

**Ep #245: Getting Hired into a Small RIA Firm as a Cohort
with Xander Larsen and Matt Pyron**



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Caleb Brown

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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 245th episode of the New Planner podcast. This is Caleb Brown, your host. My guests today are Xander Larsen and Matt Pyron, who are both associate advisors at 5280 Associates. Xander and Matt joined the show today to share how they transitioned from financial planning students to thriving associate advisors.

The pair shared how their journeys have mirrored in ways through how mentors have impacted their journey skills that they have developed, both at jobs in school and just out of school, and how they have positioned themselves for success. They go on to share what made 5280 a good fit, details on the training and mentoring they have received, how they have added value, and what mistakes they've made along the way. Plus some tips for new planners. I hope you enjoy this episode with Xander and Matt.

Before we get started, a quick thanks to our sponsor, Dalton Education.

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Stay on track and you'll be on pace to pass the CFP exam in under nine months, start to finish. And to make it even more accessible, they're offering a \$3,000 career changer scholarship or 15% off for listeners of this podcast. Check the show notes for the link and details.

Hey, Xander. Hey, Matt. Welcome to the New Planner podcast.

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Xander Larsen: Thank you.

Matt Pyron: How you doing?

Caleb Brown: Hey, I am doing great 'cause I'm talking to you guys. I've actually, I know we've had this scheduled, I've been looking forward to this. I mean, you each have similar but different backgrounds and you started at the firm we put you in at the same time. So I thought it'd be cool to have a little, like a cohort on here to talk about. So Matt, I'm gonna start with you first, just lead us off on how you got interested in the financial planning profession.

Matt Pyron: Oh, wow. Yeah, it's kind of a longer story, I guess. I just always knew that I had an interest in finance and mathematics and computers. And the computers and mathematics are less financial planning, but it kinda led me into wanting to study. I just knew I wanted to get back to school. And so I didn't, I didn't fresh outta high school, like I just didn't have my ducks in a row or the opportunity really to go to college right out of high school.

But eventually I did go to school and I knew I wanted to study finance. I did not know about the financial planning track until I was already two years into school and when I learned about the financial planning track and what it was, it just kinda like that's what I want to do. It just kind of clicked right away, okay, this makes a lot of sense to me.

So I started off studying finance, not knowing exactly what direction I wanted to go. I just knew that I. I really liked finance and I liked math and computers, so I was like, let's just go as far down that rabbit hole as I could. And then when I found the financial planning track, it just all made sense. I was like, "Okay, let's switch my focus to financial planning."

Caleb Brown: You found your people, right?

Matt Pyron: Yeah.

Caleb Brown: Got it. That's really cool. Xander, why don't you, same question. How'd this get on your radar and how'd you get started?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I think, fortunately for me, I knew pretty early and actually so early in life, it was probably around fifth grade.

My dad really sat me down and I had the fortunate opportunity where he had set up a UTMA or a custodial account for me with all the birthday money I had gotten and

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throughout the years. And then fifth grade kind of sat me down and gave me a basic overview of how investing works and how you can purchase these companies and see it grow and just basic principles of diversification.

And I really got hooked on that. I was like, "Wow, I can be sitting in class in fifth grade and make \$12 in a day or something small." I would see that. And I was like just fascinated by how that worked and just started learning more and more about that. And then I started to realize that I could help other people with it, starting with my friends, and looking around and just realizing how much of a demand there was for it.

And kind of shocked at one point that not all my friends had a UTMA account or a brokerage account or any investments, and I realized the huge demand in this space there and really took a lot of passion and helping them open up a brokerage account because it's so simple and helping them buy some well diversified investments and seeing how excited they got too, and they could sit in high school and be like, "Wow, I made \$80 today, and I just sat in class." And that was really inspiring to me. So I knew I wanted to go into financial planning before college, so I did a lot of research on schools that were available to me where I could sit and study personal financial planning, which is why I went to CU Boulder.

And it was everything I wished for. I still love it, which is awesome. And I keep learning, which is great, and I'm sure I'll continue to just keep learning every day. Come in.

Caleb Brown: Thanks for sharing. That's the beauty of this business. You never stop, learn. I mean, it's part of the job. I mean, the clients hire you.

It's like they're relying on you to keep up with all this stuff. Is your dad available to, help with personal literacy for the rest of the country? I mean that, I'm just listening to him like this is because he, if I remember correctly, he's not a planner. He's not an advisor, is he? He was in some other business.

Xander Larsen: Oh yeah, he does, purchasing and real estate, corporate real estate management and leasing. And he's actually from Denmark and moved to the US when he was like 28, 30. And he had a financial planner when he first kind of got here, but he wasn't doing such a great job and he didn't really like him and he felt he could do it on his own and kind of had himself.

