CLIENT CASE STUDY

MARKETING & BUSINESS ADVISORY

CF LIEU ADVISORY · INDEPENDENT WEALTH ADVISORY, MALAYSIA

Seeing the Business Clearly

How an independent financial advisor turned three connected engagements — paid media, content, and a rebuilt data backbone — into a business he can finally see clearly enough to scale on his own terms.

ENGAGEMENT PERIOD
EARLY 2026 — ONGOING

FOCUS AREAS
PAID MEDIA · CONTENT · CRM & DATA

01

Client Context

CF Lieu Advisory is a solopreneur financial advisory practice serving high-net-worth individuals, based in Malaysia — most of his clients are Malaysians based in the country, with a smaller number based abroad. Like many successful small business owners, CF was already investing in paid advertising as a key source of new leads. Beyond lead generation, CF had also built a surprisingly mature operational setup for a solopreneur, leveraging automation across his enquiry management process, from web forms, email, WhatsApp and SMS through to appointment scheduling and reminders.

SNAPSHOT

Sector	**Wealth Advisory**
Structure	**Solopreneur**
Market	**Malaysia**
Client Since	**Early 2026**

The Presenting Challenge

With the business growing steadily over the years, CF sought an independent review of whether his paid advertising campaigns were performing well enough to justify further investment. What began as a marketing diagnostic, however, uncovered a series of interconnected business challenges that would ultimately reshape the direction of the engagement.

THE ENGAGEMENT, IN THREE CHAPTERS

01 — COMPLETE

Revenue Model Review & Client Profile Positioning

Reconciling attribution data to establish a reliable revenue baseline and understand who CF's most valuable clients really are.

02 — COMPLETE

Paid Ads Acquisition Diagnostic & Recommendations

An independent review of paid campaign performance, with structural fixes to reduce wasted advertising spend.

03 — IN PROGRESS

CRM & Data Pipeline Orchestration

Started August 2026, running to approximately October 2026 — rebuilding how the business sees itself.

02

The Question Asked — and the Questions Beneath It

We conducted two discovery sessions to understand both the current state of the business and where CF wanted to take it over the next few years.

The Question CF Brought To Us

The initial business question was straightforward.

> **THE CLIENT'S PRESENTING QUESTION**
>
> "Before I invest more into paid advertising, I want an independent opinion on whether my campaigns are performing well enough — and whether increasing my budget will actually help grow the business."

This is a common question among growing business owners. They recognise there are gaps in their knowledge and seek an independent perspective before committing additional investment.

Looking Beyond the Presenting Problem

However, our discovery process is intentionally designed to go beyond the presenting problem. While clients often engage us to solve an immediate business challenge, we believe meaningful recommendations require understanding something equally important: what kind of business the owner is ultimately trying to build.

Without that context, it is difficult to determine whether a recommendation that solves today's problem will still be the right recommendation three or five years from now. As a result, we deliberately explored a different set of questions too, not just about advertising, but about CF's longer-term aspirations, constraints and definition of success.

> *The Discovery Pivot — the conversation shifted from "How do I improve my marketing?" to "What kind of business do I want to create?"*

Three Dimensions of Sustainable Growth

That deeper conversation revealed three recurring concerns. Although expressed differently, CF's own words reflected three distinct dimensions of the same underlying challenge:

> *“I want to grow the business, but how do I scale without overwhelming myself?”*
>
> *“If the business becomes larger, how do I continue spending most of my time with clients instead of running operations?”*
>
> *“How do I build a business that grows without sacrificing time with my family or the quality of advice I give my clients?”*

Capacity

How do I grow without becoming overwhelmed?

Identity

How do I continue doing the part of the business I enjoy most?

Life Trade-offs

How do I ensure success doesn't come at the cost of family time or quality advisory?

THE GROWTH CHALLENGE

Sustainable growth had three dimensions: increasing capacity, preserving the owner's role as an adviser, and protecting the life the business was intended to support.

Two Horizons, One Engagement

These conversations did not replace the original business question. We recognised the paid advertising challenge and the longer-term business foundations as two distinct but equally important objectives and treated them as complementary horizons within the same engagement. The immediate challenge remained improving paid advertising performance and reducing unnecessary marketing spend — every inefficient campaign represented real financial leakage and reduced confidence in future marketing investment.

