

**Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate
Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer**

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maddy Roche

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Narrator: [00:00:01] Join your host Maddy Roche as she brings you into a community of fee-only financial advisors who are successfully building profitable businesses that serve the next generation of clients. Learn from innovative advisors whose unique stories will inspire you to dream big and take action on your goals. Are you ready to live your best life and help your clients live theirs? Then you're in the right place.

Maddy Roche: [00:00:25] Hello and welcome to #XYPNRadio. I'm Maddy Roche your host and today's episode is episode 333. Today I have Cynthia Meyer, a CFP®, a CFA and an XYPN member who is the owner and founder of Real Life Planning, a fee-only firm dedicated to supporting real estate investors. Today's podcast is so informative. Cynthia shares her expertise with real estate and how she's been able to create a service model that has allowed her to scale to 50 clients in her first three years. We talk about everything from the real estate bubble to using her campaign management experience in her business today. Cynthia exudes enthusiasm for her work, her clients and her niche, and it is contagious. Cynthia is also a power user of the XYPN network and has effectively launched a highly productive real estate investment study group and a community within the XYPN membership. And today, she talks all about how giving back that way has given her so much value in return. If you're interested in real estate as an asset class and how to serve clients who do too, then this show is for you.

Maddy Roche: [00:01:36] A firm isn't a firm without clients—as the Chief Marketing Officer of your RIA, the most important job you have is guiding prospects through your marketing funnel and converting them to clients. If your funnel has leak, you could be spinning your wheels and missing opportunities. Mapping your funnel is the first step towards developing an

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

effective marketing strategy and a valuable tool for evaluating the health of an existing one. Download our free template and map your funnel at XYPlanningNetwork.com/funnel.

Maddy Roche: [00:02:08] Also be sure to go to XYPlanningNetwork.com/VIP to join our private group just for #XYPNRadio listeners. It's a community of advisors we've all been looking for that's there to provide support when we need it the most. Best of all, it's free. I encourage you to check it out. Again, that's XYPlanningNetwork.com/VIP.

Maddy Roche: [00:02:28] Hello, Cynthia. Welcome to #XYPNRadio. How are you?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:02:33] Hello, Maddy. I'm great. Thank you. It's-it's a wonderful day in central New Jersey here, and we are starting to have some spring, so welcome to spring.

Maddy Roche: [00:02:45] Good, good, good. So glad to have you on. Cynthia, you've been such a fabulous XYPN member, and I'm really interested and excited to introduce you to our listeners who may not have had the opportunity to cross paths with you yet. So, Cynthia, I'll let you do the honors. Please introduce yourself and your firm.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:03:02] Okay, great. Well, hey, everyone, I'm Cynthia Meyer, and I'm the founder of Real Life Planning, which is a financial planning firm, virtual financial planning firm that works with real estate investors, in particular, rental and vacation property investors, all types of

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

real estate investors. And what we do, I like to call financial mentorship. So this is the combination of financial planning and real estate business coaching. And I work with folks who are in the building stage, right? So maybe they have some rental properties, but they're looking to get to where they have enough doors so they can be work optional, preferably sometime earlier than the typical retirement age.

Maddy Roche: [00:03:46] Wow. I've already got questions just based off of what you said, but let's give the listeners a little perspective. When did you launch? How many clients are you serving currently?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:03:55] Sure. Well, after our pre conversation the other day, I actually went and looked it up. And so since we have been in business, we've served 62 clients. Some of those were projects. So right now we just signed number 50. So in terms of the long term planning clients.

Maddy Roche: [00:04:13] Oh, what a threshold. Congratulations. It's really exciting. And what year did you launch?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:04:18] So I joined XYPN in 2019 and I launched just went live on the website and started taking clients that I wasn't related to in December of 2019. And then I-I had already picked the, the, the niche that I wanted to serve and I had already put up the website and all that sort of thing. But originally I was leading with something called House Hacking. And are you familiar with that term?

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Maddy Roche: [00:04:51] No, please.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:04:53] So how is hacking is when you-you buy a multi unit property and live in one unit and rent out the other ones or in what I like to call house hacking 2.0 is when you use a home that you already own and monetize it in some way. Like perhaps you you take roommates or you list it on Airbnb for the weekend or you rent out your garage or RV parking or something like that. And so I developed this whole campaign around house hacking 2.0, which was basically letting other people in your house and then, of course, the pandemic. So I had to go to right away I had to take that down and I had to pivot and rethink how I was going to-to-to get new clients initially.