And my mom was a finance major and they learned it themselves and did really well with it. Yeah, they're definitely my inspiration for it. They taught me everything I could know to get me on my feet and start running.

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Caleb Brown: And you realized pretty quickly you were the minority. I mean, people, just I'm like my son's going into fifth. I'm like, man, I need to get this scheduled. Like Xander's dad is really putting, making me absolutely bad over here.

Xander Larsen: And I think that's what kind of engaged me so much. I was like, wow, in fifth grade I could kinda understand some of these basic principles. I can teach. It's not that difficult. We can really teach it and help inspire some other people to get involved with it and get their finances together. That was really powerful to me. I knew that's where I could add a lot of value.

Caleb Brown: We're gonna come back and pick up your story in a minute, but I want to go back to Matt. So you got into the major a little bit later, then you got outta CU Boulder. I think it is what it was. And then what did you do? Because you didn't go right into financial planning right out of college. Did you do some other things before that?

Matt Pyron: No, I did. So right after school, I ended up working at a different firm for a little while. I think it's real important to find the right firm to work at. I really think 5280 is like the right firm, right?

And you can find yourself at a firm that just isn't as good of a fit. So, yeah, I mean, I went, I started off at a firm, it was an internship that I had while I was at CU and then it just became apparent that wasn't going to work. It just wasn't the right fit.

So then eventually, I transitioned over to 5280 this year. But yeah, I guess it's kind of that story in a nutshell.

Caleb Brown: I mean, when you're just starting out and you just need to get your foot in the door, I think people deep down like, yeah, I need to make sure it aligns, but also need a job and just get started.

Matt Pyron: Yeah. That's the way I felt, right? I mean, that's exactly how I felt when finishing up school. I was like, "It doesn't matter where I go, I just need my foot in the door. I need to meet people." But looking back, I think it's more important that you find the right fit and you take your time finding the right fit than jumping into a position at a firm that isn't a good fit.

Because once you're in that position, you might find yourself stuck and it's just better to wait until you find a firm that you really connect well with. Which is why, I feel really lucky that I found 5280 because of that.

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Caleb Brown: And people get nervous about that in the timing. And here's what I tell them, I said, "No firm is gonna hold it against you if you graduate college."

And then, I mean, 'cause it's kind of my story and maybe I'm biased, but you take six months off and you're studying for the CFP or the series 65 or whatever it is. I mean, no one's gonna hold that. Like, "Why didn't you get something?" I mean like, "Why didn't you get something the day after you graduated?" That's not how, I mean, some employers may be like that, but the ones that we work for are not, I mean, that shows a lot. So if you're job searching and you're struggling, maybe you just put it on hold and say, "Look, I'm gonna try to get some of these licenses. I'm gonna go through Hannah Moore's program, Amplified planning. I'm gonna do some of the Cody Garrett stuff," or something, and then while I'm getting some of these other designations, that way I can reenter the workforce and the job search and say, "Hey, now I have my 65. Now I've already passed the CFP," which makes it much more difficult for these firms to reject you.

Matt Pyron: Yeah, I completely agree with that. Once you finish school, while you're in school, it's a little bit harder to get some of those licenses. I mean, maybe you can do your SIE while you're still in school, but some of the other ones, you're just busy with schoolwork and you don't have time to get your licenses, but if you still haven't found that right fit in a job yet, that's a good time to get the licenses that don't require sponsorship, like you need someone to sponsor you to get your Series 7, but if you want to get like your 65 or your SIE or your Life and health, those are all licenses that you can get on your own and we will just make you a much stronger applicant.

Caleb Brown: The first firm, when did you know, "Ah, this is a problem." 'Cause you stayed there about a year. I know you stayed there a year.

Matt Pyron: Yeah.

Caleb Brown: When did you know it wasn't a fit?

Matt Pyron: It was kind of an ongoing thing, and I don't want to, I don't wanna throw anyone under the bus, there were just a couple of times where like I would sit in client meetings and I would hear the advisor give advice that just like everything I had learned about being a fiduciary, it went against that, right? And it was about collecting money for themselves instead of for doing what's in the best interest of the client. And after you sit in those meetings for so many times, you eventually just hit this spot of like, I don't think this is gonna work. I don't think that's actually in the best, the client's best interest.

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Caleb Brown: Where do you think your, this fee-only, the fiduciary, did that come from your own research or the professors or your school or how did you develop sort of your philosophies and the values you were seeking in a firm?