At the same time, understanding CF's longer-term aspirations provided important context for the second horizon. It became clear that continued growth would eventually require stronger operational foundations, particularly CRM, data orchestration and reporting capabilities. Rather than treating these as competing priorities, we sequenced the recommendations so that each horizon reinforced the other.

SHORT-TERM HORIZON

- Improve campaign effectiveness
- Reduce wasted advertising spend
- Build confidence in current marketing investment

LONG-TERM HORIZON

- Build stronger business visibility
- Strengthen CRM, data orchestration and reporting
- Create foundations for sustainable growth

By addressing both horizons together, the immediate improvements delivered value today, while the foundational investments increased the effectiveness of future marketing decisions and prepared the business to scale with greater confidence.

03

Following the Evidence

With the business objectives understood, the next step appeared straightforward: examine the available data and determine which campaigns, channels and audiences were producing the strongest returns. But it quickly became less straightforward.

From Platform Performance to Business Outcomes

To understand whether CF should invest more in paid advertising, we first needed to establish what that advertising was actually producing in business terms — not just clicks, leads or platform-reported conversions, but ultimately clients and revenue. That meant following the trail beyond Google and Meta into HYROS, the marketing attribution platform CF used to track leads, sales and revenue back to their acquisition sources, and his existing customer records.

When The Numbers Did Not Agree

The first problem was surprisingly basic: the numbers did not tally. For FY25, revenue differed depending on which HYROS view we looked at — Leads, Sales or Reports. These weren't minor variations we could comfortably ignore. Before analysing channel performance, we had to stop and ask a much more basic question: **which number actually represents revenue?**

METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

Before evaluating advertising performance, we first had to establish what the advertising was actually producing in business terms — not merely clicks, leads or platform-reported conversions.

Reconstructing the Source of Truth

We eventually designated the HYROS Sales report as our working source for revenue — but that only exposed the next problem: attribution.

Origin sources were recorded under labels such as **Googleorg, IFA ver2** and **ThruPlay July 15**. Some described channels, while others described campaigns or tactics, and the naming wasn't sufficiently consistent to aggregate them reliably. To understand how much revenue Google, Meta and other channels were actually producing, the data had to be manually cleaned, normalised and mapped back to common acquisition sources.

Testing the Answer, Not Merely Finding One

And even then, we weren't comfortable assuming we had the answer.

We cross-checked what HYROS was telling us against CF's existing business records to validate customer, revenue and acquisition-source information across different data sets.

