

# Financial Planning

INVESTED IN ADVISORS

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## Tech Review: eMoney's Next Generation

Within the advisor technology space, eMoney has always been somewhat of an enigma. It is often categorized as financial planning software, but many advisors purchase eMoney for something other than financial planning. That's understandable, because the eMoney platform includes account aggregation, analytics, marketing materials, a vault, a client portal and more.

The eMoney platform offers a great deal of functionality, but the various components haven't always provided the seamless experience that they should. Edmond Walters, the charismatic founder and CEO of eMoney, recently gave me a blunt assessment of the platform — saying that, over the last several years, the platform began to feel dated to him. As a result, Walters undertook a major renovation of the entire eMoney platform.

The result of that effort is the new, improved EMX product. A full package, called EMXpro, includes all the advanced planning features and lists for \$3,600 annually, with discounts for multiple licenses and affiliated partners. A more basic version, EMX, offers just aggregation, a client portal and goal planning, and lists for \$2,400 a year.

The EMX platform includes both advisor tools and a highly configurable client portal — well designed, intuitive and customizable — that is accessible from both computers and mobile devices. I'll be dealing primarily with the advisor platform here.

### SPLIT SCREEN

The EMX reboot has a clean, modern design. It makes good use of color, without overdoing it. There is plenty of white space, creating a clean, easy-to-navigate environment.

The home page is divided into two main sections. To the right is the Financial Feed, which can be thought of as a personalized business version of a Twitter or news feed; it includes tasks, alerts, alarms and the like. The Financial Feed includes alerts to let advisors know when clients log on to their portal, aggregate an account or upload documents. You can also set alerts tied to security prices and asset allocation threshold violations. In addition, eMoney will be integrating alerts from third parties; Morningstar is expected to be an early integration partner.

Each alert contains a link, so you can immediately drill down for details. For example, if an asset allocation alert is triggered from a household, you can click on the household name to see its overview page, where the asset allocation information is prominently displayed.

The left side holds an aggregated look at the advisor's business, showing total assets under management, segmented by type — taxable, qualified retirement, cash, life insurance, etc. You also see all client assets not managed by the advisor, broken down in the same format. Below held-away assets, the home page displays the top movers in the advisor's portfolios.

A navigation bar across the top of the page provides access to other areas of the application; there's also a link to a list of all an advisor's open tasks and alerts.

### CLIENTS & ACCOUNTS

The client link provides a list of all clients, with phone numbers, email addresses and the client "owner": the primary advisor assigned to the client. You can create three types of clients — individual clients, sample clients and organizations — as well as groups of prospects and clients. You can filter the list by last name or type a name in the search box to locate a client.



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When you click a client's name, a menu pops up letting you either go to the client overview page or add the client to a group. (I think this creates an unnecessary extra click; the vast majority of the time, advisors will just want to go to the client overview screen.)

Once you navigate to a client overview page, the system immediately alerts you to missing information. When I arrived on a page that was missing a client's date of birth, the system told me it was using the default date, and asked me to enter the correct date.

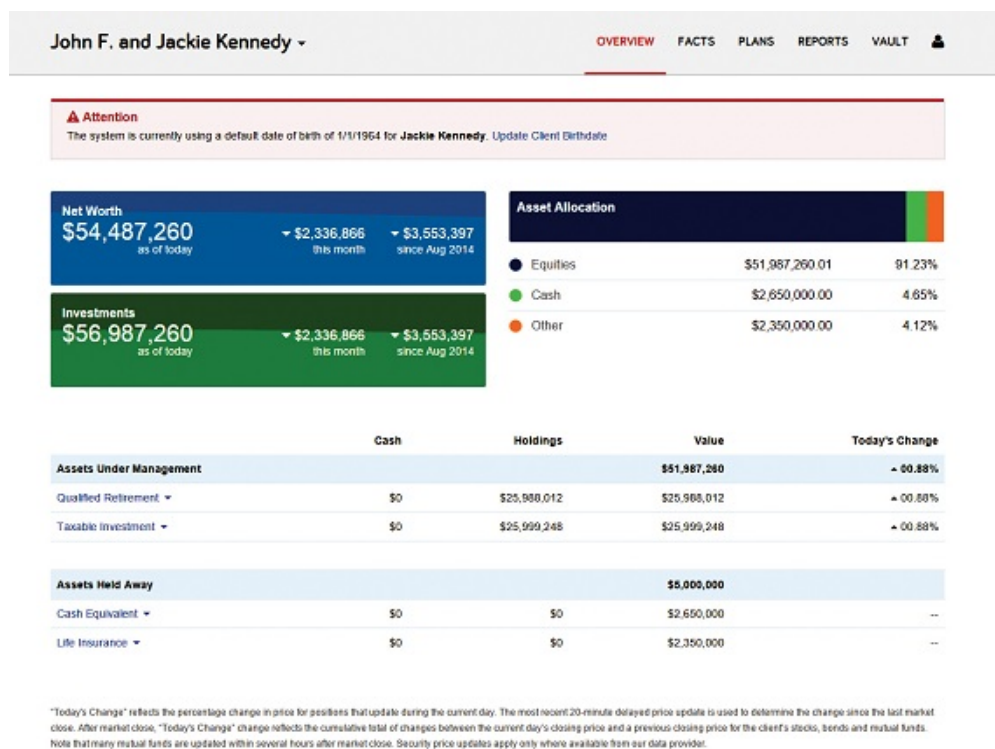
The client overview shows important financial information at a glance. This includes net worth (with month- and year-to-date changes, or change from inception if less than a year's data), total investment portfolio, asset allocation and assets under management by account, with performance data.

