



CUSTOMER STORY

Northstar Uses Smarsh to Stay Connected to What Matters Most – Customers



Customer profile

Northstar Financial Companies is a financial services planning company based in Conshohocken, PA, that has served clients for more than 30 years. The firm recently transitioned from operating under a broker-dealer to operating as a registered investment advisor. With seven employees and plans to grow significantly in the coming months, Northstar needed a compliance solution it could rely on.

The challenge: Rebuilding compliance for remote work

In the spring of 2020, Northstar Financial Companies was in a unique situation. The longstanding financial advisory firm decided to make the switch from operating under a broker-dealer to operating as an independent registered investment advisor (RIA). At the same time, a pandemic was quickly spreading across the world, dramatically disrupting business as we know it.

Julia Randall, Advisor and Chief Compliance Officer at Northstar, was tasked with crafting a compliance program for the newly minted RIA. And, she had to do this while navigating the pressures of serving clients while working from home and significantly expanding her firm's size.

"Recently, we have gone through a big transition at our firm and we're expanding the business. This happened right after everything got shut down for the pandemic," Randall said. "I needed technology that seamlessly fits into our existing systems and follows along with me as I communicate with clients, because client communication is the heart of what we do. It's very important that we stay connected with them."

When building her compliance program, Randall wanted to implement a compliance solution that was trustworthy and easy to use. This would enable her to spend as much time focusing on her clients as possible.



"There weren't a lot of other companies we found that could do everything as well as Smarsh does. When we set up all our communications and social media to go into the archive, and crafted policies, we were impressed with all of the features available. It is really cool!"

Julia Randall

Advisor and Chief Compliance Officer
Northstar



Especially now, while everything is online and we are working virtually, I needed a compliance system that I just didn't have to worry about. I want to stay focused on our clients so we can always be there when they need us."

Julia Randall

Advisor and Chief Compliance Officer
Northstar

The solution: A compliance platform built for security

For Northstar, one of the most important factors in choosing a compliance system was that it included an integrated email encryption service.



For me, there is no point in having two different systems for email archiving and encryption. I need both, and I need to know that they work well together."

Julia Randall

Advisor and Chief Compliance Officer
Northstar

When looking at solutions, Smarsh immediately stood out, because it provides email hosting and encryption services. And, there was an added benefit that Smarsh can integrate with their existing technology ecosystem.

"Everyone in our firm appreciates that Smarsh seamlessly integrates with Outlook and our CRM [customer relationship management system]," Randall said. "Previously, we had to go through a number of contortions to get encrypted email links and then get client emails recorded in our CRM. It is so important to have records of what everyone has said to clients because we have a team approach. We wouldn't have a business if we didn't have a good recordkeeping system to keep track of client communications."

Beyond integrations, Northstar was looking for a trusted and easy-to-use compliance system. As a new RIA, the firm had to face an introductory audit by the SEC. Randall had to learn how to set up automated lexicon policies for supervision and review procedures. "It was very important to us that Smarsh had a lot of experience in the financial services industry and was well known," Randall said.

The result: A compliant firm positioned for success

Northstar has an aggressive growth plan. Randall needs a compliance system she can trust to capture all of her employees' communications and alert her if there are any violations.

"When it comes to working on my compliance system or answering a call from a client who needs me, my client has to come first," Randall said. "That's what is great about Smarsh. It's working in the background as I communicate with clients, and I don't have to worry about it. Especially now with the pandemic, so much of our communication is electronic. It is crucial to have a compliance system working well in the background."

The Smarsh services team was also a critical part of Northstar's transformation.

"I have dealt with tech support on so many systems during this time of change, and the Smarsh support team is so refreshingly great," Randall said. "They are so thorough, and you can tell that they really care about everything — from my setup to training. It has made everything so much easier for me."

As Randall and her team work to grow Northstar, she knows she can count on the Smarsh Customer Success and Support team to help her with any future compliance needs.



Smarsh® enables companies to transform oversight into foresight by surfacing business-critical signals from the most in-demand communications channels. Regulated organizations of all sizes rely upon the Smarsh portfolio of cloud-native digital communications capture, retention and oversight solutions to help them identify regulatory and reputational risks within their communications data before those risks become fines or headlines.

Smarsh serves a global client base spanning the top banks in North America, Europe and Asia, along with leading brokerage firms, insurers, and registered investment advisors and U.S. state and local government agencies. To discover more about the future of communications capture, archiving and oversight, visit www.smarsh.com.

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Customer Story - 10/25