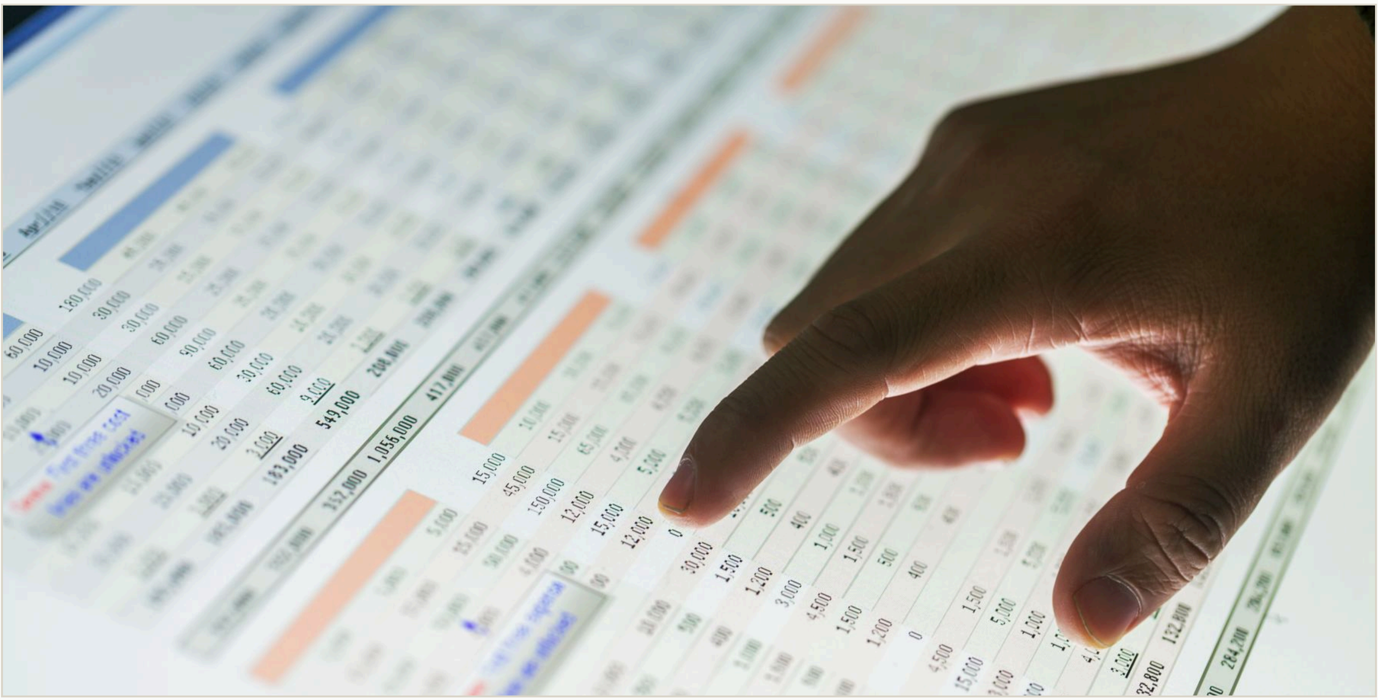
Where the systems disagreed, we went back through the records, questioned our assumptions and tried to establish whether the discrepancy came from attribution, naming, missing information, or simply different definitions being used by different systems.

RECONSTRUCTING THE EVIDENCE

VIEWS EXAMINED	Three conflicting HYROS views — Leads, Sales and Reports
LABELS	Acquisition labels manually normalised
CHANNELS	Revenue mapped back to common acquisition sources
CROSS-CHECK	HYROS findings validated against separate business records
DISCREPANCIES	Traced to attribution, naming, missing data and differing definitions

Only after that reconciliation could we begin asking the questions we had originally intended to answer: which channels were actually producing revenue, who were the customers behind that revenue, and were the patterns strong enough to guide future investment?

All examples in this case study are presented with the client's permission. Customer information used during the analysis has been anonymised or aggregated, and no personally identifiable or confidential financial information is disclosed.