An account menu lets you edit the account or view a popular report, such as an asset class summary or holdings details. You can often drill down further from there. For example, if you click on the name of an asset class in the report, you'll see a list of all holdings in that asset class. You can change to other views: stocks by sector, holdings gain/loss, a Monte Carlo analysis of the simulated returns for the portfolio over a 20-year period and more.

Many of these reports can be customized and filtered. For example, the Monte Carlo analysis could show the results of non-qualified assets, or you could illustrate the projections for qualified vs non-qualified side by side. Reports can be downloaded for use by the advisor, or sent to the client's vault.

Beyond the overview screen, a client facts section lets you track family and friends, demographic and personal information, financial priorities, goals, net worth, income, expenses and taxes, savings and contributions, asset allocation, "protection" (i.e., insurance), plus observations and next steps. Fields like life expectancy and retirement age are used to power financial plans.

Most of these sections are self-explanatory, and much of the information is automatically populated through the included aggregation services. This section also lets advisors create asset groups in order to organize and display asset information in a way that is meaningful to them and their clients. The platform comes with default groups, but advisors can add their own custom ones.



## PLANNING OPTIONS

Because eMoney is, after all, a planning tool, the plans section deserves a deeper look. There are three modules: Goal-Planner, for interactive, goal-based planning; DecisionCenter, for cash flow-based planning; and DistributionCenter, for interactive estate planning. You can also access any previously created planning scenarios for

the client.

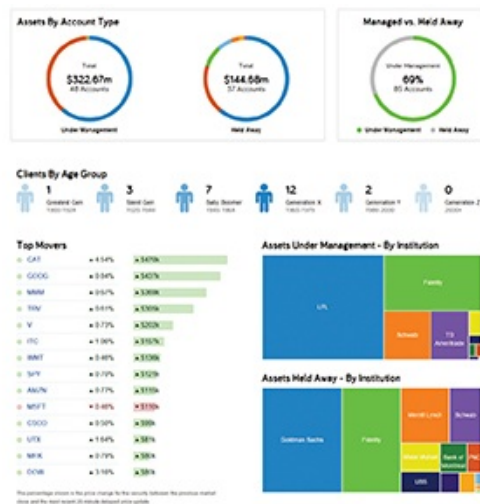
There are also various tools for performing tasks in a rapid, semiautomated fashion. For example, a “what if” tool generates scenarios from a drop-down list. Options include a bear market at retirement, disability of a spouse, an inflation increase and other options.

Investment planning tools can help you create investment proposals, investment policy statements, rebalancing reports and others. A needs analysis includes disability, retirement and estate planning.

The modules follow a similar pattern. If you jump to the goal planner, a summary screen displays the current situation and the probability of success; you can also add a second scenario for comparison. To see a scenario's details, open the decision center and select one of three views: cash flow, detailed cash flow or a Monte Carlo analysis that shows the probability of a plan's success along with additional details.

You can add “techniques” to a plan to add income, sell property to generate income, modify or add purchases, or make gifts. You can also alter plan assumptions like growth rates, inflation rates and retirement ages. Advanced techniques include estate planning tools (with various trusts and partnerships), estate transfers and insurance.

The analytics section lets users view assets by account type, managed assets vs. held-away assets, clients by age group, top security movers, assets under management by institution and assets held away by institution. Excellent graphics and an intelligent use of color make this information easily digestible.



## LOTS TO LIKE

I evaluated a preproduction version of EMX, so I don't want to get too granular on individual functions because developers were still debugging.

Even so, there's a lot to like here. The the platform packs a great deal of functionality and power, and the complementary nature of the advisor and client portals is noteworthy. In fact, the client portal is so welcoming that it encourages clients to use it as their primary financial center. With built-in aggregation, clients can enter and track all of their assets on the platform — which, in turn, lets the advisor provide more comprehensive, holistic advice. (It also helps the advisor uncover assets that a client may want to move or reallocate to the advisor's management.)

The new version addresses problems with the previous iteration, which was not as tightly integrated as it should have been, fell short in goal-based planning and had stale design in its printed reports, which now look modern and are easier to understand. The revamp also offers one-click reactions for common tasks that previously took multiple clicks to execute. (One example: In previous versions it took more than a dozen clicks to show a client's sale of a business. Now that task takes a single click.)

Although I generally love what I've seen of EMX, there are a few improvements that could be made. I'd like to see the home page, the analytics page and a few other pages become customizable; that's not the case currently. I'd also like to see more sorting and filtering capabilities on the client list.

Within the client section, if you click on the client's name in the upper left corner, all you see is the client's age and date of birth, which isn't very useful. I'd prefer to get something else there: a list of the last five clients I worked on, a list of user-selected favorite clients, or maybe a drop-down of all clients, so I can more easily navigate to another client

from the one I'm working on.

Another problem: Because all the feeds on the home page are client centric, any security alert that affects 20 clients will generate 20 separate alerts. Ideally, that would show just a single security alert that would let you click to see all accounts currently holding the security. I've been told that eMoney plans to consolidate that to a single alert in a future update; we'll see what form that takes.

Despite these relatively minor issues, however, EMX is a very impressive platform, and the price tag seems reasonable, given the new version's feature set and quality.

As clients and prospects expect more on the technology front, it offers advisors the kind of solution that will be necessary to stay competitive. I expect that it will get a warm welcome from the advisor community.

*Joel Bruckenstein, a Financial Planning columnist, is co-creator of the Technology Tools for Today conference series and technology guides for advisors, including Technology Tools for Today's High-Margin Practice. Follow him on Twitter at [@FinTechie](#).*

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