Maddy Roche: [00:05:40] So wow. And I love your niche so much and it's feels more specific than most niche-niches that we hear on the podcast. I'm interested how did you know that this was an area that clients needed help with?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:05:55] Sure. Well, it seems to me like the great blue ocean to me, if you if you've ever read that book, The Blue Ocean Strategy. So I've been a financial planner for a long time, so I could have worked with different types of people. When I first started my career, I was in the Bay Area of California, working mostly with people who had equity compensation, and I thought about doing that again. I thought about-I thought about working with people who were expats, right? Because I've been an expat for a while. I thought about working with women, particularly women business owners. But I really settled on the real estate investor clientele because I didn't think anyone was serving them. You know, I had built a rental property company with my husband during the Great

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Recession, and we were sort of self educated, first generation real estate investors and, you know, financial planners just didn't know that much about it in general unless they had a family background in real estate investing. And and I thought that that there was a need. And I was happy to find out that, in fact, there is a need and there's lots of room for growth in this niche.

Maddy Roche: [00:07:04] Totally.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:07:05] I think lots of people that who are not well-served by the financial services industry right now?

Maddy Roche: [00:07:10] Absolutely. And by-by nature of the technicalities that you have to coach on this that that it's really specific to types of financial decisions versus maybe a psychographic niche of an individual or a professional niche of an individual.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:07:25] Yes. Yeah, I think you're right on target with that. Maddy. And real estate is owning direct properties in real estate investing. You know, let's say owning a rental property, for example. It bears more in common with other types of small businesses than it does with securities investing. I mean, you have this large, expensive, illiquid asset. It has carrying costs that you may have to pay if revenue goes down, right? If people aren't paying you rent. And it's not like you can just turn around and bring it back to Walmart, right? Like once you bought it, you've got it for a while. So a certified financial planner is actually pretty well well positioned to especially a fiduciary, to bring an unbiased perspective to that relationship. But a lot of folks just they just don't know much about real

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

estate investing beyond buying their own house. And they the comp model up until now really favored the AUM model, which isn't it's possible, it's definitely possible to serve real estate investors with that model, but they are particularly well served with the fee for service model, right? Where people are paying you directly for advice and coaching. And the asset management piece is a little bit more secondary.

Maddy Roche: [00:08:41] I'm so interested in that and I'm wondering when you say that there is room for growth in this in this area of the niche, is that because a lot of real estate investment people are do it yourselfers or are they have they sought financial advice and just not finding it? What are what are you sensing among the people looking for this support?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:09:02] Sure. Well, first, finding a financial planner who is fee only, which, you know, thanks in large part to XYPN and NAPFA consumers know to look now for a fee-only financial planner. It's-it's definitely a part of personal finance journalism to speak about that so but finding a fee-only planner that is real estate savvy is pretty challenging. You know, of course, the best place to go is to the XY Planning Network find an advisor tool. And not only will you'll find me, but you'll find several other people in XY Planning Network who have really great planners and have lots of things to say. And some who have niche is a little bit different than mine, like maybe in vacation properties or commercial real estate. And so it's hard to find somebody if you just Google it, right? It's-it's it's hard to find somebody who-who meets all those criteria. There's a lot of interest in real estate right now. And I think what we're seeing is just like we saw, you know, maybe 20 years ago, we saw this-this trend towards people moving towards low cost index portfolios and away from active management to being more asset allocation and and index driven. We are also seeing this-this younger generation of folks, people, you know, kind of like 50 and

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

under who are much more comfortable with real estate as an asset class. Now, they may be they may have more friends who own real estate. They watch HGTV and the DIY Network, or I guess it's called the Magnolia Network now. So they've seen all all real estate as entertainment and they think, gosh, that looks like fun and it looks like it's profitable so that people want to get into it. That there was a Bankrate study, for example, a couple of years ago, which said that 38% of millennial respondents thought that real estate was the best choice as a growth asset. And, you know, 20 years ago, that answer unequivocally would have been securities. Right. So-so there's really a mind shift, right? It's a perspective change.

Maddy Roche: [00:11:11] Yeah. What do you think caused that perspective change?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:11:15] Oh, good question. I think part of it is, as I mentioned, it's just, you know, real estate investors are more visible in media. Right. So with social media, with cable, you know, there are more visible real estate investors and they've become entertainment-entertainers. Right. Whereas maybe one or two generations back, even with the CNBC generation, you know, people had kind of like think Jim Cramer, right? Like the sort of securities investor celebrity. Right. But now there are real estate investor celebrities and that certainly helps.

Maddy Roche: [00:11:55] Yeah, I speak from experience that I feel like everyone in my-my peer group is talking about real estate and what they're doing with it and if they can even get into the game of it. I know the entry point still seems inaccessible to a lot of my peers. Quite frankly, given just the shift in the past couple of years, we've seen with the market, with real estate.