04

What the Reconstructed Picture Revealed

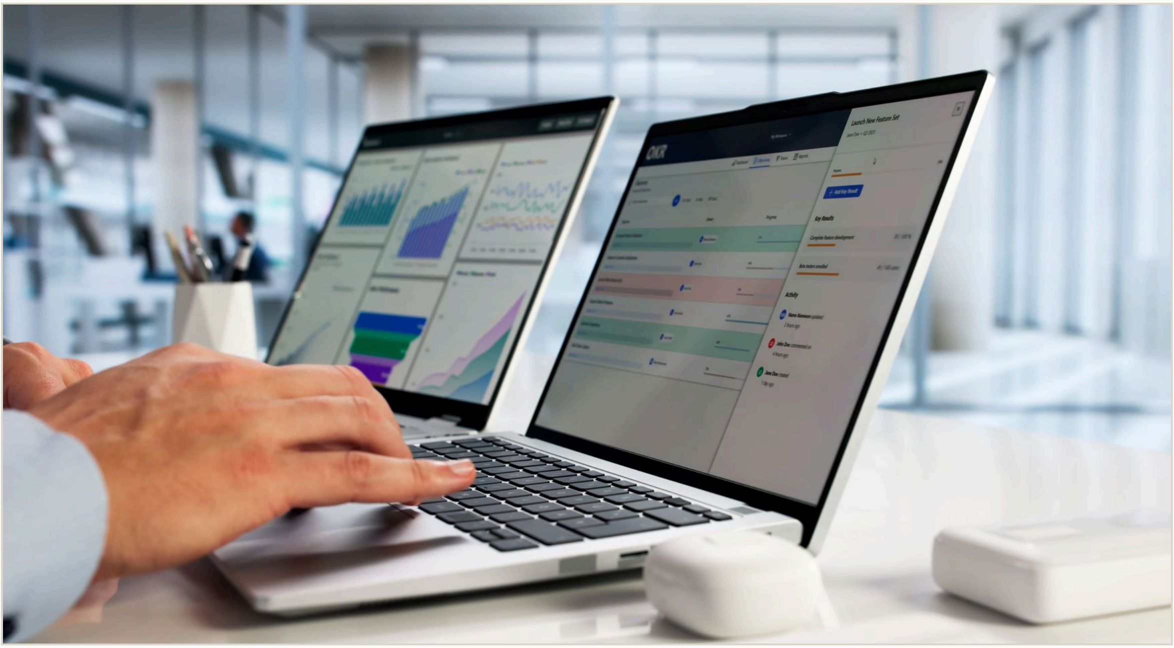
Channel and Audience Signals

The reconstructed picture started revealing useful signals. Google accounted for the largest identifiable revenue contribution in the normalised dataset, followed by Meta. Business owners within the T15 segment emerged as the strongest revenue-driving audience; the customer base skewed older, supporting CF's retirement-focused positioning; and doctors appeared as an emerging segment with needs sufficiently similar to affluent business owners to warrant testing differentiated messaging, rather than treating them as an entirely separate market.

The More Consequential Finding

But the exercise also revealed something arguably more important than any individual audience or channel finding. That distinction mattered.

> *We could answer these questions because we manually reconstructed the picture — the business could not readily answer them from its existing systems, despite various reports and dashboards.*
>
> THE PIVOTAL FINDING



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From Marketing Diagnosis to Business Visibility

Funnel and Attribution Gaps

The same structural gaps appeared when we examined the customer funnel. Stages and time-to-convert were not consistently defined, there was no systematic way to identify where prospects dropped out, and attribution inconsistencies meant that even apparently strong platform performance could send misleading optimisation signals.

Campaign Improvements Available Now

The campaign work itself confirmed that there were genuine improvements to make, from conversion tracking and campaign consolidation to audience overlap, Quality Score and budget allocation. However, increasing investment without improving the underlying visibility would continue to make confident investment decisions unnecessarily difficult.

EVIDENCE FOR ACTION NOW

Identifiable campaign inefficiencies that could be corrected immediately to reduce waste and improve performance.

EVIDENCE FOR INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

If CF intended to grow the business, he needed a much easier and more reliable way to see the relationship between acquisition, leads, clients and revenue, without having to reconstruct it manually every time a significant business decision needed to be made.

The immediate campaign problems could be fixed. But if CF wanted to make increasingly larger growth investments with confidence, the business needed to become much better at seeing itself.

STRATEGIC CONCLUSION

The business needed to become much better at seeing itself.

06

Solution Strategy: Turning Automation Into Business Visibility

The Solution Was Not More Automation

CF's enquiry process was already highly automated. A website submission could trigger WhatsApp, SMS and email responses within seconds, provide a booking link and move the lead into an established nurture sequence without requiring CF to intervene manually. The practice therefore did not have a basic automation problem.

The missing layer was operational visibility. The existing systems could capture activity and automate responses, but they did not provide a coherent view of where each prospect sat in the decision process, what happened after an initial consulting engagement, how referrals contributed, or what each client was worth over time.

So, instead of replacing everything or adding automation for its own sake, the proposed solution would connect the systems that already worked and introduce a clear business workflow that would support business visibility.

ARCHITECTURE PRINCIPLE

Retain what already worked, assign each system a clear role, and add only the missing layer of business visibility.

Choosing the Architectural Direction

Several directions were considered:

Broader Platform (e.g. HubSpot)

Could consolidate more of the technology stack, but risked introducing more cost and complexity than a solopreneur practice needed at this stage.

Specialist Wealth CRMs

Wealthbox and Redtail were screened out because their operating assumptions were more closely aligned with the US market.

Stay With HYROS Alone

Would preserve familiarity, but would not resolve the absence of a formal acquisition pipeline and post-consultancy client lifecycle.

> Pipedrive offered a middle path. It could become the practice's workflow and business-visibility layer while HYROS continued to perform the server-side attribution role for which CF had selected it. MailerLite could remain the nurture engine initially, and the response automations already running through n8n did not need to be rebuilt.

