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CRM Setup Checklist

Use this checklist when setting up or auditing your CRM. Note that all CRMs may not have all of these available features or options. Work through each section, in order, to ensure a thoughtful and well-designed configuration.

SECTION 1 — USER & SECURITY SETTINGS

⚠ INTEGRATION CREDENTIAL WARNING

When setting up integrations, NEVER use an employee's personal login credentials as the connecting account, unless the integration requires individual credentialing for each seat. Remember that if an employee leaves the firm, their credentials will be deactivated — and your integrations will silently break. Always use the firm owner's credentials or a dedicated service account (e.g., integrations@yourfirm.com) that is controlled by the firm and will never be decommissioned due to staff turnover.

- ☐ Create and assign user accounts for all team members
  Include name, title, email, and access role.
- ☐ Set up user permission levels / roles (Admin, Full Access, Read-Only)
- ☐ Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) for all users
  Critical for cybersecurity compliance. Require 2FA as a firm-wide policy.
- ☐ Review and configure session timeout settings
  Recommend 15–30 minute auto-logout for security.
- ☐ Establish a password policy (length, complexity, rotation)
- ☐ Review audit log / activity log settings
  Ensure you can track who accessed or changed client records.
- ☐ Restrict access to sensitive fields (e.g., SSN, DOB) by user role
- ☐ Configure IP whitelisting if available [WB]
  Limits access to approved office/VPN IP addresses.
- ☐ Complete data processing agreements if required by state law

SECTION 2 — CREATE A TEST RECORD

- ☐ Create a test contact (e.g., "Test Client" or "Jane Sample")
  Use a clearly fake name so it is never confused with a real client.
- ☐ Create a test household and link the test contact to it
- ☐ Add placeholder data: DOB, address, phone, email, fake SSN pattern (e.g., 000-00-0001)
  Allows testing of field visibility, masking, and permission rules. Use a personal email for testing outside of your workplace domain.
- ☐ Assign the test record to a test category and status
  Verify that category assignment triggers the correct behavior.
- ☐ Tag the test record and confirm tags appear and filter correctly
- ☐ Run each workflow against the test record before deploying to real clients
  Catch broken steps, missing assignees, or misfired triggers before they affect clients.
- ☐ Document any issues found during test record validation and resolve before go-live

SECTION 3 — CLIENT CATEGORIES & STATUSES

- ☐ Define and create client categories (A/B/C tiers, Prospect, COI, etc.)
  Categories drive segmentation, reporting, and service model assignment.
- ☐ Define and create client statuses (Active, Inactive, Prospect, Former)
- ☐ Map categories to service models or meeting cadence schedules
- ☐ Review default category assigned to new contacts
  Ensure new contacts aren't auto-assigned to an incorrect category.
- ☐ Document category and status definitions for staff reference

SECTION 4 — TAGS

> **SHORT TAGS VS. DESCRIPTIVE NAMES**
> *Both Redtail and Wealthbox let you set only the tag name — there is no built-in description field visible in the tag itself. Use short, consistent abbreviations (e.g., SVC-COMP, EVT-RET5) that work cleanly in automation rules and integrations. Maintain a separate Tag Dictionary that defines each tag's meaning, whether it is permanent or temporary, and any automations that utilize it as a trigger or filter. Note that not all of these tags are necessary when starting, unless they fit your service model.*

- ☐ Design a tag taxonomy and naming convention before creating any tags
  Decide on categories (SVC-, EVT-, MKT-, AUTO-, TMP-) and document them first.
- ☐ Create a Tag Dictionary that lists every tag, its meaning, its category, and whether it is permanent or temporary
  Store this in a shared document or your CRM's notes. Update it every time a tag is added or retired.
- ☐ Create service model tags using short, consistent abbreviations
  e.g., "SVC-COMP" (Comprehensive Planning), "SVC-INV" (Investment-Only), "SVC-HLY" (Hourly).
- ☐ Create life event / planning need tags
  e.g., "EVT-RET5" (Retiring within 5 yrs), "EVT-COL" (College Planning), "EVT-EST" (Estate Review Needed).
- ☐ Create marketing and segmentation tags
  e.g., "MKT-NL" (Newsletter), "MKT-EVT" (Event Invites), "MKT-REF" (Referral Source).
- ☐ Create permanent workflow and process tags
  e.g., "WF-ANNREV" (Annual Review), "WF-TAX" (Tax Return Requested), "WF-ONB" (Onboarding Active).
- ☐ Create temporary automation tags (prefixed TMP- or AUTO-)
  Used by other applications to manage automations. Tag should be removed automatically when the automation step is completed.
- ☐ Remove or archive all unused system-default tags before going live
- ☐ Train staff on the tag naming convention and the Tag Dictionary
  Untrained staff adding ad-hoc tags will undermine your taxonomy over time.