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Cynthia Meyer: [00:12:15] Sure. I mean, it's in many metro areas. It's like the Bozeman area, for example. It takes a lot to get into a first home. You're competing with investors who might be able to buy in cash. Right. And some of those are institutional investors. And getting into the first home is the first hurdle. And then getting into the first rental property is like the next big step up. And then once people get into the first property, then over time, if you're saving your net rents, it's not as hard to get into to more, right? So it's those first two hurdles that are the the hardest ones.

Maddy Roche: [00:12:51] I'm interested, Cynthia, in your background. You're-you're so well-spoken and up to date with with your current endeavor of serving this clientele. But what were you doing before this?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:13:02] So right before I launched my own firm, I was working in financial wellness programs. So I worked for a company called Financial Finesse, which for people in the employee benefit space will be familiar with it. And it's one of the leaders in corporate financial wellness program. So I was delivering these programs to large companies, mostly Fortune 1000 companies, and I would talk and meet with everyone from the person who had 10,000 options to exercise to the person who is at risk of being evicted. Right. So it was really-it was really you know, I'd been-I've been a financial planner for a long time, but it was really a boot camp on, you know, just really drastically expanding the scope of folks that I would talk to. And as part of as part of that engagement, I worked there for about four years. And as part of that, I was on the think tank, the financial wellness think tank, and we did a lot of research because we collected a lot of data anonymously. So we did a lot of research about financial trends, employee financial trends, and that's kind of informed my work now too, in

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

terms of how I approach people and how I've tried to set up the financial planning process in the firm.

Maddy Roche: [00:14:18] In what ways?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:14:20] Well, I think one of the biggest ways is that I think in many ways, even though I've been a financial planner for a long time, that the traditional model of financial planning, where the planner tells the client what to do is not in the long run is not the most effective method. I think if we don't if-if clients don't make their own wise, convicted, comfortable financial decisions, if they don't own it, if you will. Right. It's not going to happen. Right. So you can have the most beautiful recommendations possible. But if you don't have good coaching skills as a financial planner, stuff's not going to get done. Right. And so I think working in the serious boot camp of financial wellness to really hone my personal coaching skills was super helpful. Right. And I think that's one of the reasons why I was so interested in working with real estate investors, because it's an aggressively DIY group of people. Right. It is that having that coaching background like kind of that marriage of financial planning and financial wellness and financial coaching, and that's what I just decided to describe it as financial mentorship. Right. So, so I will try and coach a client through the decision making process, through the process of buying a property or selling your property or deciding what to do to improve profitability in their real estate business as well as the other financial planning elements. Right. But ultimately, the client is the person that owns the outcome. And so I-I-I will give advice, obviously, I'll give advice when, when it's needed, but I'm hoping to take the client through a process where, where they are gaining their own equilibrium, right? Where they become more and more confident over time in the financial decisions that they're-making about they're-they're growing their real estate business.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Maddy Roche: [00:16:24] Beautiful. Could you give us a summary of your service model and your fees?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:16:29] Oh, sure. So I have a subscription model and there is an upfront initial financial planning process that everybody shares. Right. So the first three months or so, 3 to 4 months or so, there's an initial financial assessment that goes through all the moving parts of people's financial life. Right. And I have a systematized process that's going to take anywhere. The typical engagement is going to be somewhere between five and eight initial meetings where we're going to take people through the process of getting organized, defining the dream. Looking at their current financial picture, right? If nothing changed, if they did nothing differently. How close are they to getting to their goals? Exploring possibilities. Right, all the different possibilities. That's the super fun part, right? Doing a securities portfolio review, incorporating a rental property business review, assuming that they own those properties already. Taking other special things. Right. Like, say, if somebody has stock options to exercise or equity comp to review and then at the end of that process, we're going to look at what are the next actions and priorities to work together. You know, some in the short run, some of the parking lot for later and some kind of in the holding area for somewhere down the road when it's time to get to them, when the most important things have been addressed. And so once that initial planning process is finished, then clients can take two paths. Those people who have a lot of active things happening in their financial life choose something called lift. And the lift is ongoing financial planning with optional investment management for those people who are not DIY securities investors. And I have a calendar, right? So there's a theme for every month we do tax planning and investment planning. We revisit the retirement projection once a year. We're going to do review the rental property business twice a year as some examples. So we're going to touch

XYPN Radio with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

on every piece of their financial plan throughout the year. We're going to do a lot of business coaching in that process. Not everybody needs that level of intense interaction. And so for those folks, I also have a financial coaching service which is called launch, and that's basically a quarterly coaching call which is very client driven in terms of what they want to talk about. So that is the less that-that-that is the sort of less expensive alternative for people who were well served with the initial financial planning process, but they want to have somebody to talk to over time.