This was an augmentation strategy, not a wholesale replacement. It contained implementation risk, respected CF's preference to grow without immediately adding permanent headcount, and created a foundation that a small team could later use without forcing the current one-person practice to operate like a larger company.

Aligning Business, Process, Technology and Implementation

The solution direction brings about advantages seen across multiple angles:

BUSINESS

Preserve CF's time for advising clients, improve confidence in growth investment, and support a practice that may expand without making the owner materially busier.

PROCESS

Define how an enquiry becomes a consulting client, how that relationship may progress into AUM management, how referrals are captured, and when inactive opportunities require attention.

TECHNOLOGY

Use Pipedrive for workflow and visibility, retain HYROS for attribution, retain existing response automation, and connect the systems through a controlled orchestration layer.

IMPLEMENTATION

Build foundation first, keep integrations inactive until historical data is ready, introduce approval gates before irreversible changes, and validate the system through real use.

Separating Acquisition From the Client Lifecycle

CF's practice contained two related but distinct commercial journeys: converting an enquiry into a consulting engagement and developing that relationship into ongoing AUM management. Combining both within a single pipeline would have blurred acquisition performance and obscured what happened after the first engagement.

We therefore designed two linked pipelines: one for acquisition and qualification, and another for the longer client lifecycle. This preserved a connected customer relationship while allowing each journey to be understood and measured on its own terms.

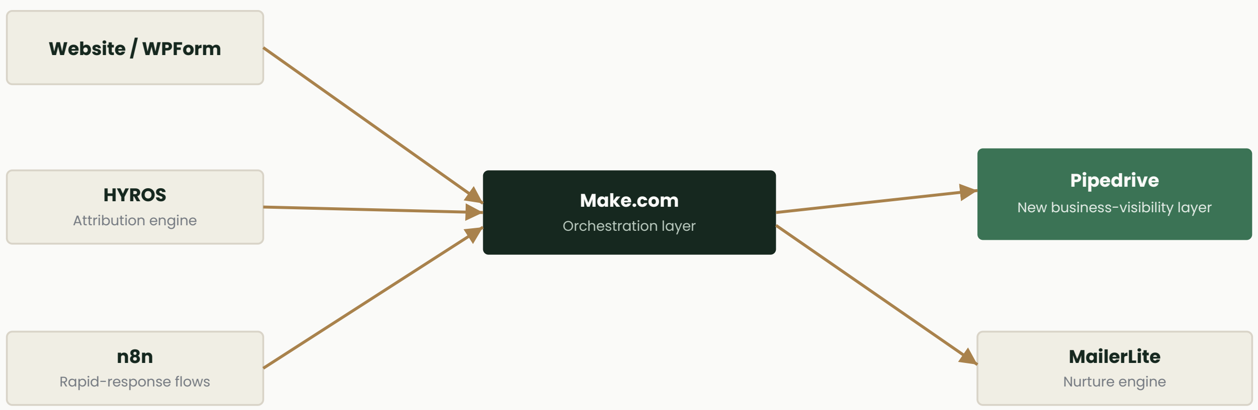
DESIGN PRINCIPLE

The CRM structure should reflect how the business creates value — not force every customer relationship into one generic funnel.

Connecting the Systems Without Losing What Already Worked

The architecture does not require a single application to own every kind of truth. Instead, each system is given a defined role: HYROS continues to explain acquisition and attribution; Pipedrive becomes the operational record of pipeline and lifecycle status; MailerLite continues to run email nurture programs during the transition; and Make.com carries agreed data between them.

SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE



Website and WPForm feed existing n8n rapid-response flows and Make.com. HYROS attribution data also feeds Make.com, which exchanges records and stage changes with Pipedrive and sends nurture signals to MailerLite. Pipedrive is highlighted as the new business-visibility layer.

Migrating History, Not Just Records

Historical HYROS records are not left behind. They are exported, mapped to Pipedrive's Person and Deal structure, cleaned to standardise origin-source names and imported as Won deals using their original close dates. This allows the CRM to begin with usable client history rather than an empty pipeline.

