



NITROGEN CASE STUDY

The Risk-Oriented, Client-First Approach that Really Works



PICTURED: CornerCap's Discovery Room

Quick Look

Company: CornerCap

Tech Stack: Nitrogen, Practifi, eMoney Advisor

Year Founded: 1989

Headquarters: Atlanta, GA

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Background

More than three decades ago, Gene Hoots and Tom Quinn sat in a basement in Atlanta, Georgia, and brainstormed ways to help individual investors grow and protect their wealth. After having spent a decade managing RJR Nabisco's \$4 billion retirement fund, the two were ready to strike out on their own—the result? CornerCap's creation.

CornerCap, now fully-staffed and 100% employee-owned, utilizes the Fundametrics® investment methodology the two men invented in 1989. With an AUM valued at \$1.3 billion and an impressive tech stack (including Nitrogen, eMoney, and Practifi), this mid-size firm continues to provide portfolio solutions up and down the market cap spectrum.

Seizing the Moment

Throughout CornerCap's long history, the company had always branded itself as an investment management firm. The client process usually began with and largely

followed two questions: "What do you have?" and "What do you want to do?"

That changed in 2020, when CornerCap's leadership team saw the opportunity for a positive shift to reposition and reconfigure not just how the firm presents itself to the world, but also how it approaches relationships with clients.

Instead of client onboarding beginning directly with questions about money, the shift puts a personable approach to get to know clients first. The goal is to understand their unique appetite for risk, risk profile, and the reasons why they want what they want. This shift to immediately uncover information about a client's dreams, fears, and attitudes about money aligned perfectly with its intention to put Nitrogen more towards the center of its new client experience. CornerCap's Chief Growth Officer, Paul Barlow, calls it a "truly authentic approach."

Paul began at CornerCap in November of 2020, after serving as Schwab's relationship manager to the firm. When his ideas for

a company rebrand were well-received, he was recruited

"We can create better connections when clients take the risk questionnaire in a more relaxed office environment—it's calming," says Paul. "We get more in-depth, complete answers and they feel an ability to be open and transparent about their money needs."

by CornerCap to lend direction for the transformation. His current role as CGO is to support the growth of advisors, recruit new advisors, and to give those advisors the right tech stack to be successful.

In the past year, CornerCap has gone from being a firm focused almost exclusively on investment management to a business offering comprehensive wealth management with a client-first, risk-oriented approach.

And Nitrogen serves as the foundation to all of those custom- designed pieces.

Transforming an Entire Business

If CornerCap was going to make changes, they were going to go big. The transition the team underwent took place across all mediums— from client relationships to website design and even their Atlanta-based office's interior design.

What was once a stiff board room has been revamped into a welcoming living-room style concept, affectionately known by team members as the "discovery lounge." Here, advisors guide clients through Nitrogen's Risk Tolerance Questionnaire in a relaxed, personable environment where they feel comfortable.

The website has been purposefully redesigned with a series of questions to help get to know a visitor first,

which has also given CornerCap's team more insight into their target market of "Xennials"—a micro-generation that fits between Gen X and Millennials.

Those in the Xennial generation include people in their late 30's to early 40's who are beginning to build their incomes and wealth.

"We feel like that's the spot where we wanted to be connected with them," Paul explains. "We want to know who they are first; once we know them, we can know best how to support them"

Even CornerCap's sales strategy has changed as the firm's decision to put risk first in client conversations has been adapted.

"Our financial professionals used to love telling everyone how good we are, but we're out of that habit now," Paul says. "Now they want to hear what other people are about and they're interested in learning about them first. It's completely changed the dynamic of relationships early in the prospecting process."



CornerCap

Life Appreciates

Looking Ahead to What's Next

As CornerCap's shifts from an investment management firm to a risk-centered, comprehensive wealth management team, they expect incredible growth to follow. Paul describes the sum of the transformation as a team effort centered around putting people first.

"We're not gathering just to grow. Everyone here works together as one big giant team; it's not a collective of individuals, and understanding our clients and serving them is at the core of it all."

To propel the company forward even further, CornerCap recruited Chief Marketing Officer Catherine Aguilar from the healthcare industry. With Aguilar's 20 years of experience in marketing, CornerCap plans to take its initiatives to the next level and to bring those solutions to more investors who need them.

These fresh initiatives extend beyond just growing the business— CornerCap has established a marathon in Atlanta that's currently raised \$50,000 for the St. Jude charity organization.

Although CornerCap is already seeing some benefits of the company's cultural and philosophical shift, Paul believes the best is yet to come.

"For us, attitude and approach have been key pieces. 2022 is positioned well to take us forward and capitalize."

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This advisor has requested to remain anonymous—their firm and name have been changed.

Nitrogen is the company that invented the Risk Number®, which powers the world's first Risk Alignment Platform and was built on top of a Nobel Prize-winning academic framework. Advisors, broker-dealers, RIAs and asset managers use the Nitrogen platform to create alignment between clients and portfolios, leverage sophisticated analytics to increase the quality of their advice, automate trading and client account management, and access world-class models and research in the Nitrogen Partner Store — all with the mission of empowering the world to invest fearlessly. To learn more, visit Nitrogenwealth.com.



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