Maddy Roche: [00:19:17] Wow. Fabulous. What do you think? You're, you know, your breakdown between those two service models?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:19:22] So interestingly, it's about half and half. So it's about half and half. And when I really put this together and I'm sure you've had plenty of people on that have expressed how they've iterated over time. Right. As their-their-their firm grew. I originally thought that the launch service would kind of be aimed at the early career folks who are who are just getting started. Right. But interestingly, there-there has been some feedback from really experienced real estate investors who-who are validators. Right. Because they want to go through that initial financial planning process. They'd like to have somebody to talk to you once in a while, but they don't necessarily need ongoing help every month. And interestingly, there are some people who are relatively early career, but they're very high earners and they do want to talk to somebody every month. So the mix being 50/50 actually surprised me a little bit.

Maddy Roche: [00:20:16] Wow.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Cynthia Meyer: [00:20:17] That if you'd asked me two years ago, I wouldn't have expected that.

Maddy Roche: [00:20:20] Oh, I'm so glad. Have you have you had to evolve the price point you started at originally?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:20:25] Yeah, of course. But doesn't everybody right.

Maddy Roche: [00:20:27] Yeah. Yeah, that's point.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:20:29] So-so what I did over time was I kind of expanded the ranges of what I could charge people to try and incorporate more of the scenarios that I was thinking and to account for complexity in the initial planning process. So-so I expanded the range of that. I also expanded the fees a little bit on the financial coaching service.

Maddy Roche: [00:20:55] Wonderful, what a fun firm. Cynthia, I love hearing about.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:20:58] I'm having a great time.

Maddy Roche: [00:21:00] I bet you seem it. You seem it. And we'll get into that a little bit about how you brought that energy to your peers and this network. But let's go back in time just a little bit. I imagine you-you had a

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

very successful career. You've talked a bit about it. What made you think I want to go at it alone?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:21:16] Well, good question. So, I mean, I've had my own business before. And so before I went to work in financial wellness, you know, I was I had was teaching financial workshops and teaching some other things and working on the real estate business for a while. We had been expatriated for a while, as I mentioned before, and we'd come back to the United States and, you know, I guess I'm just really entrepreneurial, Maddy. You know, I've spent most of my adult life working for myself. I have I did have a long period of time when I first started in financial planning. I worked for Merrill Lynch and I had a nice career there, but then left my team when my husband got an offer overseas that was kind of too good to pass up. So, you know, I like-I like building stuff. I like building stuff. And so as the company I was working with. Which, again, wonderful business. You know, it just started to get larger and larger and it felt like it was time to go start something new.

Maddy Roche: [00:22:16] Wow. Beautiful. Oh, I love that. Yeah. What would you say is is different between the clients that you're serving versus maybe just the average client that-that-that other advisors would end up serving? You mentioned that they're very do it yourself. That really stood out to me from our last conversation. But experience whys and their understanding of things, how does that change as you serve them?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:22:42] Sure. So a couple of things. In terms of my client base, a couple of things that folks generally have in common. So the first is, which is-is that in-in terms of their saving outside their retirement accounts, they prefer real estate as an asset class. Right. So folks, you

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

know, they're maxed out their 401Ks and their IRAs. Right. But when it comes to investing outside of their retirement accounts, they really do prefer real estate as an asset class. Right. So they're just they're real estate people. The second thing is that generally, even though people are- people that I work with are generally most folks are professionals building a significant real estate side hustle. And about 20% are what you might call professional real estate investors. But in general, even those folks who are happy in their careers and trying to build a nice real estate portfolio on the side, you know, they've all they all say things like, you know what, I just like to have the option to leave corporate America if I wanted to. Right. That doesn't mean they have the intention to do that. It just means they're trying to build financial independence for themselves and for their family. Right. So they love the idea of maybe having ten or 12 doors, right, or door is a unit. Where that would give them enough to pay their living expenses. Right. If they needed to. Yeah. And then I would say the other difference is that many of them are securities investors. Right. But they really they're fee sensitive. They're not generally active managers or they like to do it themselves. Right? They like to do it themselves. So they're looking for planning help, not so much to tell them what to do with their securities portfolio, but to talk about all these other pieces in their financial life. Like how does the real estate impact the other parts of their financial plan?