The migration and live integrations are deliberately coordinated. The Make.com connections remain inactive while the historical snapshot is cleaned. They go live immediately after the approved import, closing the gap in which a lead could otherwise be missed or counted twice.

From Activity Data to Decision-Ready Reporting

The first reporting layer is intentionally native to Pipedrive. It is designed to answer a small set of recurring business questions without introducing a separate BI environment:

Source Comparison

Which acquisition sources produce the strongest win rates and revenue?

Referral Performance

Who refers new clients, and what count and value do those referrals produce?

Stalled Deals

Which active opportunities have had no activity for 30 days and may require attention?

Lifetime Value

How much consulting and AUM revenue has accumulated for each client over the relationship?

AUM revenue remains manually entered in this phase. That is less technically ambitious than automated invoice reconciliation, but it places the system around an available operating habit instead of making core visibility depend on an untested data-extraction process. A 12-month threshold for an AUM client to be considered dormant is treated as a configurable business rule, separate from the 30-day stalled-deal view used for active prospects.

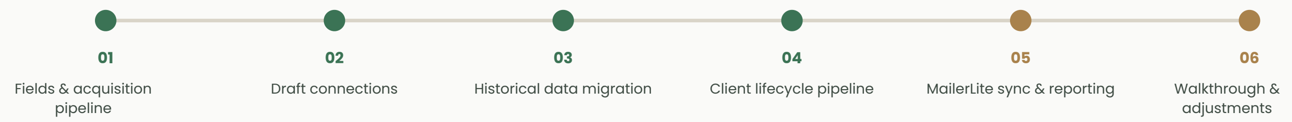
Building the Foundation Before Adding Intelligence

CF's longer-term ambition included exploring how far automation and AI could help the practice grow without prematurely adding permanent headcount or a heavier day-to-day management burden. The first phase, however, does not begin with an AI layer. AI cannot compensate for undefined pipeline stages, inconsistent source labels or incomplete lifecycle data — it would merely allow the business to process ambiguity more quickly. The more responsible sequence is to establish the data model, workflow and decision rights first; observe whether the system produces reliable information; and only then identify specific decisions where AI or additional automation could create meaningful leverage.

> *The first requirement for intelligent automation was not more intelligence. It was cleaner structure, clearer ownership and more dependable data.*
>
> AUTOMATION PRINCIPLE

Phased Delivery With Approval Gates

The scope was deliberately staged: establish the capabilities needed for trustworthy visibility first, and defer enhancements until their value, data dependencies and operating burden could be tested. This reduced implementation risk and kept later investment grounded in evidence rather than possibility.



Six phases sequenced around dependencies, with live changes introduced only after the relevant foundation is approved.

CF retained approval over decisions affecting his data, client-facing tools, spend and operating rules. Approval was required at four points:

- **Structure approval** — the field model and pipeline stages were signed off before configuration proceeded.
- **Migration approval** — the HYROS record count, snapshot timing and cleaned data were reviewed before permanent import and live connections.
- **Lifecycle-rule approval** — the AUM entry cadence and dormancy threshold were confirmed before the relevant workflow and reporting rules were finalised.
- **Nurture cutover approval** — phasing out MailerLite remained a separate go/no-go decision after the connected workflow had been tested.

The working cadence was deliberately light but traceable: written updates at the end of each phase, decisions documented asynchronously, calls at key points rather than a standing weekly meeting, and a final walkthrough with a short reference note explaining what each automation does and why. Each phase therefore closed with a visible checkpoint rather than a silent handoff — helping ensure that a system intended to reduce dependence on the owner did not create a new, permanent dependence on its original implementer.

Outcomes & Takeaways

This chapter is being written. The CRM and data pipeline engagement runs through approximately October 2026 — the Outcomes and Takeaways will be added once the system has been live long enough to show what actually changed, rather than what was expected to change.

CHECK BACK AFTER OCTOBER 2026 FOR THE COMPLETE STORY.

Is Your Business Ready to See Itself Clearly?

If your marketing, CRM and reporting feel like three different stories about the same business, that's usually the first sign worth investigating — not with more spend, but with a clearer picture of what's actually happening. We help solopreneur and small business owners like CF turn scattered systems into a business they can see, understand and grow with confidence.

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