Matt Pyron: That's a good question. I think that the CFP board and the industry as a whole is trying to really move towards that fiduciary standpoint and is definitely taught a lot at CU Boulder. That was a big part of the financial planning program that was taught. But I just know me personally from my own personal background, like I did ocean rescue for seven years and like pulling people out of water and saving people and helping people.

That was a big part of who I am as a person. That's a big part of what attracted me to financial planning is like, "Okay, this is the way it really fits with my personality of really being able to help people." And so I guess just from like my own ethical standpoint. And mixed with what we learned at CU Boulder, being taught to be a true fiduciary, and that knowing that the CFP board really pushes towards being a true fiduciary. I think having that mix really put that focus on being a fiduciary.

Caleb Brown: I like how you snuck in that you were a rescue diver. And that's not on your LinkedIn. I didn't know that. And we're gonna come back to that, so be prepared. So Xander, we're coming back to you. So you got there, you got to the CFP program.

Were you doing internships or were you working part-time or you, what were you just kind of doing the student thing? What were you doing while you were going to school?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I was working as a server and a line cook at a restaurant about 25, 30 hours a week. I've always kind of had a passion for working and I just like to stay busy, but I didn't do any internships. I actually tried to apply for some but wasn't having much luck. I think my interview skills weren't as strong as they became over the years, but a lot of those denials and just practice for interviews and practice for internships and trying to get one really helped me for when an opportunity like 5280 came around, but I pretty much just studied.

And then the summer, I didn't get an internship. I just picked up some more summer classes so I could graduate a little bit early and hopefully sit and take my CFP exam earlier in case I didn't have a job lined up after. And then I knew kind of when I passed that a lot more opportunities would open up. But fortunately, right after I graduated, UN 5280 came around and I was able to land it right outta school, which was perfect.

Caleb Brown: It's all about timing, right? I mean, this is kinda one of the themes of the new planner is the timing is everything on this recruiting and hiring stuff. Alright. I'm just,

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and if I remember right, I can't remember if it was during, maybe it was during high school. Weren't you like running a movie theater or something like that?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I was working at a movie theater and I worked there for five years and I actually worked two jobs for almost a year in college, trying to do some weekends down there. I had a really great mentor there, the GM there. He was very highly educated, very great leader, and just taught me a lot about management and developing leadership skills. And I went from like a crew member up to a manager by the time I was leaving, which was a pretty incredible experience.

Caleb Brown: As a high school student.

Xander Larsen: Yes.

Caleb Brown: Oh my gosh.

Xander Larsen: Yes. He really helped develop me and we're still friends to this day. We still go get dinner and he's been a great mentor and really pushed me to. Excel and really tried to push me to take it to the next level. And even though you might just say go, it's a movie theater, he taught me so much and he really opened up to the financials in it.

And he was also kinda had a decent say in the corporate office. So he really gotta teach me a lot about financials of the theater management, how to hire good people, how to just run a good culture.

Caleb Brown: Okay. I'm still just trying to understand this. So your parents set up UTMA, so you had some money for college.

Xander Larsen: Yes.

Caleb Brown: Here you are working two jobs, at least for one year. The movie theater, then you're over here like doing a lot. I mean, like you're back there in the kitchen, like cooking and being a certain—not a glamorous job, which some of your peers, which there's empirical evidence. It's like, “That job is way beneath me. I'm not doing that.” Why were you doing all this stuff?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, that's a really good question, and I remember a little bit why I was pushed to have a job and my parents pushed me a little bit. I didn't need to go get one, but they saw a huge social benefit in it. And I struggled a little bit starting high

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school with socially and finding new friends, and my mom really pushed me to get this job.

I didn't want to at the start so much, but I ended up just applying a AMC theaters, and it was like night and day change. Like I met so many great people, so many great friends, and really built a social group. And then I was also respected, well for my work ethic and due diligence and was promoted through it and it became kind of an addicting feeling.

And it was the same too at the restaurant. I got a couple promotions from just like a baseline cook to prepping to a lead server. I just kind of got addicted to that healing of promotion and moving up a little bit, and I just kept wanting to do it and it was rewarding and it was rewarding to be able to pay for myself a little bit and not have to rely on my parents. And I found a lot of value in that and I made some of my greatest friends through it and it really kind of helped change my life.

Caleb Brown: And you developed skills. You already talked a little bit about the manager at the movie theater, but obviously, on the other jobs and the same thing, Matt, coming back to you, and I think that's why you guys have had the success that you've had.

Just at the time of recording, six months into this new position we put you into, it's gonna be a little bit longer that when this airs. But you guys had pretty significant work experience and life experience in other areas. So Matt, I'm coming back to you like you gotta tell us about this rescue diver swimmer thing.

