

Coach's Corner

Our latest commentary to help you elevate the success of your practice

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4 Steps to Capture Referable Moments

By: David Richman | September 6, 2023

Imagine an exercise that can help align team messaging, unlock your differentiated brand, make first encounters count AND increase the odds of capturing referable moments. That exercise is "ism" development and articulation.

Perhaps it's time to embrace the spirit of back-to-school season and bring yourself and/or your team to "Ism School." Here are four steps to help guide the exercise.

1. Start with "We believe" instead of "We do"

Reframe your thinking from "what we do" to "what we believe." Isms are not a value proposition or a mission statement. For example, "We practice active asset allocation and tactical rebalancing" is not an ism—it's what you do.

2. Apply the 4 best practices

Isms are **timeless** regardless of market conditions. They should be **pithy**—concise and intriguing—**sound bites** that are easy to remember. Finally, isms should **connect the dots** between your financial beliefs and the advice you deliver to clients.

3. Develop isms for each of your practice areas

An ism should not be a tagline for your business—although it may lead you to one. Rather, isms should be specific to what you believe about investment strategy, tax management, financial planning, estate planning and other areas of your practice. Here are examples of what those may look like:

- **Investment strategy:** Safety isn't always safe.
- **Tax management:** Uncle Sam can be a coach, not simply a referee.
- **Financial planning:** It's all about the family balance sheet.
- **Estate planning:** Legacy goes beyond the money.

Have a goal to develop one ism per practice area in your first Ism School session, with a long-term goal of developing two or three more.

4. Put them into practice

Once you've developed your isms, identify ways to incorporate them into all dimensions of conversations with existing and prospective clients.

- **An existing client:** When a client is reluctant to diversify a concentrated position, using the ism, "There's no need to be all right or all wrong," can help ease their anxiety over diversification and inspire partial action.
- **A first encounter:** When asked for your thoughts on the markets, create curiosity gaps and pique interest in a follow-up conversation by responding with an ism, such as, "Noise is often confused with signals."

- **A referable moment:** When a client and an acquaintance are talking about big market memes and your client recites one of your isms, the acquaintance is likely to ask where your client heard such an insight, to which they will respond, "My advisor. They have really helped me navigate these turbulent markets."

Bottom line: Schedule time for your team to develop and articulate your isms to elevate your practice with intentional messaging.

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