SECTION 5 — USER-DEFINED FIELDS (UDFS)

- ☐ Identify data fields not natively in CRM that your firm tracks
  Examples: Medicare enrollment date, RMD amount, advisor generation, referral source detail.
- ☐ Create UDFs for each custom data point
  Use consistent naming conventions. Avoid duplicating fields that already exist natively.
- ☐ Assign UDFs to the appropriate record type (Contact, Household, Account)
- ☐ Set UDF field types appropriately (date, text, dropdown, currency)
- ☐ Make critical UDFs required fields where applicable
  Reduces incomplete data entry.

- [ ] Create a UDF data dictionary for staff training

SECTION 6 — MEETING TYPES & ACTIVITIES

- [ ] Define meeting types for your firm (Annual Review, Intro/Discovery, Planning, Ad Hoc)
- [ ] Create meeting type templates with default duration and location
- [ ] Set up activity types (Call, Email, To-Do, Meeting, Document Request)
- [ ] Create note categories (Meeting Summary, Phone Call, Internal, Compliance)
- [ ] Configure email logging preferences for auto-logging client emails

SECTION 7 — TASKS & WORKFLOWS

- [ ] Map out all repeatable firm processes before building workflows
  Common: onboarding, annual review, tax return review, offboarding, RMD processing.
- [ ] Build onboarding workflow
  New client onboarding: paperwork, account opening, planning intake, first meeting.
- [ ] Build annual review workflow
  Pre-meeting prep, meeting execution, post-meeting follow-up, documentation.
- [ ] Build tax return review workflow
  See Coellaborate Tax Return Review SOP for step-by-step guidance.
- [ ] Build offboarding workflow
  See Coellaborate Client Offboarding Workflow for step-by-step guidance.
- [ ] Build RMD processing workflow (if applicable)
  Annual RMD calculation, client communication, distribution setup.
- [ ] Assign workflow owners / responsible team members to each workflow
- [ ] Test each workflow end-to-end using the test record
  Confirm every task, trigger, and assignee fires correctly before applying to real clients.

SECTION 8 — INTEGRATIONS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO INTEGRATE EVERYTHING

Not every integration listed below will be relevant or beneficial for your firm. More integrations mean more complexity and more maintenance overhead. Before connecting a tool, ask: Does this reduce manual data entry? Does it improve data accuracy? It is perfectly reasonable to leave some tools disconnected and handle the data bridge manually — especially for low-frequency workflows. ***Integrate intentionally, not exhaustively.***

- [ ] Connect custodian data feed (e.g., Schwab, Fidelity, Pershing)
- [ ] Set up portfolio reporting integration (e.g., Orion, Black Diamond, Tamarac, Riskalyze)
- [ ] Connect financial planning software (e.g., eMoney, MoneyGuidePro, RightCapital)
- [ ] Connect billing software (e.g., AdvicePay, Orion Billing, Black Diamond Billing, Stripe)
  Confirm whether billing pulls client data from CRM or requires separate maintenance.
- [ ] Connect document management system (e.g., Box, ShareFile, SharePoint, SmartVault, Bracket)
- [ ] Set up email integration (Gmail, Outlook)
  Enables email logging to client records.
- [ ] Connect e-signature platform (e.g., DocuSign, Adobe Sign)

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- ☐ Set up calendar integration (Google Calendar, Outlook)
  Syncs meetings to and from CRM.
- ☐ Connect compliance/archiving tool if applicable (e.g., Smarsh, Global Relay, XY Archive)
- ☐ Connect Holistiplan for tax planning integration
  Redtail has a native Holistiplan integration; Wealthbox users typically open Holistiplan separately.
- ☐ Connect Zapier, Hubly, or other automation platform
  Use a dedicated service account for the API connection — not a personal employee login.
- ☐ Test all active integrations and confirm sync direction (one-way vs. bidirectional)
- ☐ Document all integration credentials, API keys, and sync settings in a secure location
  A password manager or secure operations document. Include who manages each credential.

SECTION 9 — DATA QUALITY & HYGIENE

- ☐ Import existing client data via CSV or migration tool
  Validate field mapping before final import. Do a test import with 5–10 records first.
- ☐ Remove or merge duplicate contact records
  Search by last name, email, and phone to find duplicates. Merge rather than delete to preserve relationship history.
- ☐ Verify that all households are linked correctly
- ☐ Confirm beneficiary and relationship data is complete
- ☐ Add preferred names / nicknames for clients who do not go by their legal name
  e.g., "William" prefers "Bill", "Margaret" goes by "Peg". Most CRMs have a Preferred Name or Nickname field. Using the correct name in all correspondence signals real attentiveness to clients.
- ☐ Verify phone numbers are formatted consistently and flagged by type (mobile, home, work)
- ☐ Confirm all email addresses are current and permission to email is documented
- ☐ Set up a data quality review cadence (quarterly or semi-annual)
- ☐ Train all staff on data entry standards and naming conventions before going live

Want this built out in your actual systems?

This document gives you a powerful starting point. But if you'd rather have someone configure all of this directly in your CRM, automate your workflows, and customize everything to your firm — that's exactly what Coellaborate does. Reach out and let's build something that works for you.

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Let's Coellaborate →

Contact us to create effective, custom solutions for your firm.