Matt Pyron: I mean, that was something I did right outta high school. I did it for about five years and then took a break for it and did some other, you know, I went and sold cars and sold jewelry for a while and had a lot of experience in sales. And then I got burned out selling cars.

You can, it's a good industry to be in for someone who doesn't have a college degree. So I did pretty well selling cars, but then I just got burned out with it and went back to ocean rescue for a while, 'cause I just needed the break. I don't know. So, yeah, I guess I've had a handful of different experiences.

But the ocean rescue thing, something I. Kind of right outta high school. And it was a really good experience. Like in high school, you go from someone who has to ask permission to use the restroom to now I'm in charge of like very serious situations. I know, someone might be having a heart attack or drowning or heat stroke, whatever, broken leg, and now it's your job to take care of that and be in charge.

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So to go from like having asked. For permission for like simple things to being in charge of very serious life and death situations, it's a really good experience to have that, I guess.

Caleb Brown: What I'm hearing is financial planning is super easy for me because it's not life or death like I had when I was at this other job.

Matt Pyron: I mean, I don't know about that, like financial planning, money's not the only thing in the world, but you know, it kind of comes second to breathing. You kinda need it to do things. It's important to have a really good financial plan. 'Cause having control of your finances is really important in someone's life and it can make a big difference to somebody, so.

Caleb Brown: I'm with you. Thanks for sharing that. I want you both to talk a little bit about, and Xander, we're gonna start with you, about what you were looking for in an employer. If you even knew at that point, I mean Matt, I think you probably had a little bit clearer idea 'cause you already had year at another firm. Xander, no internships.

So what were you looking for in another firm and why, because I think you were both looking at other firms when we were talking to you, like why did you choose 5280?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I think that's a great question and I actually got some good advice from a mentor, and a mentor who's in the space and has his own RIA And I actually really wanted to work for him, but they were full at the time and he kind of told me, go find, he was like, "You got some talent and you got some ambition. Go find a place like an RIA that's fee only, where you're not having to sell products or bring on new clientele and someone who's gonna come in and invest a lot of resources to you and mentor you." And I almost felt that was kind of double-sided advice. I felt that was, 'cause that's really hard to find.

It's hard to find a place that wants to take a risk on a young college student like myself and invest a lot of resources into them. So it was really tough to find places like that. And I found a couple, but they were requiring you had the CFP already, or requiring one, two years work experience, or some internship and I didn't have that.

I was pretty determined, though, that I'm gonna find what he told me. Obviously, my hope started to drop a little bit, but then I kind of came across 5280. I sat down with Chad, who's the lead advisor above me, who's mentoring me, and he talked to me everything about what 5280 does as what my mentor told me to go find.

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And I kind of knew at that moment that this is it. This is where I wanna be. I don't wanna sell things. And he told me right off the gate, he's like, "I don't want you to bring new clients on. I don't want you to bring in new business. We have enough here. We want to bring you in and grow you and develop you to the point where you can help service clients here. You don't need to bring your clients on. We have too many." And that really showed a strong sign of health here and that they're doing something right, and I wanna be a part of that.

Caleb Brown: Matt, what about you?

Matt Pyron: One of the things, there was a handful of things that I really liked about 5280. First was the website. Transparency, you could see their fees on the website, which let me know that there wasn't gonna be any like guessing as to what you're gonna be paying for the financial planning. And then one of the things I'll look for, I'd been interviewing with several different companies and had been going through the interview process with a lot of different people.

But one of the things I really liked when I interviewed with Beth and Anne is they were just so easy to talk to. I just felt like I was myself when I talked to them, that I could just be me and I didn't feel any friction like I did with interviewing with other firms. It just felt like I was talking to a friend I'd known for a long time. For whatever reason, we connected on that level, and I think that is really what I was like, "Okay, I think this will be a good fit."

Caleb Brown: And Matt, let's stay with you for a minute, then we'll go to Xander. I mean, associate financial advisor. What does that mean? What are you guys doing and spending most of your time with?

Matt Pyron: So, I guess it's two parts, really. Part of it is a big support role for the lead advisor. And then the other part of it is we're learning a lot. A lot of the work that we're doing it's both support, but it's also designed to allow us to learn and grow and become lead advisors ourselves. So a lot of that is prepping for meetings.

We sit in on every single meeting. So Xander and I both have our own designated lead advisor that we work directly with, and we sit in on those meetings with them. I work with Scott, and I sit in on all of his meetings and take meeting notes and then develop the follow-up recommendations after the meeting, which then Scott will go back through and edit and correct and help me learn how to be a lead advisor.

