

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with
Andrew Fincher



NEW PLANNER PODCAST



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Caleb Brown

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Welcome to the *New Planner Podcast*, where it's all about helping you successfully enter the financial planning profession and accelerate your financial planning career.

This podcast will help you understand the profession, become familiar with the various career paths available to you, and avoid the mistakes that limit your success.

Join your host, Caleb Brown, to explore the human side of creating a successful planning career through interviews, personal experience, and insights from the trenches.

Let's get started.

Caleb Brown: Welcome to the 140th episode of the New Planner Podcast. This is Caleb Brown, your host.

My guest today is Andrew Fincher, a financial advisor at VLP Financial Advisors in Vienna, Virginia.

Andrew joins the show today to share how he became a financial planner, including how he started out as an accounting major, why he changed to financial planning shortly thereafter, what his favorite course in the CFP program was and how it helped him become successful early on in his career. Plus, his thoughts on how we get more high school and college students interested in a financial planning career.

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Check out the middle part too, where he talks about graduating during COVID and how he navigated all of his job leads drying up overnight while facing rejection has helped him become a better planner, and how he ended up finding his current firm and what his role entails.

He goes on to share how he's able to gain the partners and the client's trust to be the lead advisor for 40 clients at just 25-years-old. Plus, what his typical client profile is, why he has a good fit and remains loyal when other rival firms try to recruit him.

Stay tuned to the end as he provides some tips for new planners and what his plans are going forward. If you think you're too young or too inexperienced to become a lead planner, then this episode is for you.

Hi Andrew, welcome to the New Planner Podcast.

Andrew Fincher: Hey Caleb, thanks for having me.

Caleb Brown: Absolutely. Thank you for making a few minutes for us. Excited to dive into your story today. So, why don't you just start us off with how financial planning popped up on your radar and then maybe why you chose to go to Virginia Tech.

Andrew Fincher: So, it's kind of an interesting story actually. So, I grew up a UVA fan, which UVA and Virginia Tech do not get along very well together from a sports perspective, so I ...

Caleb Brown: That's University of Virginia?

Andrew Fincher: Correct. University of Virginia. And so, when I was looking at colleges, I remember my parents wanted me to view Virginia Tech and I was like, "No, I'm not going to go and look at it. I

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

don't even want to be around there.” But as decision time came down, I knew that I wanted to be in business. I didn't know what I wanted to do necessarily.

And for University of Virginia, you have to go for school two years there and then apply into the business school, whereas at Virginia Tech you get in immediately. And just that uncertainty of going to school for two years not knowing if I got to do what I wanted, kind of made Virginia Tech an easier decision for me.

So, I ended up surprising many people at going to Virginia Tech.

Caleb Brown: Archrivals, man, archrival. Did you get excommunicated from your friend groups?

Andrew Fincher: It was okay, because the head coach of University of Virginia for football had just gotten fired and all the players, I grew up watching were gone at this point. So, it was a clean slate. Frank Beamer at Virginia Tech he had just left as well. So, all that rivalry kind of dissipated at that point. So, it made it easier.

But I actually never stepped on foot at Virginia Tech until after I had already agreed to go there. I'd never been to the school before, so it was an interesting experience.

Caleb Brown: Well, why did you do that? I mean, that's a pretty big decision without ever having visited the campus.

Andrew Fincher: I guess I wanted to live on the edge a little bit, I don't know, it was not the smartest decision that I've had. But it ended up working out well because the community at Virginia Tech is just amazing.

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

It's a fantastic school. The architecture, the food, the education, people that go there. It ended up being more my speed anyways because I grew up in a very small, more rural town, which fits Blacksburg to a tee versus University of Virginia is known to be a little bit more preppy.

Caleb Brown: And so, you started going to school and then how did you find out about the financial planning program?

Andrew Fincher: So, actually I came into college as an accounting major. I didn't know what I wanted to do, and my family is a lot of accountants and they said, "You'll always have a job, so go in that path."

So, I went there, and I joined a fraternity, and I had a couple friends in that fraternity that were in the financial planning program. And they just raved about how amazing it was and the career path and what you get to do within it. And as I started to talk with them, I kind of realized that financial planning is actually what I thought I was going to do when I got into accounting.

For me, I always thought of accounting as more budgeting and helping people that way, not realizing that it was going to be more of audit or cost analysis and things that I wasn't as interested in once I got into the classes.

So, I ended up funny enough going home to my family and saying, "Hey I think I'm going to switch into financial planning." And my mom, which I should have known this, but I'm not the most observant person. I kind of just don't think about these things.

