

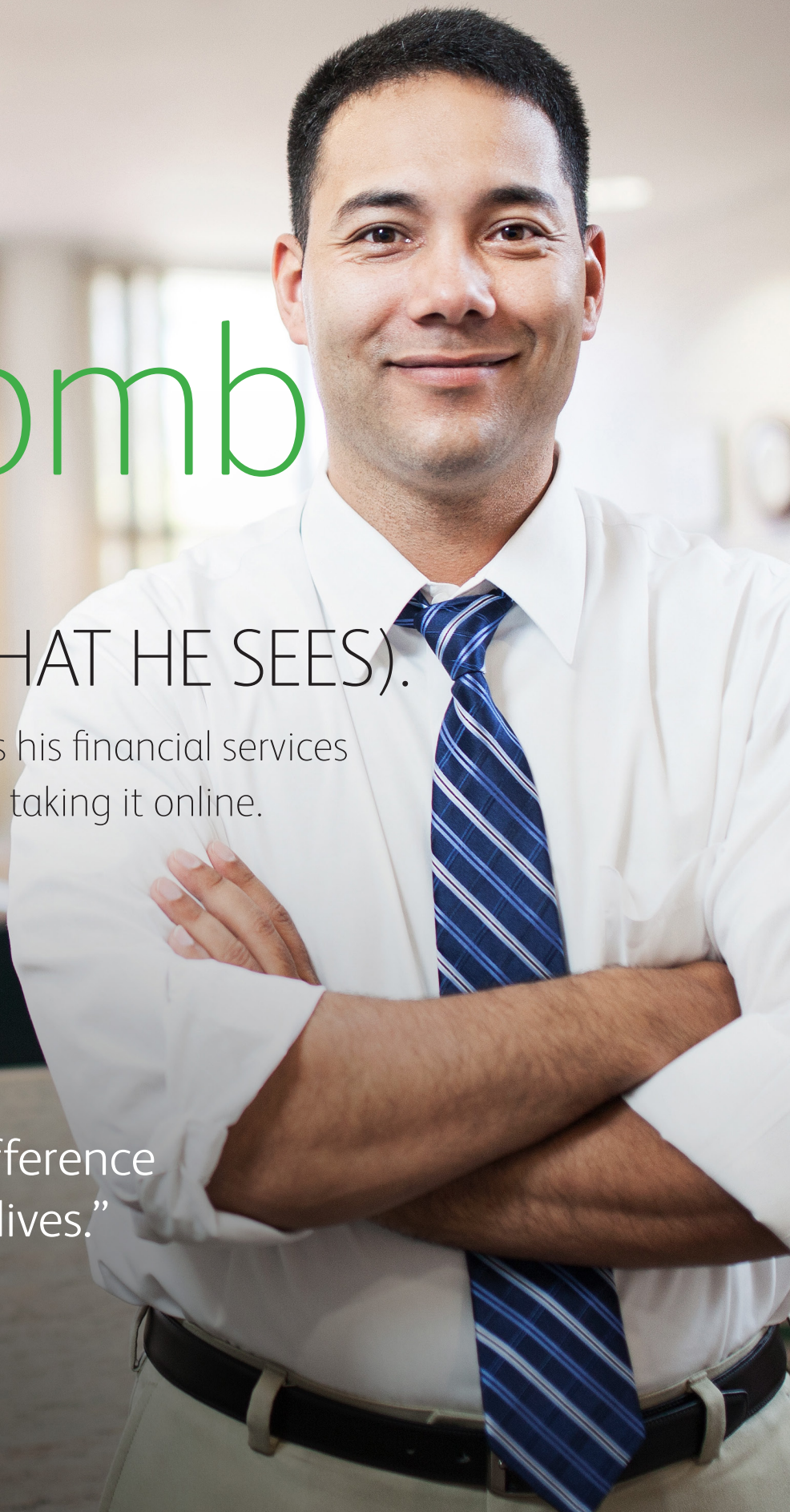
# Jesse Lipscomb

LOOKS AHEAD  
(AND LIKES WHAT HE SEES).

A Certified ProAdvisor takes his financial services business to the future—by taking it online.

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“I make a difference  
in people’s lives.”



Jesse consults with client  
**Ryan Ahearn, Real Estate Agent, Keller Williams Realty**  
and **President, Ahearn Enterprises Inc.**  
San Diego, CA



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## Meet Jesse.

Ever hear the one about the soldier who became a licensed investment advisor? We thought that sounded unusual, too—until we talked to Jesse. After an injury forced the West Point grad to abandon his military career, he had to rethink his plans. At first, he felt daunted. “I was like, oh my God, what am I going to do with my life?” he recalls, laughing at the memory. But his training as an army officer helped him sharpen his ability to think ahead and stay organized. All he had to do, he figured, was look for a career that would leverage those qualities. It wasn’t long before he found one. “Financial planning helps me utilize my skillsets,” he says. “I make a difference in people’s lives.”

This desire to make a difference is what drove Jesse to start his own business. He began with a focus on helping people plan for retirement, which evolved over the past five years into a niche of tax-return-based financial planning. “I look at their tax return and then I help them strategize how to lower their taxes and keep more of their money,” he explains. “Yesterday I sat down with a client and we went over his tax return... If he keeps doing what he’s doing, he’s going to keep paying. [I showed him] just a couple of small changes. He’s not only going to be able to pay substantially less money in taxes, but also develop a nest egg for himself.”