So I guess it's two parts there, both support and a lot of learning and training.

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Caleb Brown: Xander, anything to add?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, like Matt said, we sit in all the meetings stuff. Now we're actually getting the opportunity to lead small portions of the meetings, like maybe just going over the investments or a little section, which has been extremely fascinating and a little nerve-racking, but also super exciting.

And so then, after each meeting, we'll kind of get some feedback from our advisor on how you can do better or what they want you to focus on more. But yes, it's a lot of prep, a lot of post-meeting notes and summaries and really fine-tuning the recommendations and doing some customer service work roles too.

So we work with the service team, learning how to do some roles, I guess, simple as maybe journaling some cash from one account to another, sending out some money, or calling in RMD to Charles Schwab for them to adjust it for the year. And then also too, studying for licenses at night. They can be some long days, but it's very rewarding.

Caleb Brown: Gotcha. So how many meetings do you think you've, just ballpark estimate that you both have been in the last six months?

Matt Pyron: Probably 90 to a hundred. Somewhere in there.

Xander Larsen: Yes, I would say the same.

Caleb Brown: So here you guys are, six months into this, 90 to a hundred meetings, something like that, which is a lot. And then, if I heard it right, now you're getting to actually present. I mean, that's amazing. Like why are they letting you, I mean, do you know what you're doing?

Matt Pyron: In the parts of the meetings that I lead, I feel really comfortable. I feel like I really know what I'm doing and talking about, some of it's just stuff that I've been studying and learning about and working on for 10 years or more now.

So, the parts of the meeting that I lead, I feel really comfortable with, because I've worked so hard at learning how those things work. So normally, I'll lead like parts like investments or we do bucket strategies and sometimes I'll lead those parts of the meetings and it just kind of seems natural. I don't know, Xander?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I would say we didn't go into it blind. I mean, we'd seen it like 50 or 60 times before. This is a recent thing. And then we also do role play. Matt and I role-play meetings every week so we can kind of practice there. And then we also have role

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plays where our senior advisor sits in, and that's a little bit nerve-racking, so you kind of, it makes it feel real when your senior advisor is sitting in and listening and asking you questions and critiquing you.

So by the time you get to the client-facing part, it does feel like you're well prepared, that you've practiced it enough times, you've seen it enough times, and you've already gone through, like a real scenario of maybe some of the nervousness with your senior advisor sitting in and critiquing you.

Caleb Brown: Yeah. It's usually if you can meet their expectations, it's the client side. It's gonna work, it's gonna work pretty well, right?

Xander Larsen: Exactly.

Caleb Brown: And maybe talk, this is great. I mean, talk about just their patience, I mean, and their mentoring and coaching and just sort of bringing you guys along, but also not, I mean, what I'm not hearing that you had to sit in a cubicle for six months and never talk to anybody that you're getting your, you're rolling the sleeves up and getting in there and getting the feet wet.

Xander Larsen: Yeah. They've been incredibly patient. I mean, every Monday we have an hour meeting with our advisor where we just get asked questions, and where they can help critique us and help give us good advice. But also what I really like about 5280 is there's a lot that you kind of have to just take and run with and develop your own processes for, and that you have to figure it out a little bit.

And I like that. There's not a lot of micromanagement and that is a little bit of a difference from maybe school, a little bit, where you're always being graded or tested on or critiqued on some things. Here, they kind of let you run with it and. They'll tell you if you're doing a good job or not, but they're not gonna sit there managing you, like asking when is this gonna be done? What's taking so long? Or why does it look like this? They're really supportive and I haven't really heard anything negative or anything with a negative tone. It's always been really constructive. I think that really allows you to kind of fail. I've made a lot of mistakes already in these six months, even though I've tried to be as perfect as I can. I've already messed up so much and I really like that they let me do that.

Caleb Brown: We all appreciate the transparency and I'm gonna put you on the spot a little bit, just kind of tongue in cheek too, but can you just maybe give us recall like a mistake that you made and how it got handled?

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Xander Larsen: And I think Matt probably remembers this. I sent an email out to a client and I was gathering data on some external accounts and I sent an email out and I listed some of his accounts. I didn't list any account numbers or information. He had quite a few other accounts and I said, "Can you please update me with the values on this?" 'Cause we were doing financial planning and we needed some of the data. And he called the office really upset. He's like, "Who's this new associate? He's sending out all my account information over email and an unsecured link. I don't appreciate this at all. It's extremely sensitive. I don't want my statement of net worth out there."