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

She's like, "I'm an estate planning attorney? I work with financial advisors all the time. I didn't know this was even a major." It's like, "Well I guess I'm going to work with you mom."

So, and my firm actually does do a lot of work with her firm, so that's been really cool as well.

Caleb Brown: Oh, that's neat. So, sound like you had some accountant sort of background family in the background kind of pushing you that route, but you didn't realize the estate planning connection on clients and CFP until after you got going in the major?

Andrew Fincher: Exactly. All I knew was that my mom helped people write wills. That was my extent of the knowledge. And we didn't even know going into it, that Virginia Tech had a concentration in finance for financial planning.

I mean it was just viewed in my mind as the typical like, "Oh you go marketing management, finance or accounting." It was thought of that broadly. It wasn't thought about what you could do with it.

Caleb Brown: I mean we've heard this lots of times on the New Planner Podcast. I mean kind of going the accounting route, sort of people falling into the financial planning major.

And I guess a question that I have for you and a lot of the other guests is, how do we change that? How do we get you, when you're sitting there whether it's your senior year in high school or whatever, even you're afraid of like, "I'm doing financial planning, I know about it, I'm all signed up; I'm not even going to consider anything else." How do we get there, and can we get there?

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Andrew Fincher: I absolutely think we can get there, and I think we're starting to see it more now. I think it has everything to do with exposure.

A lot of times people in high school will not necessarily be exposed to what financial planning is. Maybe a couple school systems do have like a single like financial planning class that you just work basic budgeting.

But for the most part it's either not talked about or you think of financial advisors like a salesperson, like the old stockbroker or someone that sells insurance.

And I don't think there's a clear picture of what you get to do as far as from a behavioral standpoint working with clients, how you get to help them realize their goals and how to help them plan for retirement.

It's just such a broad thing that if it was brought into that level and something that's talked about more at the high school level and there's better marketing of it, I think it's something that's really going to grow.

Caleb Brown: What was your favorite course in the CFP program?

Andrew Fincher: So, Virginia Tech has a class called CRM, so Client Relationship Management. So, not the actual software that us advisors use, but it's actually designed to be a behavioral course talking about heuristics and basically how to work with clients as they have their own preconceived notions of how to manage and handle money.

And I thought that was incredibly interesting, just getting to look through all the biases that people have themselves and how to get them to realize that without necessarily projecting onto them

[**New Planner Podcast**](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

what our industry as a whole would view the path needs to be to get there.

Caleb Brown: I thought you were going to say estate planning.

Andrew Fincher: Well, I do have a personal bias to estate planning, but it can be a rather boring subject.

Caleb Brown: So, you got an A in estate planning, because mom was kind of helping you. Am I right?

Andrew Fincher: I did get an A in estate planning.

Caleb Brown: Alright. So, you get through the program, now, did you get an internship? Because an internship I think is still required to graduate from there, right?

Andrew Fincher: I'm actually not sure. That's a good question. It might be, but I did get an internship and that was the thing about Virginia Tech's program was such a fantastic program is when I was there it was Ruth Lytton and Derek Clark and they really took the bull by the horn, so to speak and really ran that program not just from a course perspective, but also fundraising to help lower costs for students helping get resumes out there and pushing internships and jobs and just that overall connection.

And so, I did get very nice internship with a local firm up here in Tysons Corner, Virginia which was a great experience. And then someone that — your colleague Jesse's now taken over Virginia Tech's program has continued on with that, so it's just fantastic.

Caleb Brown: One thing I really appreciate about Ruth and Derek is they had very high expectations for their students, which is what we — for New Planner, so it was ...

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

They did not mince words when people weren't doing what they should have been doing. So, appreciate them and glad that they are fully gainfully retired now.

So, how did you get the internship? I mean, talk to us about that and then what did you do in the internship and why has that been important in your development thus far?

So, that's kind of a lot there. So, maybe take them one at a time.

Andrew Fincher: So, I actually got the internship. I think I would've gotten it through the program if I went that route, but it just so happened that my mom had reached out to me and said that this firm that she had worked with was looking for interns and that maybe I could reach out.

So, I emailed one of the partners at the firm and said I was interested in interning, and it was kind of more of an informal process with them. And then I got the internship and ended up ... they visit Virginia Tech as many firms do every week to talk about their companies and how our program fits into their growth.

And so, I got to see them down there and they talked to students and did interviews as well.

As far as the internship itself went, there's a lot of different aspects to it. Obviously, any internship is going to have more menial tasks to it, whether it's paperwork, sorting through Excel sheets, occasionally shredding, just some of the basic things.