This advisory role is Jesse’s bread and butter. He thrives in it. “I’m not an employee of my clients,” he says. “Our interactions are always consultative.” To further enrich those interactions, Jesse recently added bookkeeping to his portfolio of services. But, just like his career path, he didn’t go about it in a conventional way.

The thing is, Jesse is neither a bookkeeper nor an accountant. That might stop most people from hanging out a bookkeeping shingle, but not this eager entrepreneur. “Our approach is so different,” he explains. “We have a team in India that reconciles our information. We have cloud servers that keep all of that data secure. When the India team is working, I’m sleeping. When I get up in the morning, I have deliverables ready to go.”

Let’s take a second to recap. You’ve got your army officer who became a self-employed investment advisor, who became a tax-return-based financial planner, who expanded to offer bookkeeping services via a team he employs halfway around the world. How did he do it?

For Jesse, the answer is two-fold. “Technology and efficiency,” he says. His entire business—his entire *career*—is based on the pursuit of the most productive, tech-savvy ways to overcome everyday business challenges and deliver value.

And that, in a nutshell, is why Jesse conducts his business online.

# Jesse's approach to working online.

Because he began his career relatively recently, Jesse was able to leverage the latest in cloud technology right out of the gate. For him, there were no barriers. There was no transition from desktop to online. He was online from the start, and loving it. "I didn't have any hesitation or reservation," he says. "By utilizing [software] like Dropbox or FileThis, we're able to grab [statements] right from our clients' desktops... Leveraging technology helps us be efficient... Everything we're doing makes sense to me."

Where did he learn to embrace technology so fully? Part of it is instinct, and part of it came from his exposure to new ways of doing business. Jesse meets regularly with the Bookkeepers Meetup Group of San Diego. He also attends conferences when he can, and credits one in particular, organized by Intuit,<sup>®</sup> with giving him a major infusion of excitement about working online. "*Freedom in the Cloud* was absolutely an eye-opener for me and my business," he says. He learned how other people were taking advantage of solutions like QuickBooks<sup>®</sup> Online and QuickBooks Online Accountant—and how he could, too.

Also, importantly, he learned that some people were reluctant to embrace online technology. "I felt resistance to QuickBooks Online," he says, remembering conversations he had while attending Intuit's *Freedom in the Cloud* conference. He began to see this resistance as a cautionary tale, which made him more determined than ever to harness the potential of working online. The more research he did, the more he saw how making that shift could give him more control of his business—and how it could help his practice thrive in a shifting business world.

This urge to prepare for a shifting future comes naturally to someone who, after all, has built a business around planning for people's future—namely, their retirement. So it makes sense that Jesse would apply the lessons he learned at *Freedom in the Cloud* to his day-to-day work, helping him keep his client list satisfied—and his business growing. "I've got a couple of hundred financial planning clients," he says



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of his core business. And what about the newest branch of his practice? By leveraging online solutions, he's seeing it thrive, too. "Our bookkeeping business [is getting] very good, very quickly."

## How working online helps Jesse's business.

We know that working online gave Jesse the advantage of outsourcing his bookkeeping tasks. But what are the other, more tangible benefits of online? "Wow, there are so many!" exclaims Jesse when we ask him. It's clear right away that he loves working online not just because it appeals to his appetite for harnessing the latest tech trends, but because it delivers real advantages to him and to his clients.

Security is a big factor. Jesse's heard from others in the financial sector who wonder if their clients' data will be secure in the cloud—and he has something he would like to ask them. "If you had a choice between being able to keep all of your documents secure online, or in a filing cabinet, what would you rather do?" For him, the answer is clear. "I'd rather have an easily searchable, portable web, right there online, on a secure server," he says. "No problem."


Having instant access to all of that secure data is another major benefit for Jesse. He can remember when doing manual data input was a necessary and time-consuming part of running a business like his—and he's thrilled to see those days come to an end, thanks to today's cloud-based solutions. "Especially with QuickBooks Online," he says. "I was utterly amazed that I put in a credit card and two bank accounts and—boom—I had a P&L... I think it's great!"

This level of data automation helps Jesse grease the wheels of his day-to-day workflow—and adapt his business to suit a rapidly changing future. "If you can't get the information you need directly, via technology," he explains, "you're running an inefficient business." In Jesse's view, this efficiency will help him outpace his competitors and keep his business growing.

## Jesse's advice to his peers.

Jesse's experience at *Freedom in the Cloud* opened his eyes to the possibilities of harnessing technology for the good of his practice—and the good of his clients. Now he wants to pass along what he's learned, helping his peers thrive alongside him. And the best advice he's got? For a guy who took a winding route to reach the career he has today, his advice is surprisingly straightforward. "Embrace technology," he says. "And build efficiency into your business." Following these two principles will, according to Jesse's experience, support growth and sustainability.

What it comes down to, he says, is the same problem that all entrepreneurs face: a scarcity of time. You're trying to manage your practice. You're trying to attract new clients. You're trying to provide an outstanding experience to the clients you already have. It's a lot to juggle—but the juggling, says Jesse, can be more or less effective, depending on the choices you make about how to take advantage of online solutions.

"Where do you want to spend your time?" he asks. "Do you want to spend your time growing your business, working on your business, getting the clients? Or do you want to waste time inside your business, doing functions that technology could do for you, faster and easier?" 



"Embrace technology and build efficiency into your business."