

Greetings & a warm welcome to this week's edition of 401k Real Talk. This is Fred Barstein contributing editor at WealthManagement.com's RPA omnichannel and CEO at TRAU, TPSU & 401kTV - I review all of this week's stories and select the most important and interesting ones providing open honest and candid discussion you will not get anyway else. So let's get real!

In a shocking and surprising move, Great Gray announced the acquisition of RPAG, a leading 401(k) practice management platform for retirement plan advisors. According to a company statement, "RPAG will continue to operate under its brand and leadership." Separately, RPAG cancelled their national conference held at the Ritz in Laguna for the past 30 years as well as other regional events.

Read my recent [WealthManagement.com column](#) that broke the news and what's next for Great Gray, RPAG as well as flexPATH, all owned by PE firm Madison Dearborn which sold NFP to AON last year.

Former employees at Swiss Re with over 4,000 participants and \$1.45 bn filed a [lawsuit in the SDNY against the plan and the record keeper alleging excessive RK fees](#). They also alleged that Empower, their record keeper, made improper rollover recommendations unlawfully using participant data to cross sell.

Specifically, the complaint alleges that Empower improperly appropriated participant data to market its own Roth IRAs while concealing conflicts of interest which they claimed to be a fiduciary breach.

TIAA had been fined by the SEC and the state of NY for promoting proprietary investments by their in-house advisors without revealing potential conflicts and is facing lawsuits on similar issues.

As the push to serve participants and sell proprietary products heats up for providers like Empower and TIAA as record keeper fees decline, lawsuits like the Swiss Re case are bound to increase especially against deep pocket providers which could also affect what plan sponsors must do to protect participants.

Two cyber breaches were recently reported first by TPA [The Pension Specialists](#) which revealed that data of over 71,000 participants may have been breached.

Separately, [Inspira](#) self reported that one of their call center reps accessed sensitive data of 2300 clients including SSNs.

As hackers continue to target DC plans with over \$11 trillion, recent hacks indicate that third party vendors, not record keepers, are more likely targets as they do not have the same level of cyber protection. All of which will make plans and providers more careful about which vendors and 3rd parties, even advisors, have access to data and, if they do, what cyber protections they have which could result in further consolidation throughout the industry including TPAs.

Morningstar, noting that the robo advisor revolution never really happened, nevertheless [has rated the top firms](#). Though only a fraction of the targeted \$36.8 tr US retail market use robos which are somewhere between wealth management and DIY trading, they are used by

digital savvy investors and can amplify live advisors to do simple tasks like diversification and tax loss harvesting.

The top 5 firms which received above average ratings include Vanguard, Fidelity, Betterment, Schwab and Wealthfront.

Can robo advisors in combination with AI and live reps bring advice at scale to the masses at DC plans? Maybe, but 1st we need more engagement.

LPL announced the [hiring of Michael Doshier as SVP of their Retirement Partners](#) reporting to Cheri Belski, head of investment management. Belski, who joined LPL late last year, and Doshier worked at T Rowe Price.

As one of the leading independent BD with top RPAs in their ranks including GRP and Hub, its refreshing to see LPL step up and hire an industry professional. Before T Rowe, Doshier had been a sr retirement strategist at Franklin Templeton with stops at MassMutual and Fidelity.

Not only with LPL and their reps benefit but the BD community will as well as they turn their focus to the

convergence of wealth and retirement at the workplace.
Great hire.

And last but not least, last week's LinkedIn poll asked: [With MLB Spring Training starting, who is most likely to win the 2025 World Series?](#) The Dodgers led the Mets and Yankees with any of the other teams the top choice. Go Yankees!

So those were the most important stories from the past week. I listed a few others I thought were worth reading covering:

- [Fidelity releases inaugural workplace outlook report](#)
- [Edelman accuses rival of helping advisors take client information](#)
- [Synthetic ETFs try to mirror PE investments](#)
- [Pending POTUS Cornell case could affect the future of ERISA litigation](#)

Please let me know if I missed anything or if you would like to comment. Otherwise I look forward to speaking to you next week on 401k Real Talk.