Which was a little taken outta proportion. I didn't put any account values in it, but he was pretty upset. And Chad pulled me into his office, and he was just like, "These things are gonna happen." He's like, "But what I want you to do now is I want you to call him and apologize and work out process on how going forward in the future, you're gonna get this data and how he wants to go about it."

'Cause every client's a little different. So that was a pretty nerve-wracking call. I called him after. He was pretty upset and yeah, he was a little bit upset with me on the phone, but I just apologized and I kind of just took the hit. And then I asked, "Well, how would you like me to go out about it in the future, where we can do this that works best for you?"

And he was like, "Well, I would like you to just call me in the future and we can sit down and grab the data together." And I was like, "Perfect." I was like, "Oh, I will not forget that. I'll make a note of it in our CRM system and ensure that we do that in the future." And then we had a client meeting and he was really appreciative of how I went about it. And I felt like it honestly have a better relationship with him than I do some of our other clients.

Caleb Brown: That's really cool. I mean way to diffuse. "Hey, I'm sorry. And what would you like me to do?" So this, that happened again. I mean, it's hard for people to keep piling on and just escalating when you do that, right?

Xander Larsen: Absolutely.

Caleb Brown: Matt, what about you just, I mean, the training and the mentor, I mean, it just seems like they've really kind of brought you guys along that's fit your, sort of what you're looking for. What I'm not hearing is like, "Man, I'm really raring to go and they're holding me back." I'm not hearing that.

Matt Pyron: No, there's, as far as like the patience thing that we were talking about that we've seen from our lead advisors, I'm gonna brag on Scott here a little bit, but you know, I mean, just like his emotional intelligence is just like through the roof. When all

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the tariff stuff was happening and the markets were going down, and we'd go in these meetings and people were freaking out and Scott's just there like cool and collected and just, "Yeah. Nah, it's gonna be okay." And I mean, there's more to it than that, but just having that ability to just, "No, I'm just gonna stay cool and collected," and just, you know, and so that's kind of the way he handles every situation. So I myself have made mistakes and I never get like my head ripped off for making a simple mistake. It's just, "Hey, I'm glad you recognized that was not the right outcome. Let's do it right next time." So, yeah, that level of patience is definitely there and noticed.

Caleb Brown: You guys have talked a lot about learning and mentoring and developing and sort of, and growing and also some of the mistakes. I mean, what's been the hardest thing or the biggest struggle for you in kind of this first, I mean, Xander really your first six months into your career? I mean, Matt, you got a little bit of time on him, but what's, is there something that stands out that's been really difficult for you to sort of grasp? Xander, maybe go for you, then come to Matt.

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I think it's a little bit of a blessing and a curse being at such a great firm like this, especially under Chad. He's been doing it for 22 years now and he's known a lot of his clients for 20 years. A lot of the clients he still has, he met very early on in his career.

And one thing that's a little bit for me, it's amazing being under such a great advisor, but how am I ever gonna get to that level and how am I ever gonna one day I'm supposed to absorb some of his book and his clients and help free up his capacity. And it's, how am I gonna develop this relationship that he has with these clients because they speak so highly and it's a little bit intimidating like, wow, I know it's not this year or next year or maybe even the year after that I'll start being their advisor, but it will come at some point.

Am I gonna be able to be there or are they gonna just leave? If that's the case, that I'm their advisor. So it's a little bit scary and it's something that I think about probably too much, but I hope that at the rate we're learning that I'll be able to fill it pretty well and that the clients will be excited about hopefully me being their advisor.

Caleb Brown: But like you said, it gives you something to shoot for, right? It puts that out there, and I remember having this exact same thought when I started, I'm like, "Oh my gosh." Like, these people are good. I really gotta, this is gonna be hard for me to get to this level. It was a little bit of depressing, but also motivating and more inspirational. If I work hard, I think I can get there, but I have a long way to go.

Xander Larsen: Oh, yeah.

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Caleb Brown: Matt, what about you?

Matt Pyron: The most difficult thing I think has been, really being able to balance everything. When we have these meeting surges that we have, it's being able to prep for the upcoming meetings while at the same time, wrapping up whatever came out of the last meeting we were just in, right? So if you have a couple of meetings in a day, there's a lot of action items that need to happen after those meetings are over and but at the same time, you have to think about what meeting do I have tomorrow? What meeting do I have next week? What meeting do I have two weeks from now?

And being able to balance preparing for the meetings with the meetings themselves and the follow-up parts of the meetings, just having a cohesive way of juggling all that has been a challenge, but it's kind of been a fun challenge as well.