But also, a lot of good opportunities to sit in on client meetings take notes, which is, in my opinion, one of the most invaluable things of the process because you get to learn about the client

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

experience while gauging how an advisor interacts with a client. It is just these questions pop up randomly in a meeting and how they address that. So, that was huge.

And then just other projects, whether it's investments, doing research for company models or anything along those lines, retirement projections, it was really good experience. And how could I forget CRMs? I mean, every company has a different CRM system and getting to work in there, it's great.

Caleb Brown: And how has that been helpful as a building block for your success over the last three years that you've been in the profession?

Andrew Fincher: It's been huge. It really has, because for me, I have a strong interest in investments. That's something that I really enjoy doing. And so, the firm I interned allowed me the flexibility to really utilize Morningstar and YCharts and all those different softwares that allowed me to kind of ... when I was having downtime along with a couple other interns, we basically created a project that hadn't been done at the firm before.

So, we wanted to create our own model and almost pitch it to the CEO of the company as, "We should add this model to your company's lineup." And it's not something that they had asked us to do, but they gave the flexibility for us to work on that.

And so, just us trial by error learning how to create portfolios and what it looks like as far as underlying risk factors. As I came into the firm I work for right now, VLP, which hopefully I work for them forever, but as I came into that, they needed somebody at the time who did have a little bit of investment focus and that's just really helped me take off in my advisor career as well.

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Caleb Brown: So, the internship firm, you brought a proposal to them about adding another model portfolio, did they go with it or what ended up happening?

Andrew Fincher: No, so it was just going to be a project, they weren't actually going to add it, but I did bring it to them as if it was more of an exercise not just to do that, but also to talk to somebody who's been a very successful advisor in the area and try to pitch them and then they could give pointers on how we presented things.

Caleb Brown: So, you did the internship and then what happened after that?

Andrew Fincher: So, I did the internship between junior, senior year and went into senior year, which at Virginia Tech is a very difficult year with case and retirement planning and the likes of all that. And of course, COVID hit, that was 2020 when I graduated.

And I think as I was looking for jobs, if I remember correctly, I think I applied for like 60 jobs and 45 of them immediately went on hiring freeze. So, nothing there.

And then I think I went through the process, ended up with like seven companies and they ended up going with different people at the time. So, I was kind of really looking for something and that's where New Planner Recruiting came in.

Caleb Brown: How were you feeling when you reached out to 60? I mean, that's a lot of effort. I mean, kudos to you, 60 companies. I've spoken to candidates before just over my career, it's like, "Oh, I reached out to five or six firms and hadn't didn't hear anything, like, I'm frustrated." We may have to ramp it up.

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

And then 45 shut it down and then you get it narrowed down to seven and they reject. How are you feeling at that point?

Andrew Fincher: Well, so first off, I'll say I got to give my parents credit more than anything because they are very persistent people. Both of them were attorneys and they would not let me not apply to jobs. I think it was almost every day I was getting text messages or phone calls of, "You need a job, you need a job." So, that kind of fueled that.

As far as those seven firms, looking back now, it was an experience that I'm glad it went through. It was certainly difficult at the time and it kind of felt like I came in second at the ball all the time, I would make it through three, four interviews. It was between me or someone else, so they just said at the end of the day, they felt they had a slightly better fit with the other candidates.

So, at least the silver lining there going through that process was like, clearly my resume was good that I was getting to this point. Clearly, I was doing well enough in the interviews to continue on further.

It was just something at each firm that was slightly different and wasn't ideal, I'm not going to lie, it wasn't fun, but it definitely worked out for the best cause I ended up in a good spot.

Caleb Brown: That's great. Okay, so you got connected with us and I think we helped connect you with VLP and then just tell us how it's been going. I mean, you've been there, what about three years now?

Andrew Fincher: Next week is three years. It's been incredible really. I wasn't sure what the future was going to hold for me, going with

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

COVID and everything else and we had a conversation of I wanted to end up in Charlotte.

That was the place I really wanted to be and we had a conversation, I can't remember if it was you or Jessie at the time, but it was basically like, "Well, we found out that you grew up in the northern Virginia area and there's this one firm that's really looking and if you're open to it, you should just interview with them."

And so, that was VLP, and I interviewed with them and immediately just had a great connection and met with both partners and so down to earth and we were laughing at the first interview. It was a very different experience. Anyone that's been around VLP knows that we work hard, but it's a very relaxed, fun environment.

And so, as you asked me about three years, that's basically how I would talk about it, it's been a blast. Get to come to work every day and there's never a day that there's a dull moment where I don't want to be here.

I really believe in the process that we have with clients. I feel like what we provide as a service model is fantastic. The partners have always been fantastic in pushing me to be on the board of the financial planning association and giving me opportunities for raises and career advancement.

