



How The Latitude Group Helped an  
**EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL ADVISOR**  
Move His Career into High Gear

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Edward Jones is a leader in the financial services industry and has grown through a network of community-based financial advisors. The company today has nearly seven million clients and more local offices than any other investment company in

America. When Greer Ducker joined the firm, he built a solid client base and met his early financial goals. But what would it take to move his results to the next level and achieve breakthrough performance?



### THE CHALLENGE

Greer Ducker says a family tragedy led him to a career in financial services. He was still in college when his father, a minister, was killed in an auto accident. Ducker's mom faced the sudden loss of both her husband and the parsonage the family called home.

neighborhood office in Greensboro, N.C. Soon he had a profitable business with a healthy client roster, but he felt like he was running in place. He was working long hours just to maintain the status quo.

"Seeing what she went through to get back on her feet and buy our first home got me interested in financial planning," he says.

"I simply wasn't making the kind of progress I wanted," he says. "I was spending too much time on too many clients for too little revenue."



After graduation, Ducker joined Edward Jones and set up a

### THE SOLUTION



Through a leads referral group, Ducker became acquainted with The Latitude Group and began working with the firm's CEO and cofounder Dan La Perriere to develop new ways of thinking about his business. La Perriere led him through a comprehensive strategic thinking and business planning process that involved:

La Perriere followed up with Ducker with monthly business reviews and coaching sessions throughout the year to keep him on point. He monitored his progress, held him accountable for the plan he had established and helped him make course corrections and adjustments.

- > Creating a vision statement and clarifying Ducker's core values.
- > Developing a clear understanding of his current clients and the type of business he would like to cultivate.
- > Setting specific objectives for both his business and his private life.
- > Developing a business plan with clear action steps and due dates.
- > Defining critical success factors.

Knowing that it's easy for a busy executive to relegate even the most promising business plan to a bookshelf to gather dust,

"Whether we work one-on-one or in a small group setting, our focus is the same," says Dan La Perriere, CEO and cofounder, The Latitude Group. "We help clients play to their strengths and achieve more than they ever thought possible."



Today Ducker is generating outcomes that have caught the attention of both his employer and his fellow financial advisors. He manages twice the number of assets, has half as many clients and puts in far fewer hours at the office.

**How did he do it?** By retooling his business from top to bottom, including:

### The Four-Step Process

1. A focus on high-value clients
2. A strategic approach to prospecting that played to Ducker's strengths
3. New services to broaden client relationships
4. Working a shorter work week

#### 1 A focus on high-value clients

During the planning process, Ducker identified three categories of clients he enjoyed working with the most.

- > Retirees who want to turn a lump sum into an income they can't outlive.
- > Upcoming retirees who are planning for the future and want to know whether they have saved enough to reach their goals.
- > Business owners who need help handling cash reserves and setting up retirement plans.

Ducker decided to concentrate on the same three categories as he searched for prospects and grew his business. To free up the time he needed for development, Ducker made a bold move. He brought in a partner and spun off 200 accounts that weren't a good match for him.

"I came to the realization that it didn't matter how large an account was, it needed to be a good, long-term fit," he says. "Spinning off accounts was a win-win. I realized the client would get a higher level of service from someone who had more time, and I would be free to focus on the clients I wanted to replicate."

#### 2 A strategic approach to prospecting that played to Ducker's strengths.



Ducker also developed a new prospecting strategy. He had never been a fan of cold-calling, but he did enjoy public speaking. So he began to concentrate on business development opportunities that

played to his strengths. He ramped up speaking engagements and hosted dinners where he could establish warm and friendly relationships with the people he met. He also began to develop strategic alliances with attorneys, CPAs and other professionals who might have clients who fit his target segments. The approach worked, and today Ducker is able to rely solely on referrals for new business.

"After strategic planning with The Latitude Group, I'm managing twice the number of assets, but with fewer clients and less time in the office," says Greer Ducker, Edward Jones Financial Advisor.

### 3 New services to broaden client relationships.

One of Ducker's goals was to be more significant to a fewer number of clients. That meant finding new ways to broaden relationships and add new value.

"I realized the more types of services clients have with me, the more likely they are to see me as a trusted advisor," he says. "I decided to identify a few key services I could offer and to concentrate on marketing them."

One example: He promotes "transfer on death" agreements as a simple and cost-effective strategy for leaving stock, money market accounts or other non-IRA assets to a beneficiary – eliminating the need for probate.

"One client had \$400,000 in 50 different stocks," Ducker says. "At her death, her daughter would have needed to produce a death certificate and do paperwork for each. Now we've placed all her stocks in a single Edward Jones account covered by a 'transfer on death' agreement. The account can be transferred to her daughter with no paperwork when the time comes. My client has peace of mind, and I'm hopeful her daughter will remain with us over the long haul."

### 4 Working a shorter work week.

When Ducker launched his business, 50- to 60-hour work weeks were common, leaving little time for his wife and small children. Now he works fewer than 40 hours a week on average – leaving by 2 p.m. on Fridays to get a jump on weekend plans. He also schedules family vacations at least twice each year.

"Now I control my business rather than my business controlling me," he says.

### **New Group Sessions Are Custom-Tailored for Edward Jones Advisors**

Greer Ducker's breakthrough financial results soon caught the attention of his Edward Jones colleagues. They were curious about what he was doing differently and were eager to replicate his success.

In response, The Lattitude Group now offers group planning sessions custom-tailored for members of the Edward Jones team. Financial advisors participate in a 10-month, results-driven process that marries face-to-face group sessions with one-on-one coaching. They engage in strategic thinking, create a personal business plan and establish key action steps and deadlines.

Ducker himself was instrumental in getting the first session off the ground and chose to enroll as a participant. "I found I really liked the group model and benefited from the collaboration," he says.

His colleagues agree that the sessions are delivering significant benefits. First, group pricing makes business planning affordable to financial analysts who aren't yet ready to invest in one-on-one consultation. In addition, working with peers from the same firm boosts accountability and promotes positive outcomes.

"When we meet to discuss the progress each team member is making, they aren't just reporting in to me," La Perriere says. "They also are being held accountable by the group. In addition, we've found that team members are committed to helping each other become more successful and are more than willing to share helpful ideas and experiences."

***"My business is up 20-25 percent, and I feel good about how I am building my business going forward," one group member says.***

To discuss how The Lattitude Group can help you address your business challenges, contact us today at [information@tlgrp.com](mailto:information@tlgrp.com), call 336.855.3704 or visit [www.lattitudegroup.com](http://www.lattitudegroup.com).

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The Lattitude Group specializes in strategic business planning and leadership/management development.

Since 2002, The Lattitude Group has delivered results for more than 160 clients in 20+ industries throughout the U.S. and Canada in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.