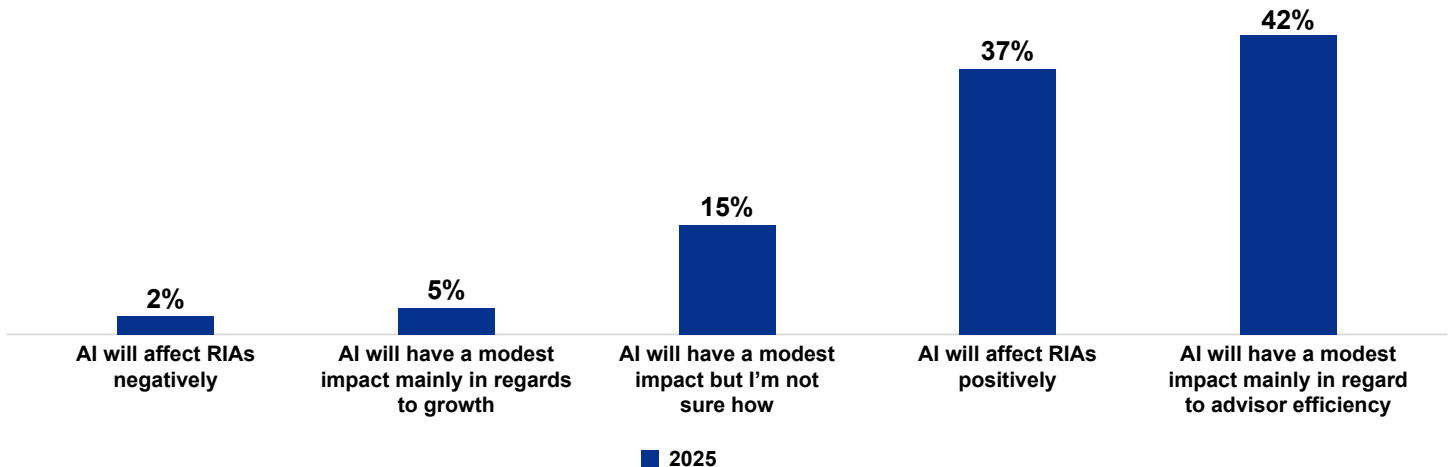
The implications reach far beyond operational efficiency. Firms are beginning to integrate AI and automation across multiple layers of their enterprise, from back-office administration and client onboarding to investment analysis and personalized communications. These tools are enabling firms to scale more intelligently, unlocking capacity that once required significant headcount. But with this newfound efficiency comes with a cautionary tale.

What Keeps RIA Executives Up at Night

As an executive or advisor, what keeps you up at night? (Limit answers to three).



How do you think AI will affect the RIA industry?



As firms modernize, they must ensure that technology enhances (rather than erodes) the culture and client experience that distinguish independent advice.

The tension between digital capability and human connection is shaping what DeVoe & Company believes to be the next competitive edge. RIAs that treat technology adoption as an extension of their culture, not a replacement for it, are the ones best positioned to thrive. They are investing in digital infrastructure while simultaneously reinforcing their

firm's purpose, values, and service philosophy. In doing so, they're not just keeping up with innovation, they're using it to deepen engagement with both clients and employees.

Beyond AI, broader technological convergence is changing the economics of advice. Custodians, fintech platforms, and enterprise software providers are racing to deliver end-to-end ecosystems that promise scale and integration. This arms race is raising client expectations and compressing margins for firms that fail to adapt. This combination is creating a new standard of professionalism, where digital acumen sits alongside investment expertise and relationship management as a core leadership skill.

“AI is unlikely to replace advisors. But it will profoundly reshape the advisory landscape. Advisors who adapt will unlock new capabilities—and those who don't may fall behind.”

David DeVoe, CEO, DeVoe & Company

“AI is unlikely to replace advisors,” DeVoe explains. “But it will profoundly reshape the advisory landscape. Advisors who adapt will unlock new capabilities—and those who don't may fall behind.”

Ultimately, the story of technology in the RIA industry is not one of full-blown disruption but perhaps a slow evolution. The firms that succeed in the decade ahead will be those that combine cultural clarity with technological agility. They'll empower advisors with tools that amplify empathy, insight, and efficiency without losing sight of the human trust that underpins this profession.

The Path Forward

This year's findings point to an industry that is stable in many respects. However, the RIA ecosystem is facing several pressures that will shape firm strategy going forward. Succession affordability and leadership readiness remain significant constraints. Organic growth continues to be difficult for many firms to generate, and the rise of META-RIAs is changing the competitive landscape. At the same time, cultural alignment has become a central priority in M&A, valuations have steadied at higher levels, and technology (particularly AI) is beginning to influence how firms operate and serve clients.

None of these dynamics exist in isolation. The decisions RIA leaders make over the next several years will influence their flexibility, competitiveness, and continuity. Firms that evaluate their succession pathways early,

take a disciplined view of growth, and consider cultural and technological alignment in their strategic planning may be better positioned to navigate an environment defined by both opportunity and increased complexity.