Caleb Brown: Yeah. Well, and you talked about this a little earlier, but maybe just to revisit and just maybe add a little more if we can, if there is, but how, and maybe Matt will just stay with you, how have you added value? I mean, I know your senior advisors aren't on here, but if we ask them, it's like, "Hey, how's Matt added value to you and your business and your firm?" What do you think they'd say? Or, how do you think you've added value?

Matt Pyron: I think it's a mix of things, but primarily it's trying to take time off of the lead advisor's plate. The main focus for our lead advisors is to continue to grow the firm and anything I can do to take time off of their plate and put it online, which frees up time for them to work on the business and further the business goals, and that's a little twofold because as someone who's new and sometimes makes mistakes, sometimes it goes the other way and I'm adding time to his plate, unfortunately.

But as time goes on and as we get stronger and better as advisors, I can take more and more time off of his plate to allow him to do the things he needs to do to grow the business.

Caleb Brown: Xander, anything to add there?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I would say I take a very similar approach. We talk about a lot at 5280, kind of giving time back and adding value there.

And one of the ways I felt I did that pretty well to start is I would kind of watch the things my advisor Chad was doing and see if I could really help him. So I saw how he prepped his meetings and then one week without kind of him asking, I went in and corrected him all before he came in on the office on Monday.

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And he really appreciated that, and I did my best. I didn't do it perfect, but he gave me some critiques and just appreciated the effort. But then we also have some tasks that come out of the meeting that are solely for kind of the senior advisor and the financial planning team to work on. And I would just try my best to tackle those before they would get around to it to try and accelerate some of the work or take some time to invest, researching or learning about the subject we had to read up on.

And then I would take notes on it and kind of present that to him and he was really appreciative of that, and I always beg him too, I'm like, "Please send me any client email that you think I can maybe help deal with or help learn from, or that you think I can tackle." And he's been trusting me more and more to do that.

Caleb Brown: Great initiative. That's amazing. And I love how you both got, and I think you've said that like you're going to your senior people that like, "Give me more. I want opportunities. I want to see this stuff, I want to try." And then, and for other people that are listening, maybe that your boss aren't doing that.

It's like, if you see a situation kinda like what Xander you just said, try to like, "Ooh, how would I answer this client question?" Or, "How would I deal with this email?" Or, "Would I call that person or would I bring some," I mean, just run through those scenarios in your head. If you don't have someone who's gonna let you have the bats that, you know, these guys will let you have.

Hey, this is great, guys. I mean, it's awesome stuff. It sounds like it's a great fit. Glad you guys are doing so well. The licensing, so you needed to get, I can't remember. You gotta get the Series 65 and then the CFP. So where do we stand on all that stuff and how do you approach that?

Xander Larsen: They're only having us get the CFP because after you pass the CFP I believe it waives the 65 now is kind of what we've heard from our compliance team. So they only want us to go for the CFP and since we're not selling any life or annuity products here anymore, we're moving more to fee-only, we don't need any of the other series, license or life licenses there.

So, my track is, I actually take the CFP on July 17th, so a little less than a month. So I've been in a prep course. I did the Dalton review, and I've loved it so far, and I've been doing that the last few months and almost through the course. And I take my first practice test tomorrow, actually. And then I take a practice test every few days until the exam.

Caleb Brown: Dalton's got a great program. They're actually one of our podcast sponsors, so I'm glad that you're using them, so, hey, good luck on that, man. Has this

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last six months given you more confidence than feel like you can pass the exam versus if you would just be taking right out of school?

Xander Larsen: Absolutely, and Matt and I have been talking about that too. I feel when I'm answering questions now, if I don't know the answer so much, I just kinda ask, "Well, what would we do at 5280?" And try and answer it like that. And most of the time it's right, especially helpful in the fundamentals section. I mean, I really just answer those questions, how we practice here at 5280 and it's very, very accurate.

Caleb Brown: Matt, what about you? What are your plans for CFP or certifications?

Matt Pyron: I'm gonna be taking it again. I did not pass it the last time I took it and yeah, it's a tough test.

Caleb Brown: Yeah, it is.

Matt Pyron: But I'm taking it in March of 2026 and that's designed so that it, because of our meeting schedules and the way the surge meetings work, that's just the best time I think for taking it again. Part of me wanted to wait a little bit just to get comfortable with the job, and I think that a lot of the meeting stuff that we've done, really helped to prepare for the CFP. A lot of the stuff that I saw in the CFP study, I was like, "I'll never need that." Some of it, you're like, "Ah, how often will I come across that?"

And then some of the stuff that you focus on, you're like, "Well, I'll be using this every day." It's kind of like some of the stuff you think you're gonna be using a lot you don't use at all, and some of the stuff that you didn't think you'd use at all. You actually use a lot. So it's been good to be able to sit in on the meetings and know, okay, I should focus on this topic a little bit more, or I should focus on this thing more, or that thing less.

