



JAVI is a dedicated transition consultant with nearly a decade of experience in financial services, specializing in transitions consulting, project management, and operations. As the director of transitions at Concurrent Investment Advisors, he has successfully guided financial advisors through seamless transitions, including overseeing the movement of over \$5 billion in assets in just two months.

Thinking about your next move? Let's talk.

SHOULD I JOIN AN RIA OR START MY OWN?

Some advisors excel with the autonomy of their own firm; others thrive within an established RIA's structure. If you're facing this choice, here's how to approach it.

BY JAVI OTERO

The path to independence has never been more traveled – or more misunderstood. Every week, financial advisors across the country leave captive firms in pursuit of greater control – over their book of business and the way they serve their clients. However, before they figure out which custodian to use, what CRM to adopt, or how to design their logo, they must answer one critical question: Joining an RIA vs. starting your own – which path is right for you?

This decision is existential – it shapes your daily operations, scalability, compensation, and ownership. As a transition consultant, I've guided hundreds of advisors through this critical choice, observing success and failure on both paths. Success hinges not on which path is inherently better, but on alignment with your long-term goals and preferred working style. Some advisors excel with the autonomy of their own firm; others thrive within an established RIA's structure. If you're facing this choice, here's how to approach it.

The Case for Starting Your Own RIA

There's a reason why "I want to build something of my own" is one of the most common motivations I hear. Starting your own RIA is the closest thing to true independence you can get in this business. You set the rules, build the systems, and create a firm that reflects your values and vision.

Why does it work?

Full Ownership. When you start your own firm, you own 100% of the enterprise value. That might not matter in year one – but in year five or ten, when you're considering succession planning, equity sales, or M&A, that ownership translates into real options.

Freedom of Choice. You're no longer stuck with a limited investment menu, or vendor list. You pick your custodian(s), tech stack, legal partners, and marketing team. You have full say over how the business runs – and how it serves your clients.

Cultural & Brand Control. Everything from your onboarding process to your mission statement is fully under your control. The firm becomes a direct reflection of your leadership style and your values – not a compromise with someone else's system.

Exit Flexibility. You're building a scalable asset. Whether you plan to sell to private equity, pass it to a junior partner, or ride it out for 30 years, you get to define what the finish line looks like.

Personal Fulfillment. There's something deeply satisfying about building something that's fully yours. For many advisors, the autonomy isn't just a perk – it's the payoff.