I'm 25-years-old and I'm a lead advisor now which is kind of crazy to say, but they've really believed in me and pushed me to move further in my career. And so, I'm just very grateful to them.

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Caleb Brown: So, lead advisor, that's really cool. What does that mean in your firm? I wish the meaning was universal, but it's not. So, just walk us through that.

Andrew Fincher: I don't even know if we necessarily call it lead advisor at our firm, but basically, some people call it first chair, some people call it servicing advisor, but essentially, I'm meeting with clients one-on-one.

So, I've had clients transition to me either from the partners or clients that I've brought on board myself. And so, when we're in the meetings I'm not just providing a support role where I'm doing the planning on the side and then maybe I'll take notes or have secondary commentary. I'm actually fully leading the meeting to be the primary contact for clients.

Caleb Brown: That's amazing, how have you gotten there in three years? I mean, everybody's timeline is different. I mean, based on their skills and personality and goals and also the firm they're at. So, how have you gotten there? I mean that's, I would say probably on the quicker end. So, how have you gotten there so quickly?

Andrew Fincher: I think there's a number of factors involved with that. I think I happened to join VLP at a good time when the firm was growing and really needed some people to step in and take on that lead role just because, as we're scaling up and we have more clients that want to work with us and coming on board, the partners can't work with every single client, so it has to be spread out.

And then just them being willing to give me the opportunity to show myself. I mean, there was times where maybe I was thrown in the fire, so to speak, and some people might be a

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

little more cautious bringing them on and there's been opportunities or times where that has happened.

But really just given the opportunity of, "Hey, this client wants to call in for a quick question. Do you want to take that call?"

"Sure, I'll take the call." "Do you want to work with this client and email them back and show them that you're kind of the lead on this?"

And then it becomes a natural transition where the client just starts to email me more and more than what the partner was and then all of a sudden, I'm getting all the contacts and now I'm the lead on it.

So, it's been a real team effort here and just really appreciate to them for giving me that opportunity.

Caleb Brown: That's awesome. I don't want you to sell yourself short. I mean, but you had to instill confidence in the leaders of the firm, the owners of the firm to let you have some runway and take some of these swings. So, how did you do that? I mean, does anything come to mind on just how you built their confidence in you?

Andrew Fincher: I think it really comes down to the investment piece ultimately. I think the way that we work with clients, I mean, we work in a broad capacity. We do manage assets, but it's not just that, we do full comprehensive financial planning across the board, but ultimately, the way we make our money for the most part is by managing assets.

And just my ability to be able to sit with a client and talk about where we're at as far as a macroeconomic environment with the markets and understand why we have funds allocated in a certain way and be able to talk about the underlying holdings

[**New Planner Podcast**](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

and how that's been impacted by what's going on, has kind of instilled, I would say a level of trust that maybe you wouldn't just automatically give someone who's 25, especially if you're working with people in their 40s, 50s, 60s.

Why am I working with somebody that's younger than me who hasn't been around for the 2008 recession or the dot-com bubble or other things. But if I've been able to have a little bit of credibility talking about these things the age is less.

Caleb Brown: Have you gotten any kind of ageism pushback on like, “Hey, we love Andrew, but man, he's kind of young. Can we work with somebody else?” I mean, has that happened? And if so, how have you handled it?

Andrew Fincher: It has happened before. It doesn't happen often, I'll say, unless I'm not in the loop on it, who knows?

But it has happened. And ultimately if I was to have a conversation with those people, what I would say to them is like, “I understand the concern first and foremost, that wanting to work with someone who's been established does make complete sense.”

But at the same time, if you're someone in your 40s — I was talking about this yesterday, if you're someone who's 40 and you're working with a 40-year-old financial advisor, by the time that that advisor retires in 20 years, you're 68, you're about to navigate the most difficult time as you transition from the working life to retirement.

If you work with me who's 25, and obviously I have the tutelage from the partners, if they have questions, I can go to them. They've been there to back up assistance, they obviously provide and instill knowledge into me in that all of a sudden, by

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

the time you're retiring, I'm 45, I'm in the prime of my career and I get to help you navigate the next 20 years of your retirement journey, and I get to work with your children as well and have the whole family picture on it.

So, I think it's really how you look at it.

Caleb Brown: That's pretty compelling. Nice work. I like that. I could tell you've been practicing that way to emphasize the positives. That's great man, that's awesome. So, give me an ideal client, who are you working with?

Andrew Fincher: So, our firm typically tends to work with somebody in their mid-40s, early 50s that either works for the government or is maybe a business owner and they're starting to really save up a lot of cash flow.

