

Rocket to Revenue

CPA.com and Jirav Firm Success Story

With Jirav, Compass East doubled new client engagement fees – and serves up more insight to more clients

Compass East is an early pioneer in Client Advisory Services (CAS), bridging the gap between finance and accounting for clients looking for actionable financial reporting and insights. Today it utilizes Jirav's financial planning and analysis tools to deliver these capabilities. The firm has been able to double its new client engagement fees, and credits Jirav as a key enabler in achieving this milestone.

John Nevel, CEO, started the firm in 2011 with cofounder and President, Dan McCarthy. *"We both came from an audit background,"* says Nevel. *"But both of us always knew we wanted to be involved in the forward-looking aspects of our clients' businesses. We wanted accounting to be useful in decision making and creating plans for the future. Many clients would be working with firms that only focused on bookkeeping and accounting, and they'd say, 'I'm still not getting proactive ideas and insights into where we can take our business.' That's exactly the need we wanted to address with our firm."*

Nevel and McCarthy recognized from the outset that they would have to build a different type of firm to deliver on their vision for clients – starting with cloud-based solutions. *"Early on, clients were saying they wanted dashboards and forecasts, but they were still running desktop solutions,"* says Nevel. *"We liked to say they were asking for the moon but could only catch a cab to the shuttle launch. Their data was a problem – it wasn't reliable or accessible enough to support those types of capabilities. Our most important first task was to get the data to a good place to enable insight."* While at first the Compass East team relied on their own templates to manage client data, they quickly moved clients to reliable online solutions as they emerged. As a result, they were able to focus on other aspects of the client engagement rather than data management.

A flexible foundation

Today, Compass East's clients rely on a full range of cloud-based solutions for everything from expense report management to billing, payroll, and more. Regardless of which mix of solutions they have in place, the firm onboards all new clients to Jirav's financial planning and analysis tools. The firm has a standard Jirav dashboard that it rolls out immediately as a new client comes on board. *"It's customized to fit our client management strategy,"* says Nevel, *"so they essentially have a Compass East dashboard that says 'here's what your business is telling you,' drawing from their basic financial data – revenue numbers, gross profits, operating expenses, cash – these metrics help determine the health of a business."*



Compass East

Firm profile:

Virtual firm, with headquarters in Nashville, provides outsourced finance and accounting services to clients across the U.S.

Niches served: A focus on mid-sized, growth-oriented companies with \$2-20 million in revenue, working cross industry in technology, healthcare and professional services.

Locations: Virtual

Staff: 25+

Years working with Jirav:
4 years

From there, Compass East can customize Jirav to meet individual client needs and environments, building on the standard dashboard. *"It's just a lot easier to customize Jirav compared to other tools,"* says Nevel. *"With others, it's 'here's this packaged thing we do, and you have to work within that.' With Jirav you have a lot more freedom to modify it to fit the needs of both the firm and your clients. It's a blank slate, and you can build any metric you want in Jirav."*

From sale to scale

Compass East even uses Jirav in its sales process, showing prospective clients dashboards populated with their own data. *"Once they sign on with us, the transition is pretty seamless,"* says Nevel. *"Because it's all they've known from the beginning of our relationship – we build it into the sales and discovery processes. They expect it."* Jirav is a source of competitive differentiation for Compass East, which is competing against other outsourced firms as well as clients' in-house capabilities. *"It's difficult to explain to clients that the way we code a bill is better than the way someone else does it,"* says Nevel. *"But with Jirav, we can attach a tangible result to the FP&A types of services and capabilities."*

As Compass East's client roster has grown, Jirav plays an important role in enabling a high level of service delivery at scale, even in areas that have been unscalable in the past, like projection models. *"Before Jirav, I had built a complex financial model for a client – it took a half hour to update every morning, I couldn't do anything else while it loaded, and I was the only one who could update or use the model,"* says Nevel. *"With Jirav, anybody can access and update models, without worrying about it breaking. And we can do the same for any number of other clients."*

Jirav has helped Compass East accountants gain the confidence they need to serve as business advisors to clients. They have the data and reporting they need to drive important client conversations in real time, without worrying that the data may be stale or untrustworthy. With Jirav, Compass East's accountants are able to move quickly to the relevant dashboard or forecast as client conversations shift course, helping them tell the financial story that matches their client's business story. *"Jirav helps our people put their knowledge into practice,"* says Nevel. *"The knowledge our people get from CPE courses and training is great, but it's even more powerful when you put it to work in a tool like Jirav. It keeps our team constantly growing and advancing – in that way, it really functions as a practical training and development tool."*

Delivering deeper insights into clients' businesses has had a tangible impact on Compass East's business. *"We have a lot of tools in our toolbox, of course,"* says Nevel. *"But since we've started working with Jirav, we've doubled our average new client fee. By focusing on the full package of financial planning and advisory services, we've been able to level up the value with each client."*

"Since we've started working with Jirav, we've doubled our average new client fee. By focusing on the full package of financial planning and advisory services, we've been able to level up the value with each client."



John Nevel
CPA, Cofounder, Chief Executive Officer



Dan McCarthy
Cofounder, President