

Golub Group

“The direct access to more than 100 Morningstar analysts we receive through Morningstar’s Equity Research Services is an enormous asset for us.”

Michael Golub, Founder and CEO, San Mateo, California

Independent growth

Golub Group was founded in December 2003 as an independent registered investment advisory firm. We specialize in portfolio management for high-net-worth individuals, as well as in professional and corporate retirement plans.

Being independent has allowed us to spread our wings, and the firm has really blossomed over the past four-and-a-half years. We were recently singled out as one of the fastest-growing U.S. money managers, with assets in excess of \$500 million. It has truly been a dream come true.

Deep industry knowledge

At the height of the credit crisis and meltdown in the financial sector, we saw opportunities for our clients and wanted to speak to analysts who followed that sector closely. We’re all generalists at the firm and we wanted to gain deeper industry- and company-specific knowledge. The problem with most Wall Street research is that it comes with a bit of an agenda. So we were looking for someone with an independent approach who also had the kind of domain expertise to help us make good decisions for our clients.

Research without an agenda

We called Morningstar because I’ve known about the company for many, many years. I have always been impressed with the breadth, quality, and value of Morningstar’s offerings, as well as its reputation.

Morningstar’s integrity, its lack of conflict of interest, is terribly important to us—it is the basis of our discipline. Morningstar equity research is truly objective, without an agenda. The emphasis Morningstar places on intrinsic values, economic moats, and management stewardship is aligned with Golub Group’s own approach to the valuation of businesses.

Straight from the source

Part of our due diligence in bringing ideas to our investment committee is talking with outside analysts. The direct access to more than 100 Morningstar analysts we receive through Morningstar’s Equity Research Services is an enormous asset for us. We find the analysts bright, responsive, and eager to help us build perspectives on industries and companies.

At Golub Group, we combine personal service with performance that, audited over several years, has been superior to that of the S&P 500—all for less than the cost of most no-load mutual funds. Our clients have direct access to the decision-makers doing the actual investment research and analysis as opposed to being one or two steps removed. That is where the value of Morningstar® Equity Research Services really comes through.

A powerful statement

Working with Morningstar makes a powerful statement to our clients and prospects about the quality and performance of our firm. When we discuss our research methods with prospective clients and talk about our

relationship—frankly, that’s the part where our prospects light up because they understand the value Morningstar brings. It’s an organization that is valued and trusted. By extension, that helps build trust in us.

We feel we have an institutional-grade research organization and Morningstar is certainly a key component of that. As we go into the marketplace to attract more sophisticated and institutional investors, Morningstar brings credibility to our process because of its widespread reputation.

Shared values

Working with Morningstar is extremely comfortable because we’ve found kindred spirits in terms of values and philosophy. We both have an overriding desire to delight our customers with a service of uncommon value.

We think in terms of long-term relationships—in investing, with organizations, and with human beings. We are really excited about benefiting from our connection with Morningstar—and all of its talent—as it grows for many years in the future.

Michael Golub (left) stands with portfolio managers Colin Higgins (far right) and Kurt Hoefer at a beach in Half Moon Bay, west of Golub Group’s central branch.

To learn more about Morningstar Equity Research Services, visit: global.morningstar.com/EquityResearch



Aequitas Wealth Management, LLC

Office Edition fits ideally into our sales process and ongoing operations. We can meet with a prospective client and come back looking like an all-star.

Joseph Alexopoulos, Co-Founder and Principal, Los Angeles, California

Fair, impartial, and honest

Aequitas opened in 2005 with the intent to provide investors with greater transparency and education about the investments we were recommending—and especially to eliminate the conflict of interest between client needs and how advisors are compensated. We serve families of entrepreneurs and executives, as well as small nonprofits and pension plans.

Aequitas is a Latin term for “fair, impartial, and honest.” It rings true with our mission to be the “good guys,” if you will. We think we differentiate ourselves in four ways: we are independent, we are fee-only, we provide lifetime personal financial planning, and we do not subcontract portfolio or investment management.

Intelligent presentations

When we started this business, we started with our good intentions. Eventually, we needed to make better, more effective sales presentations to our prospects. We wanted software that could clearly show prospective clients how they were invested today versus how we were suggesting they be invested tomorrow. So we needed, in an intelligent and simple manner, to highlight the benefits of our recommendations so they could be appreciated by novice and more sophisticated investors alike.

When we had the wherewithal to start buying software, we looked at a number of companies and services, and learned about Morningstar® Advisor Workstation™ Office Edition from looking at Morningstar’s Web site.

A pedestal of integrity

I’ve known Morningstar since its beginnings. It represents to me a high degree of integrity, competency, and responsiveness. Because I have known Morningstar for so long and Morningstar has always been such an ethical company, I put it up on a pedestal of integrity. There’s also, of course, its wide breadth of data and information resources. And Morningstar operates in a fashion like we do. Its business is independent and genuinely unbiased.

