Two months after its launch, our APViewpoint service has quickly expanded. The secure discussion forum now has 1,200 members and 80 online conversations on a wide range of topics of interest to the advisory profession. APViewpoint is an online study group where investment advisors, registered reps and financial planners can learn from each other by discussing topics of their choosing.

APViewpoint now has 42 thought leaders who have signed up to start and participate in the dialogue. In the past month, we welcomed the additions of Marilyn Capelli Dimitroff, Keith Jurow, Dan Moisand, Bob Seawright and Bill Winterberg.

Of the 80 conversations that have been started, 10 have generated 10 or more comments with a diverse range of ideas and opinions. James Shambo’s “Why I disagree with the conclusions of the Kitces-Pfau research papers” has generated the most comments (27) and was the first conversation to receive 1,000 views. This conversation presents a wide range of perspectives on the impact of immediate annuities on retirement sustainability. It includes Michael Kitces and Wade Pfau’s response to Shambo’s disagreements as well as dialogue from Harold Evensky, Michael Edesess and other non-thought leader members.

Evensky commented, “I just want to thank both Michael and Jim [Shambo] for one of the most interesting, thoughtful and exciting investment discussions I’ve had the privilege of reading in many years.”

More recently, the conversation from Daniel Solin’s The Sad State of Happiness fueled a wide range of suggestions on how to help clients. Similarly, the conversation from Robert Huebscher’s A Test for Small-Cap and Value Stock Investors generated a dialogue with enlightening viewpoints from 11 different members and pitted advisors aligned with the approach that favors small-capitalization and value stocks against those who don’t.

While attending the Morningstar Investment Conference in June, I shot a video for APViewpoint, working with Chris Allen of Investius. In the video, three of our thought leaders, David Blanchett, Michael Kitces, and John Rekenthaler, discuss why they chose to be thought leaders on APViewpoint, the conversations they have been involved in and the benefits to advisors in joining APViewpoint. You can view the video here. Feel free to share the link with your colleagues.

While at the conference, I also met with David Snowball, the editor of Mutual Fund Observer. David also runs an online forum and was a very helpful resource during the design and development of
APViewpoint. He featured APViewpoint in his July issue.

In the same issue, David discusses the problems associated with listening to and making decisions based on varied intelligent opinions. This gets to the essence of what we are hoping to accomplish with APViewpoint. Conversations among thought leaders and members shed light on the myriad of complexities in the advisory profession.

David includes the following quote from the 20th-century political philosopher and classicist, Leo Strauss:

Education consists of listening to the conversation among the greatest minds. But here we are confronted with the overwhelming difficulty that this conversation does not take place without our help – that in fact we must bring about that conversation. The greatest minds utter monologues. We must transform their monologues into a dialogue, their “side by side” into a “together.”

I encourage you to continue and strengthen the dialogue by joining APViewpoint and inviting your colleagues to join.

Justin Kermond is the vice president of business development for Advisor Perspectives.