Maddy Roche: [00:24:45] I love that. I-I would assume that most advisors are working with clients who have some real estate, whether it just be their primary residence or their-

Cynthia Meyer: [00:24:55] Yeah.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Maddy Roche: [00:24:56] -but how does that advice shift from the advice you're giving your clients around how to consider real estate is what you really talk about as being an asset class.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:25:07] Sure. So a couple of couple of thoughts there. One is that a lot of times I talk to people who have had conversations with other financial planners who have tried to talk them out of owning their rental properties. Now, hopefully nobody asks why would do that? But just, you know, they-they-they've had their person right at their firm for a while. And that that person keeps telling them, oh, you know, you should sell your rental property and put it in some diversified securities portfolio. And generally, for most people, they're not super happy with that. You know, you wouldn't have-you wouldn't tell somebody that owns some other kind of small business, right. That they had to sell their business and put in the stock. Right. So I would say that for-for the planner who, you know, the typical planner is going to have some people in their practice who-who own rental real estate or who want to own rental real estate. And one of the things that we've-I've been talking about with my colleague Scott Jensen, with renovated financial planning, who he and I started the the little micro community, the real estate study group within the XY Planning Network. And so we've been working on continuing education for those folks, right? And so we're rolling it out hopefully by the end of the quarter where people can get just a basic foundation in the financial planning issues that for serving somebody who owns rental or vacation property. And-and so hopefully we can do our part right to help broaden that knowledge from a financial planning perspective.

Maddy Roche: [00:26:49] Yeah, great. I was just going to ask you, what-what can advisors do for continuing education around this?

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Cynthia Meyer: [00:26:55] Mm hmm. Well, hopefully I'll have an answer that I have some some place that I can put you to very soon, because we've been working very hard on it. But in the meantime, if you're. A member of the XY Planning Network. The first thing that you can do is come to the real estate study group. We have a really robust real estate study group and we meet once a month, the fourth Tuesday from 9 to 10:30 Mountain Time. And if you're an XY member and you're listening, you can just ping me on community and we will add to group. So having that kind of kind of community within the larger community of XY, of folks who are either serving this niche or maybe they just have rental property themselves or they're real estate curious, right. And want to know more about what are the financial implications of doing that and how does this affect all the other parts of my financial life. Right. And so learning from each other. Right. That's the best thing.

Maddy Roche: [00:27:52] Totally. Totally. I want to go back to why advisors may encourage clients to sell rental properties. And I, of course, am not a financial planner. I can sense that, you know, as fiduciaries you can't say sell it so your assets go up and things like that. But is there a bias towards real estate as being an asset class that we're like working through or what what is keeping advisors from really embracing this as-as a way to develop wealth?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:28:20] Yeah. And so, you know, I'll give people that. I'll definitely give people the benefit of the doubt here. I think it's because one, it's not-it's not really in the CFP® curriculum first of all. It was, real estate was in, I have my CFA charter as well and it was in the part of the CFA curriculum, but more from an-an analysis and valuation point of view. And so I think if unless you grew up with a real estate investor background, even if you had a whole career as a financial planner, of course you have

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

clients that have rental properties, but if you're in a bigger firm, your compliance officer is probably telling you you can't talk, you can't give any guidance about them, right? So-so you've got maybe got some compliance restrictions around that if you're in a big firm and you just might not have personal experience with it, but you do have personal experience maybe with success on the securities part of the spectrum. And so you just people just do what they know.

Maddy Roche: [00:29:22] I was wondering, I worked some of my way through the CFP® curriculum and there was no mention of real estate as.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:29:29] Yeah, I mean there are some about buying your first home and some of that applies to buying your first rental property. But there's a whole element of-of like tax facts that are important to know in the real estate space. It's a much more tax focused financial planning engagement than the typical financial planning engagement.

Maddy Roche: [00:29:50] Wow. Wow. You mentioned compliance. And I know that just recently we had our compliance teammates on that real estate study group meeting.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:29:59] Oh, it was so helpful.

Maddy Roche: [00:30:00] Yeah, I love that. What compliance considerations do you have to take into consideration when you work with this niche?

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Cynthia Meyer: [00:30:07] Sure. So-so think about it from the standpoint of as a fiduciary advisor, right? So somebody that is in the XY Planning Network are thinking about joining the XY Planning Network. You have a responsibility to give guidance that is in the best interest of your clients. So first of all, making sure if you're giving that guidance right, you should know a little bit about what you're talking about and that knowing that owning a property, owning an investment property is a large, expensive, illiquid investment. Right. So making sure somebody is really well prepared before they get started or before they buy that next property. Right. Ample cash reserves for the down payment for your insurance deductibles for up to a year's rent if-if there's a vacancy. Right. The biggest risks in real estate are really, you know, when you're first getting started, right? So if you have one vacancy in your one single family home. Right, it could ruin you. Right? So you have to be super careful. You have to be prepared. But we're talking about compliance to dive away from that.