At the end of the day, honestly, Office Edition is vastly superior in its user-friendliness, making it easy to understand how a client is actually invested compared to our recommended portfolios. We can quickly take a client’s brokerage statement, load it up in Office Edition, and *voilà*—it highlights the benefits of what we’re suggesting over what the client has right now. There’s nothing out there that does this as well as Office Edition.

Polished communication

Office Edition fits ideally into our sales process and ongoing operations. We can meet with a prospective client and come back looking like an all-star. We can summarize

the highlights of the meeting and then Office Edition fills in the information that helps us illustrate what we’re talking about.

It’s a competitive advantage to be able to assimilate investment holdings quickly into a complete aggregate and see what our prospective clients own, what they are earning, and what they are paying in fees.

Time and money saved

Office Edition really fills in that void for us when a client calls and says, “How am I doing, year to date?” Most brokers will say they have to get back to you, but when our clients call—*boom*—performance reporting is at our fingertips, however and whenever we and our clients want it.

As time goes on, we’re learning to use Office Edition better and faster. We plan to explore the possibility of using it for its billing capacity and its client relationship management or CRM features. That will literally save us time and money—time on our billing, and money because we won’t need separate CRM software.

Joseph Alexopoulos and co-founder Sarah Lewis stand down the street from their office near The Tower-Beverly Hills hotel, a hot spot for Hollywood insiders since the 1960s.

To learn more about Morningstar Advisor Workstation Office Edition, visit: global.morningstar.com/Office



Fortis

When style analysis in Morningstar Direct tells a completely different story, then that gives us something to talk about with a fund manager.

Dirk-Jan Schuiten, Head of Multi-Manager Solutions, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Best brains in the business

I am head of Multi-Manager Solutions for Fortis, responsible for manager selection within private banking globally. My group creates a recommended list of funds, encompassing all asset classes, regions, and styles, which are used in discretionary and advisory portfolios.

We provide financial advice, wealth structuring, and investment services primarily to high-net-worth individuals. We have a team here in Amsterdam responsible for global private banking, and we also have specialists internationally.

Our philosophy is to use quantitative research on funds. The pure open architecture approach is really rooted in our organization. Whether a good fund manager is external or internal to Fortis, it doesn't matter. We call it the "best brains in the business" concept. We are able to tell our clients that we go out and search for the best, highest-quality funds and managers available. Many places claim to integrate third-party products and open architecture, but then you see a lot of in-house products being sold. It's one of our competitive ambitions that this not be the case at Fortis.

Funds past and present

In our work selecting external fund managers, we have recently been expanding our use of Morningstar Direct.SM We considered other quantitative research providers,

but an important part of why we chose Morningstar Direct had to do with its style analysis. It has both returns- and holdings-based analysis, which we find very useful. It really strengthens our external fund manager selection process. It enables us to assess not only how a fund is positioned today, but also how it was positioned in the past.

Getting a good understanding of a fund's positioning is useful in testing what a fund manager is telling us. We can, essentially, do a "check-off" against what we are hearing from the manager. When style analysis in Morningstar Direct tells a completely different story, then that gives us something to talk about with a fund manager.

My team also finds Morningstar Direct extremely useful for the daily monitoring of funds. We don't stop with just selecting a fund and putting it on a list; we're continually monitoring the fund and comparing it to its style peers.

Access to a universe of data

We also took a look at the amount of data available in Morningstar Direct, which encompasses quite a big investment universe, and that was highly attractive. We considered the timeliness of the information and how trustworthy the numbers would be. Another advantage over the competition is Morningstar Direct's ability to generate specific reports on funds—others can do this, but not as attractively.

One-stop shopping

The nice thing about Morningstar Direct is that it incorporates a lot of features you wouldn't find in other products, so we don't have to work with several providers to get what we need. In my experience, there are not a lot of providers who can offer returns-based style analysis along with complete holdings data. With Morningstar Direct, it is one-stop shopping.

A proactive relationship

Working with the people at Morningstar has been very pleasant. They've been proactive from both a sales and a maintenance point of view. They've been flexible with us, specifically tailoring training sessions for our people. It's been a very positive experience.

We recently acquired ABN AMRO and that makes us the third largest private bank in Europe and sixth or seventh worldwide, and we aim to grow in regions like Asia. I expect our relationship with Morningstar to expand given the bigger size of our organization and the importance to us of using third-party managers.

Dirk-Jan Schuiten sits at a café in Amsterdam across from the Bloemenmarkt, the world's only floating flower market.

To learn more about Morningstar Direct, visit: global.morningstar.com/Direct

