

## CASE STUDY

# Berman McAleer

## Making the switch from PortfolioCenter to Black Diamond

Berman McAleer is an award-winning independent financial advisory and wealth management firm based in Baltimore, Maryland with an office in Manhattan. Berman McAleer focuses on working with high-net-worth individuals and their families, distinguishing themselves by making each client relationship a personal one. The firm's ten advisors work in teams, concentrating directly on each client's individual needs. Through this lens, Berman McAleer identifies a client's goals and objectives to develop the most appropriate, comprehensive financial plan.

Formed via a merger in 2000, Berman McAleer works with over 400 families providing both financial planning and investment management services. With a disciplined process for investing client assets in funds, ETFs and alternatives, Berman McAleer manages a unique technology approach to efficiently manage their back-office operations.

Accordingly, their legacy portfolio management system, PortfolioCenter, had accumulated an "Enormous amount of data after 20 years," noted co-founder David Berman.

The idea of transitioning that much historical data was a daunting task and Berman and his team were reluctant to

switch systems, despite the superior features and functionality offered by technology innovator Black Diamond.

"Just doing the daily data reconciliation in PortfolioCenter was occupying one and a half people full time," Berman says. "So, we knew we would immediately gain tremendous leverage and save well over \$50,000 a year in salaries by switching to the Black Diamond Wealth Platform, which automatically does this reconciliation process for us as part of the core platform." Additionally, not having to do this repetitive, manual task has enhanced the career development and employee morale so much so that Berman McAleer was recently named the #1 place to work of their size by Investment News.

The challenge then, for Berman McAleer was to take on this data conversion task. "I personally reviewed over 350,000 lines of data during the year that it took to make the switch," says Kim Silvestri, Director of Investment Operations.

**"PortfolioCenter, had accumulated an enormous amount of data after 20 years."**

— David Berman, CEO and Co-Founder

### **Berman McAleer**

Baltimore, MD and New York City

**Description:** RIA

**AUM:** \$940 million

**Implementation:** 2013

### **Background**

- Successful financial planning and investment management firm
- Seeking to upgrade their legacy portfolio management system to the latest technology
- Questioning the need to transition all 20 years of data
- Looking to further grow and scale their practice

### **Benefits**

- Reduced FTE's to reconcile data, saving well over \$50K per year
- Enhanced client experience through the BD3 Portal
- Improved employee morale and career development by eliminating manual, repetitive tasks

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In hindsight, both Berman and Silvestri agree that ultimately, they really didn't need to convert all of that data due to lack of client demand and the fact that it didn't all transition in a usable format.

"If we had to do it all over again, we definitely would have only brought over a year's worth of data and just let clients know that they would be getting brand new technology, however we wouldn't be able to provide historical transaction data and not one client had an issue with it – there simply was no benefit to that project," says Silvestri. "Instead of a year for this process, it would have only taken us a month or two."

Now that Berman McAleer is fully utilizing Black Diamond, Berman and Silvestri leverage many superior attributes and deploy client experience technology for their clients. "We really appreciate the Client Experience portal because clients see the same data that we see, making conversations so much more efficient and productive," notes Berman. "With PortfolioCenter, we had to deploy a third-party portal which wasn't able to mirror the data, creating problems and friction with clients. Now, this issue is not creating more work for us."

"The Client Experience portal is quite good and we are just starting to roll out the mobile app which is a dramatic upgrade from what we had before. Clients can navigate right away and not have to keep peeling back the layers to get to the information they are seeking," says Berman. Silvestri notes that they are projecting about 8,000 client logins annually.

On the business development front, Berman says his team always shows new prospects the types of reports they would get from being a client via Black Diamond and the portal. "It is shocking that prospects come to us from one of the major wirehouses and they are unable to review performance of their portfolios in any usable manner. When they see what we can do with Black Diamond they are truly impressed."

To learn more about Berman McAleer, check out their website at [www.bmcplanning.com](http://www.bmcplanning.com).

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