Maddy Roche: [00:31:20] No, I love it.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:31:22] The other thing is, is to disclose the risks. Right. Real estate has unique risks and it's important. So liquidity is one, but it's important to disclose the unique risk, especially to the new real estate investor who doesn't know them. And then the other thing is, is to be really clear about what you do and what you don't do. I mean, those of us who work as real estate financial planners and we're not-we're not the realtor. Right. We are not making a particular recommendation about buying a particular property in a particular location. What we are doing is giving people feedback and guidance and a process for evaluating whether the property makes financial sense in the context of that client's overall picture, big financial picture. So-so-so documenting all that, right? Making sure that you have a clear process that you've disclosed. Got to disclose where if

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

there are any conflict of interest, like-like if-if your client wants to invest in a shopping mall in which you are also invested, you have to disclose it. And then, you know, Travis Johnson, the Compliance Director who was on the call with us in our study group the other day, also really talked us through a lot of other things to think about, like from a business management point of view, like what goes in your agreement, you know, what are there different ways that you might keep records, for example? So it was it was really wonderful. And we, we decided as a group that we need to have compliance back every year before ADV season.

Maddy Roche: [00:33:03] Yes, yes. So that-that visit and your-your passion around this and your leadership around it from the network perspective has really opened some doors for us internally to talk about how do we want to support these groups that are popping up, that are focused on specific niches and then to include compliance is such a natural, easy, beautiful movement. And Travis Johnson also found it totally valuable. So that's really, really glad to have had that happen. I'm interested as you talk about risk, what is the current state and maybe this is a selfish question, but I hear a lot of people talking about are we entering into another bubble? I mean, you-you've mentioned the Bozeman real estate market, but I feel like the real estate market is poppin is how do you-how do you navigate that?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:33:51] So that's a great question. And I get this question every day from clients and prospective clients. So you are not-you are-you are-you are wise to ask it. So I think what matters the most is-is your particular numbers on a particular deal, right? So-so just like looking way, way back to the dot com bubble. I mean, I am sure that there's some it's feeling pretty bubblicious in general and traditional ratios where investors might look for a particular ratio in their financial analysis. Right.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

And we're seeing less it's harder and harder to find now. Right. So-so one of the things to put in context here, right, is we've got the shortage in the country, this big gap between people who want to buy homes and homes that are available in the starter category. Right. So the number I think there is 6.8 million households, household formations, if you will. Right. More than there are new houses to buy. So and that's not a problem that's going to resolve itself super quickly. Right. And that is a huge contributor to these inflation numbers that we've been seeing of 40% of the core CPI is driven by what's called rent and the what is assumed to be the rent of a homeowner's property. Right. So onerous rent, I think it's called. And so when there aren't enough like people are coupling up and they're having families, they want to move to a good school district and getting their first home right. And there aren't enough of those homes to buy. So they're staying in rentals. So there's more demand for the rentals, right? So prices are going up in both ends. And, you know, even with rising rates, they're still going to be that upward pressure on that. So for the real estate investor, right, the important thing is to look at their bottom line. Real estate, as we mentioned, rental property has carrying costs. You have to pay the property taxes, you have to pay the mortgage. You have to pay it when the washing machine breaks, you know, like you got to pay the utilities if nobody's in it. So it has substantial carrying costs. So the cash flow, you know, it's got ideally it's going to cover those carrying costs and it's going to give you a small, small to medium sized profit before the depreciation expense. And so it's harder to look right, like you just have to look harder and not get caught up in the idea of, well, I'm just going to buy it because it might appreciate. Right, right. Because-because they've got to have positive cash flow.

Maddy Roche: [00:36:40] Interesting. Oh, so fascinating.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Cynthia Meyer: [00:36:43] I guess I should get off my soapbox here now, but.

Maddy Roche: [00:36:46] I have like ten questions I could ask you about that stuff. But from our listeners perspective, the folks who are likely a majority we know are listening here that are thinking about launching their firm in the next 1 to 5 years. I've had a number of members get on the podcast and start with that. They'd listen to every episode of #XYPNRadio. So let's talk directly to the folks who are thinking about starting their firms. How did you go about marketing to this niche, given that it's not just this professional niche like doctors or veterinarians, how did you begin to get known in the space?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:37:24] Sure. So-so I had a little bit of an advantage in that. I have-I had been speaking to reporters on the record for many, many years. Right. So-so I've had lots of press quotes that I could link on my website, for example, which helps with SEO, search engine optimization. But I think the most important thing, whether you're looking to work with real estate investors or dentists or, you know, newly divorced moms like whatever the niche is, right? Whatever it is, is to get super, super crystal clear about who you want to serve. What is the change you hope to make for those types of clients and how you are-how you propose to make that change. And so doing the work on the front end and I'm so-I'm-I'm really evangelistic about this right is is I think that it's really important in this era to be able to, one, connect your work to your values. Right. So how do you want to be of service in the world and to differentiate yourself between other people who do something similar? Because everybody has a tribe of folks that they could work with. You know, you can only work with so many people directly as a financial planner. Right. And so you're not really in competition with anybody by yourself.