The independent RIA model remains resilient, and the data in this report reflects the continued evolution of the industry. As leaders absorb these insights, the message is less about urgency and more about intention. Understand the pressures at play, make informed decisions, and align strategies with the long-term outcomes you as a firm hope to achieve.

These findings are signals, not certainties. The firms that translate these signals into action by engaging early and thinking strategically will have more options (and a stronger hand) as they navigate the RIA industry in the years ahead.

About DeVoe & Company

*Helping RIAs navigate growth, transition, and strategic decisions
with clarity*



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devoeandcompany.com

The RIA industry is evolving quickly. Leaders are juggling growth, talent, and succession decisions that shape their firm's future. DeVoe & Company helps RIAs make those choices with confidence. We combine deep industry expertise with a methodical advisory approach to help firms sharpen strategy, complete successful transactions, and strengthen long-term enterprise value.

What We Do

DeVoe & Company is a goal-based investment bank and consulting firm focused exclusively on the wealth management industry. Recognized as a leading advisor to the RIA community, DeVoe & Company has completed over 900 engagements since inception.

The firm's consulting, M&A, and valuation services empower RIAs to accelerate the achievement of their business objectives.

Our offerings include:

BUSINESS CONSULTING

- Firm Strategy
- Human Capital
- Coaching & Growth

M&A ADVISORY

- Buy-Side Engagements
- Sell-Side Engagements
- Merger Engagements

VALUATION

- Three Levels of Valuation
- Custom
- Quarterly Model

How We Work

Every engagement begins by aligning your short- and long-term goals. Using our StrategicContext™ process, we develop a clear, data-driven "North Star" that guides decisions throughout the journey.

This approach ensures discipline, speed, and alignment—whether you are preparing for succession, exploring an acquisition, or positioning your firm for accelerated growth.

Who We Are

Our team has more than 400 years of combined RIA experience, including former leaders of multibillion-dollar firms and advisors who built, scaled, and sold RIAs themselves.

We've supported nearly 1,000 engagements with firms ranging from \$100 million to over \$250 billion in AUM, and more than 100 clients exceed \$1 billion in assets.

Our Insights

DeVoe publishes industry-leading research that sets the standard for RIA M&A intelligence and talent trends. Our work is cited in major financial media more than 100 times each year.

Flagship research includes:

- DeVoe RIA Deal Book
- Annual M&A Outlook Report
- Talent & Growth Report
- White papers on various industry topics

Survey Methodology

The DeVoe RIA M&A Outlook Survey captures advisor perspectives on M&A, succession, valuations, and strategic priorities.

More than 100 RIA executives participated in the 2025 survey, representing firms from \$100 million to over \$10 billion in assets under management.

Respondents included principals, owners, and senior leaders directly involved in strategic planning and decision-making.

Let's start the conversation.

For more information reach out to Lynn Kennerly at lynn.kennerly@devoe-co.com.

DeVoe Thought Leadership

Data driven perspectives shaping the RIA Industry.

DeVoe & Company is committed to elevating the RIA industry through clear, data-rich insight. Our research, analyses, and market intelligence provide advisory firm leaders with a deeper understanding of the forces shaping growth, succession, and M&A. By combining rigorous methodology with real-world experience, we deliver perspectives that help RIAs make smarter, more strategic decisions.



David DeVoe, Founder & CEO

David DeVoe is one of the industry's leading authorities on RIA M&A, succession planning, and strategic growth. Recognized by Barron's as the "RIA M&A Guru," Dave has spent more than two decades advising the RIA industry. He has guided nearly 1,000 engagements with RIAs ranging from \$100 million to over \$250 billion in AUM.

A frequent keynote speaker and widely quoted industry commentator, Dave is the architect behind DeVoe's flagship research, including the RIA M&A Deal Book, the annual DeVoe RIA M&A Outlook Survey, and the DeVoe Talent & Growth Report. His ability to distill complex market dynamics into clear, actionable insights has made him a trusted resource for leaders shaping the future of the independent advisory profession.

Meet the Team

DeVoe & Company team members bring decades of real-world experience building, running, and advising RIAs. They contribute actively to our research, speak at industry events, and provide the practical, data-driven perspective behind DeVoe's insights. Their backgrounds span M&A execution, enterprise strategy, valuations, human capital, operations, and leadership. All focused on helping RIAs grow stronger and navigate transition with clarity.

The following individuals contribute to DeVoe's research and thought leadership platform:



Gordon Ross
President



Brad Grubb
Managing Director



Doug Johnson
Managing Director



Adam Levy
Managing Director



Aryeh Maltizky
Managing Director



Francine Miltenberger
Managing Director

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The Nasdaq-100 Index® includes the 100 largest non-financial companies listed on the Nasdaq. An investment cannot be made directly into an index.

Before investing, consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses. Visit [invesco.com](https://www.invesco.com) for a prospectus with this information. Read it carefully before investing.

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