

## CASE STUDY

# Unlocking Growth: How Carbon Collective Expanded Their Retirement Business With Vestwell

Advisor

Carbon Collective has more than 80 retirement plans with Vestwell, with 44 of those coming in the last 12 months alone. The firm was originally established as a registered investment advisor (RIA) catering to individual investors. As their reputation for combining ethical investment strategies with personalized service grew, so did the demand from their client base for broader services.



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“Our members kept saying, hey, this is great. Can you help us at work?” explained Zach Stein, Co-Founder and Chief Investment Officer at Carbon Collective. “We started investigating and realized that we actually could provide a lot of value in the defined contribution plan space.”

Recognizing the unique opportunity to amplify their mission’s impact on a larger scale, the firm began a strategic expansion of their services. **By partnering with Vestwell, Carbon Collective was able to enhance the client experience and grow their retirement business.** Here's how.

# The Challenge: Unlocking Growth with the Right Provider

As Carbon Collective ventured into the realm of workplace retirement plans, they needed to find a recordkeeper that would enable them to scale their business without compromising the quality and integrity of their client relationships. They were looking for three main features in particular:



## 1. EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

**First and foremost, Carbon Collective wanted a partnership that would enhance their ability to provide exceptional customer service.** They knew that the backbone of their business was in the personalized support and guidance they provided to each client. The ideal partner would need to complement their customer-first approach, enabling Carbon Collective to maintain their high standard of service while expanding their client base.



## 2. TRANSPARENT PRICING

**Secondly, Carbon Collective sought a recordkeeping partner that could offer straightforward, transparent pricing.** They recognized that to attract and retain a diverse clientele, from small tech companies to large non-profits, they needed a pricing model that was clear and fair.



## 3. SCALABILITY

**Lastly, Carbon Collective required a platform that could make it easy to manage multiple retirement plans simultaneously.** The platform had to be robust enough to handle various plan types and configurations without adding an administrative burden on their team. This would allow Carbon Collective to focus on what they do best: crafting and executing investment strategies that align with their clients' values and long-term financial goals.

# The Solution: A Strategic Partnership Built for Growth

Carbon Collective partnered with Vestwell to serve their business clients. “We were fortunate that we found Vestwell pretty early in our 401(k) journey,” said Zach. As their retirement practice grew, the partnership with Vestwell grew along with it.

**Carbon Collective and Vestwell shared a focus on client-centered service.** “With Vestwell, we get the combination of a simple user interface and great service on the back end. We have been really pleased with the Vestwell team and the support that we've been able to get for our clients, especially because we have so many with you all,” he continued. “If there's an issue, we're on the phone that day, or we're getting the email support that day for our clients. And they appreciate having their hand held like that.”

Zach explained that the efficiency of Vestwell's partnership has allowed them to streamline their client service. "As partners, we have clearly defined roles, and we don't overlap," He said. "That's made it possible to create a really smooth experience for our clients. The fact that we have that tight, efficient relationship from plan sponsor to advisor to recordkeeper has enabled this partnership to work as well as it has."

**"Vestwell has been an amazing partner for us. That's why we've brought a lot of clients to you all and been able to really serve them very well."**

Zach Stein, Co-Founder & Chief Investment Officer, Carbon Collective



Carbon Collective was also looking for fair and accessible pricing for their clients, and Vestwell delivered. **Since Vestwell's recordkeeping fee is fixed and is not dependent on AUM, Carbon Collective's clients' recordkeeping costs stay the same, even as their plan assets grow.** "Vestwell offers transparent pricing," Zach said. "Not having an AUM fee as a part of the recordkeeping fee has been really, really helpful."

## Streamlined Plan Management on Vestwell's Platform

**Carbon Collective has 77 active plans with Vestwell, with another 5 plans onboarding.** Zach explained, "We work with four different recordkeepers, but Vestwell is the main one that we work with. I would say Vestwell probably has 75% of our plans."

"Overall, managing multiple plans on Vestwell's platform has been easy," he continued. "Vestwell allows us to create multiple programs with different investment lineups so that we have different options that people can choose from. When we do our annual update, Vestwell enables us to update every company in that program at once. **That gives us a great deal of confidence to be able to continue scaling.**"

## The Impact: Service at Scale

Through their partnership with Vestwell, Carbon Collective was able to build a robust retirement plan business without compromising on their personalized client experience. "Because we have great communication and support, our partnership with Vestwell makes us feel like we can keep iterating and improving the client experience," Zach said.

As they look to the future, Vestwell's suite of workplace savings options opens new avenues for Carbon Collective to enrich their offerings.

**"We see our relationship with Vestwell continuing to grow,"** Zach explained. The firm is exploring Vestwell's [education savings products](#) through Gradifi. "Vestwell's student loan repayment assistance is something that we're really excited to explore and see if we can use it to offer additional value to our clients."

**"Our clients get excellent support from Vestwell, and it has really allowed us to scale."**

**Zach Stein, Co-Founder & Chief Investment Officer, Carbon Collective**

## Conclusion

Carbon Collective's collaboration with Vestwell enabled them to not only expand their offerings into the workplace retirement plan sector but also stay true to their mission of driving positive environmental change through sustainable investment choices.

The right recordkeeper can amplify an advisor's growth—and impact. By partnering with Vestwell, advisory firms can elevate their workplace savings offerings and scale their business.

**Contact us to learn how Vestwell can help you make a lasting impact on your clients' financial futures.**



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