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Maddy Roche: [00:38:59] I've always heard of that. Who is it that you want to have but the language you just used, what's the change you want to make with that? That's so beautiful. What is the change you want to make with your clients?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:39:09] Yeah. So what does the change that I want to make with my clients? I want to help. I want my clients to grow their real estate portfolios so that if they ever want to step away from the workforce. Right, they have the financial means to do so. Right? So I help them have enough, have enough money, assets and income coming in that they can work optional.

Maddy Roche: [00:39:38] Oh listeners take that advice. Really, really beautiful. As you think about kind of having built your firm, what would you credit to some of your early success? I mean, it's-it's not every day that advisors say that they're serving 50 clients after three years of being in business as they launch during COVID. What-what do you really credit? I mean, you so clearly are an expert in the space. You clearly have professional background in in this arena. But what do you think really it takes to be someone who can effectively build a business like this?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:40:09] Sure. So I would say it's especially for those folks who haven't been in business for themselves before. Is again getting super clear on who you want to serve and how you want to serve them. Right. In a way that's connected to your own life story. Right. Like you have to use your life to pay it forward to-to-to help influence and coach and advise others. And so I think what-what-what happens sometimes and again, I've been a financial planner since the mid 1990s. What happens

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

sometimes is that people think, oh, I'm just going to work with folks of a certain net worth, right. And you know, that doesn't that doesn't help. Right. That doesn't help you build the business. Getting super clear on I've got these unique talents and skills in my life. I like to work with this particular kind of people. I mean, you know, what kind of person do you want to talk to every day? Because you're going to talk to ten of them a week. Right? So-so it should be people you like. Yeah. And-and figuring, spending time in the beginning, figuring that out and getting super crystal clear about it before, you know, it doesn't have to be a forever decision. Right. But it should be a for now decision. Right. So that and then your clients will eventually if you-if you go look for a certain type of client and then you start to get some right. That relationship is reciprocal, right? They what they need will eventually inform exactly how you do it and whether you need it down even further.

Maddy Roche: [00:41:56] Totally. Some of our guests cite internal referrals as being the main source for-for new clients. And we often see as advisors kind of get to that level of client numbers that they do see internal referrals come up. Are you seeing that in this niche?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:42:13] I definitely see internal referrals. You know, I have been trying to build a network of people that can also help clients who need them, like a 1031 exchange intermediary or real estate savvy, you know, CPA, investment savvy realtors in different markets where I have a lot of clients. Right. So-so, you know, networking with other professionals who serve a similar type of person is also very helpful, I think.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Maddy Roche: [00:42:45] Would you say you're happier now running this business than you have been in your former business owning life-life of yours?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:42:52] Yeah, yeah, I really am. I much. And you know, I think I told you when I was younger, I worked in politics for a while. That was my first career. And I was a political campaign manager in the Democratic Party. And I left in the mid 1990s and then became a financial planner. And, you know, I feel much, much happier doing this. Much happier doing this.

Maddy Roche: [00:43:19] How do you think being a political campaign manager has helped you become a better financial planner?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:43:25] Sure. Well, I think, one, I learned how to be really clear about message, right? To be really clear about message and to figure out sort of who I needed to talk to and who-who weren't my people, so to speak. Right. So who weren't persuadable. So certainly that that approaching it from a strategic perspective has helped inform my business life going forward. And I think it's also I missed the kind of large volunteer organization that was politics. I don't miss the nastiness of it, of political campaigns and political advertising. I don't miss that at all. I regret participating it. But-but the volunteer recruitment part I just loved and I think that, you know, in every position that I've had since then, like, I always find a way to incorporate that into what I'm doing. And so I think that's why I like our real estate study group so much, right? Like, you know, I just like getting people together to talk to each other is super fun.

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Maddy Roche: [00:44:34] Well, I'm interested. I mean, you're so motivated by that group, and it sounds and I know firsthand that you're giving so much value to that group. And what do you get back from having organized something like that?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:44:46] Well, so-so gosh, I mean, so many things, right. That the fact, you know, this started just as a conversation between two of us, right, between myself and Scott Jensen. And then we invited some people and then like 20 people showed up and then we started just, just sharing best practices with each other. We, Scott and I have launched this whole continuing education idea. We got some other planners in the group involved. And so we really trying to develop some standards around best practices for serving for for serving this particular client niche. And really try and impact and influence the profession, right? So-so that we can kind of pay it forward a little bit beyond just our own individual businesses.