As far as our firm goes with investing our minimum is typically 500,000. For me and then the partners, I think it's a higher number, maybe a million.

But that's very subjective. I mean, there's opportunities where someone might be in their 30s, and they save a lot of money, and they really are adapting to our process or financial planning process. That would be something we'd consider.

Or a child of a client that is looking to come on board just to keep the family together and make sure that their financial picture as a whole is sound, we'd look at that. So, it's really just case by case basis.

Caleb Brown: And how many clients are you the lead advisor for right now?

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Andrew Fincher: So, we're going through a transition process right now. So, I think it's about 40 clients that I'm working with as the lead on. And ultimately, I think for a full book of business that's around hundred 20 clients. So, it's still building, I'm not there yet, but the transition's gone well so far and clients have been very receptive to it.

Caleb Brown: And is that your job to get the additional 80 or is that somebody else that gets them and turns them to you?

Andrew Fincher: So, it actually hasn't been a conversation piece that we've talked about terribly much yet except, there's no expectation on me at this point to bring in clients that's been made clear.

At this point I have brought in a couple clients, but for the most part it's been a transition from existing clients we already have within the firm.

And they've made it very clear to me as far as my career trajectory goes that at least at this point in time, it's really just about continuing to work with the client, service the ones we have and build my knowledge base on everything.

But there's no expectation from a sales perspective that I need to bring in extra amount of — up to the firm each year or anything like that.

Caleb Brown: You're really in a good spot. I mean, 25-years-old lead advisor for 40 clients. I mean you're doing really well, Andrew.

What tips do you have for other new planners who might want to follow this same path or something, I mean we get calls a lot from people that are frustrated. “Why, our firm won't promote me fast enough and I want to be a lead planner.” What would you tell those people?

[**New Planner Podcast**](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Andrew Fincher: I would tell them, every situation is different, but I do think in some regards you have to be patient. It's a very interesting industry because we tend to work with people who are significantly older and there is some of that age bias to it, whether we like it or not. I mean, I hate it but it is what it is.

And, just as you look forward to it, obviously if you're within your firm and you feel that your career path is, being dismissed or things like that, that might be an opportunity to leave.

But I do feel like sometimes people do leave firms too early and don't allow themselves to grow as much. Especially this past year there were so many turnover over all the firms in the area, because there's firm here or there that's saying, "Hey, I'll give you a \$10,000 raise to come over here and we talk about their situation." Be like, "Well actually if you just waited five years, the firm you were at actually seemed like it was going to be a better opportunity for you."

You might make a little more money right now, but are you going to plan to continue hopping? And it's just a difficult space that I think you really need to look at the overall picture.

Caleb Brown: And you said something earlier that I want to come back to, "I hope I can work for VLP forever." No millennial or Gen Z that I'm aware of has ever said that. I mean, that's one of the — I want to work for my ...

So, you're 25-years-old lead advisor, you've got CFP, AIF, Accredited Investment Fiduciary credentials, I mean highly attractive candidate.

So, all these other DC firms want to recruit you. So, when they call and offer you all this additional, why are you telling them no?

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Andrew Fincher: There have been some people that reached out, but ultimately, it's never been something I've been interested in because for starters, I'm an incredibly loyal person and I feel like VLP gave me an opportunity during a time where there wasn't a lot of opportunities, especially during COVID when there were so many hiring freezes and VLP was open and willing and they gave me my shot.

And throughout this entire time, from the personalities of the partners and the people that I get to work with just enjoying their company and getting to laugh all the time to continue to get opportunities, they've continued to give great benefits and raises, and I would have no reason to leave. I mean, this is a firm I really enjoy working for.

Caleb Brown: Andrew. Good, good work my friend. Excellent job on this. Anything else you want to share before we close out?

Andrew Fincher: The only thing I would say is just if you're listening to this and you're in a planning program or you are a career changer and then you're looking to get into the industry, this is an incredibly innovative and moving industry right now and you can come in and help you to change as we try to grow and devolve from what it was in the 80s and 90s, it's a great place to come on board.

Caleb Brown: Thanks for coming on the show, Andrew.

Andrew Fincher: Thanks so much Caleb, appreciate it.

Thanks for joining us for this episode of the New Planner Podcast. If you are ready to discover the top career paths for financial planners and see which track is best for you, we created a free guide to help you.

[New Planner Podcast](#) with Caleb Brown

Ep #140: Student to Lead Planner in 3 years with Andrew Fincher

Grab your copy of the Financial Planner Career Roadmap at newplannerrecruiting.com/roadmap.

There, you'll also find more tools and resources all created to help you build a successful financial planning career.

Tune back in next week for another episode, and until then, we are here to help you succeed.