Caleb Brown: A good review course will help you with that. You're gonna get it, you're gonna get it done, man, now with this good experience that you've had time in the seat. Well, guys, we're winding down here and Xander, I wanna start with, just end with you and then we'll go to Matt. Like just final, I mean, you've already given us a lot and I really appreciate it and it's so cool to hear how this has unfolded. But any final tips that you wanna leave the audience with?

Xander Larsen: Yeah, I actually do have one that I was thinking about a little bit yesterday on just how I had some success with getting into this role I wanted to be and interviewing well. I mean, I got so sick of the interview process that I kind of said, the next opportunity I get, I'm just gonna be as honest, I guess, as I can and just tell them like, "I really want this. I really wanna work hard at this. I've worked hard to get here and

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I wanna be here.” And I kind of told you, I just tried to be as honest as possible. So when they ask questions like, “What was your,” they always ask the question like, “What’s your biggest weakness?”

I was just honest. I kind of told them I’m a sore loser and my communication skills need improvement. And I felt that really worked.

Caleb Brown: Great answer. Yeah.

Xander Larsen: I felt just being honest really helped me, helped them find that I was genuine and they really liked that and also too, when you called me and asked me like, “Well, why have you had all these jobs? Why did you do this all? You didn’t have to.” I just told you, “I really like the grind. I love working.” And you, I think you like that answer. And I think just being honest and maybe saying things that you think you shouldn’t say in an interview could help you sometimes. And if it’s just, if it’s true to you. And I think 5280 found that, and they screened a lot of applicants. They screened a hundred applicants. So I think if you can stand out in a way like that, it really does help.

Matt Pyron: Yeah, I think having a true, like highly ethical approach to things is really important. And then also, if you’re like still in school and studying, just whatever you can do to try and get ahead of the curve a little bit. Start thinking about, maybe start thinking about taking the SIE or the 65, how are you gonna do that? Start thinking ahead and down the road from where you are now and making a game plan to where you want to go and how are you gonna get there. I think that’s really important.

Caleb Brown: Hey, I know I said this was the last question, but I’m reneging. I had one other that I was thinking about. I mean, just, and again, like I said, at the top of the show, like you guys got hired at the similar time and started, I mean, how has it been and how, I mean, what are the advantages that you see that you guys are both, you have a buddy, for lack of a better word, to go through this journey with, I mean, how has that been for you? Maybe Xander, start with you.

Xander Larsen: It’s been extremely helpful. Obviously, there’s a little bit of competition, which is great too, but there’s also a lot of support. And even just today, for example, we finished up our kind of big surge schedule and today, Matt and I are meeting together to walk through each of our processes and where we can improve.

And also just being able to practice role playing, ‘cause our senior advisors are busy, but Matt and I have a little bit more time so we can sit there and practice running through a meeting together and it’s super helpful. Sit there and ask good questions, and it’s been a huge value to have Matt here next to me.

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Caleb Brown: If he wasn't there, the role play is gonna be a lot more difficult, right?

Xander Larsen: It's gonna be a lot more awkward. I'm gonna be sitting in front of a mirror sitting there talking to the wall mirror. Yeah. They might think I'm a little bit crazy here. Yeah.

Caleb Brown: Matt, how are you feeling about going through this with someone else versus just like, "Hey, I just joined a random firm on my own and I'm trying to have to figure it out."

Matt Pyron: I mean, I think it's great. I'm quite a bit older than Xander, but I can still learn a lot from Xander, so it's been really good. Like I can't say enough good things about working with Xander because of his positive energy that he brings to the firm. I mean, he comes in every day just like ready to go and excited to be part of the team and excited to be go and like it's just, it's so refreshing.

Sometimes he'll come out of a meeting and he's just so happy to have just gotten out of the meeting and it's so refreshing just to maybe I'll be like dragging a little bit like, okay, after lunch, you've had a heavy lunch, you're a little tired, and Xander's just like, "Yeah, let's go, let's keep going."

And it kind of, it perks you up, so it's been good to have someone that like really has that energy and and there's other ways I can learn from Xander as well. Me and Xander have different ideas about investments and the market, and it's good for us to talk about those things and just talk about planning.

Sometimes I'll have a difficult financial planning situation and I'll like, "Hey, Xander, do you know about this sort of thing? Have you come across this yet? What would you do here?" And he's a really good resource for me to bounce ideas off of in that way.

Caleb Brown: Guys, this has been awesome. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

Xander Larsen: Thank you, Caleb.

Matt Pyron: Thank you.

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