Maddy Roche: [00:45:33] Beautiful. What a great, great thoughts around how giving back actually returns so much more tenfold to us. So good on you.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:45:43] There are so many. I mean, I've met so many awesome inspirational planners in the XY Planning Network and I know I sound like a walking commercial for you guys, right? So your biggest fangirl. But you know, I've been a financial planner for a really long time and I have all these credentials and I still learn something from somebody every single day. I learned I have the mastermind that your colleague Kassy set me up with. Right? I learn something from them every week on the Facebook page, and there's always something that somebody says, I'm like, Oh, gosh, I never thought about it that way. That's really interesting.

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

You know, like, like people are really great about sharing their knowledge in a collaborative way. And so it's-it's-it's a nice, when you start a business, it can be really lonely. You feel like you're the only one. And to be able to go in XY community page or go on the Facebook group and just say, Hey, I got this, I'm chewing on this. I'm not sure really what I should do about it. What does the hive mind think in getting all this? These different answers is so helpful. Knowing that all these other people have gone through it at the same time can really help, you know, in the beginning it can really, really help. Oh, I love that so much, Cynthia. So much.

Maddy Roche: [00:47:02] What's the future of Real Life Planning?

Cynthia Meyer: [00:47:07] So the near future or the far future?

Maddy Roche: [00:47:11] Let's start with short and then long future.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:47:14] So in the short future, you know, I'm kind of reaching to the point where I'm making some scaling decisions. Right. And I already worked with a virtual assistant, but I'm just, you know, I'm just percolating on making my first hire. So-so kind of at that point. In the long run, if I had to guess, like if we were talking five years from now, I would say probably what we have is, is some kind of larger boutique firm or maybe a network of individual firms who have come together to share services. So we can-we can-we can leverage the sort of team approach, right, where, you know, you have different specialties and different things. And and, you know, I had a really nice high performance team when I was back in on the-the-the Merrill Lynch side many years ago. And, you know, there's having a team is really great for clients, right? So in the long run

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

that's my goal is to have a team or teams within the firm, right. Who service teams who are helping clients with multiple things.

Maddy Roche: [00:48:26] Beautiful. I can see it. That's exciting.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:48:29] Yeah. Yeah. And then I hope to roll out lots of courses, right. Content and courses in the long run. You know, as we get to the point where we're more about we're-we're not growing, we're-we're not spending most of our time with new clients, but we're spending more time with existing clients. You know, I'm looking to expand the ways that we can educate and serve them.

Maddy Roche: [00:48:54] Cynthia, this industry is so lucky to have you and XY is so lucky to have you as a representative. And I feel so lucky to have talked with you today about this.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:49:03] I'm just so lucky that you had me on.

Maddy Roche: [00:49:05] Of course, you just exude passion and competence, and you're-you're what every advisor should strive to be. So, Cynthia, congratulations on what you've built and the impact you're having all around you, whether you hear it or not. I know that you have impacted our community so much. So thank you very much. And listeners, take Cynthia up on her offer and check out our website and look at some of the things she's building. And if you join XY, take her up on that offer to join our incredible real estate study group. Any final words of wisdom, Cynthia, to-to the ears of the future advisors?

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Cynthia Meyer: [00:49:40] So you are what you focus on, right? So when-when you are when you are thinking about whether or not you want to go out on your own, focusing on preparation. Right. Getting really clear about who you want to serve and what is the change you want to happen for them. And when you're on your own, focusing on just the daily actions you have to take to start building your pipeline. Right. And the other stuff will take care of itself eventually.

Maddy Roche: [00:50:13] Really good advice. Cynthia, thank you so much for being on #XYPNRadio.

Cynthia Meyer: [00:50:18] Thanks for having me, Maddy.

Maddy Roche: [00:50:20] A firm isn't a firm without clients—as the Chief Marketing Officer of your RIA, the most important job you have is guiding prospects through your marketing funnel and converting them to clients. If your funnel has leak, you could be spinning your wheels and missing opportunities. Mapping your funnel is the first step towards developing an effective marketing strategy and a valuable tool for evaluating the health of an existing one. Download our free template and map your funnel at XYPlanningNetwork.com/funnel.

Maddy Roche: [00:50:52] Be sure to join our VIP community at XYPlanningNetwork.com/VIP to hang out with other #XYPNRadio listeners, ask questions for future mailbag episodes, and finally to find a community of like-minded financial advisors. Thank you so much for joining me today. We'll see you next time.

[XYPN Radio](#) with Maddy Roche

Ep #333: Finding Success Serving the Real Estate Investor Niche: A Conversation with Cynthia Meyer

<http://www.xyplanningnetwork.com/333>

Narrator: [00:51:09] You are not alone and you are not crazy. It's scary starting, building, and growing your own financial planning firm, and that's why we put together a free private community just for you, the cutting edge financial planner. Go to XYPlanningNetwork.com/VIP or text #XYPNRadio to 33344 and join a network of thousands ready to change the lives of Gen X and Gen Y clients.