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## PRACTICE MANAGEMENT: Advisers, Investors Seek Matches Online

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NEW YORK (Dow Jones)--Singles aren't the only ones looking to make matches online. Investors and financial advisers are also trying to pair up through a growing number of matchmaking sites.

The sites, which range from a basic listing of financial advisers to centers for investment advice, serve as a starting point for investors looking for help and a marketing opportunity for advisers.

Industry groups such as the Financial Planning Association, National Association of Personal Financial Advisers and Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards Inc. include adviser search functions on their Web sites. Other sites, such as paladinregistry.com and WiserAdvisor.com, emerged a few years ago to help investors conduct their own searches for financial advisers.

Newer sites and features include aspects of social networking, blogs and financial advice. To populate the sites with advisers, some have offered early adopters free access to services and more prominent placement on their sites.

To stand out, advisers using these services should highlight their differentiating qualities, including service models and offerings. They should also seek approval from their compliance departments before posting information about themselves.

FinancialAdvisorMatch.com started as a directory service about a year and a half ago and added social media features this past fall. A joint venture between Charter Financial Publishing Network and the Financial Information Group Inc., it contains information about 1.7 million financial advisers.

A basic listing is free and advisers can pay \$150 a year to include more information in their profiles and display their profile more prominently. For \$350 a year, advisers can also contribute to blogs and the site's articles library.

"It hasn't brought any clients to me yet, but I post articles I already send out to clients on my blog so it doesn't take up much time," said Craig Allen, a certified financial planner in Santa Barbara, Calif. He was one of several dozen financial advisers to whom the site offered free enhanced membership for early participation.

Pre-screened independent financial advisers have been providing advice to investors through MyFinancialAdvice.com since late 2003. The company behind the Web site is now forming an alliance of industry organizations, including the CFP Board, to participate in an expanded venture scheduled to launch in September. It will feature specific packages of advice, such as retirement planning and college savings, delivered online to middle-income investors at predetermined prices.

CFP Board Chief Executive Kevin Keller said this model could appeal to new advisers who are building their client base.

Fabeetle.com, started by former Merrill Lynch broker Brandon Gadoci, lets investors rate, review and research financial advisers and their firms for free. Launching in beta on Aug. 31, Gadoci says advisers who sign up early will be prominently listed when it goes live in early 2010, since they likely will already have a host of client reviews.

ClaroConnect.com launched last July and currently lists more than 200 advisers, president Mel Marten says. Individual advisers currently pay \$239 a year to list their profile, which can include descriptions of their business philosophies, target market and years of experience.

Lester Koryczan, a certified financial planner outside Chicago, listed himself on ClaroConnect's site earlier this year but says he hasn't received any calls yet. He was attracted to the site's top ranking on a Google search and sees no downside to listing himself, even if it doesn't yield a flurry of new business.

Philip Palaveev, president of Fusion Advisor Network, a network of independent advisory firms, agrees there's little to be lost by a listing - provided a site is reputable.

"As long as you're not listed on nakedadviser.com, you're probably fine," he says.

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