SARAH & JOHN

Kenora FINANCIAL

From $318K to $2.0M in 10 Years: A Tax-Smart Path to Early Retirement

When a successful IT consulting couple realized they had less than 20 years to achieve the early retirement they'd envisioned, they knew they needed a partner who understood their timeline and their goals.

They'd grown frustrated as every financial seminar they attended turned into a sales pitch. Previous advisors they'd worked with pushed products without taking the time to understand their goals, and they were tired of being 'talked at' instead of listened to.

Net Worth: $2.1M | Invested Assets at Kenora: $2.0M*

The Vision

Sarah and John always dreamed of retiring in their early-to-mid fifties. They wanted to ensure they had multiple years or even decades to travel and enjoy time together without the pressures of their demanding careers.

Meet Sarah and John

- Sarah and John are a dual-income couple living in a Chicago suburb. John runs a successful IT consulting firm while Sarah works as an independent consultant herself.
- At 36 and 33 years old, early retirement was a driving goal for them. They wanted to build a plan that ensured cash flow would last through a retirement potentially spanning five decades.
- They'd been maxing out Roth contributions, believing tax-free accounts were always optimal. But they weren't actually sure that was the best strategy for their timeline.
- With $318,000 in assets and less than 20 years until their target retirement, they were looking for an advisor interested in their success, not commissions they'd earn from selling products.

Although names and details have been changed for the sake of privacy, the following case study outlines the real experiences and outcomes of an actual client.

Every client's situation is different, and no situation can ever be duplicated entirely. As much as we work to guide our clients in the right direction, the outcomes seen here were also affected by circumstances outside of our control, such as the economy and stock market.

Past results are not a guarantee of future performance, and you should not expect similar results.

Kenora Financial works with every client to the best of their ability, within the situation at hand. This case study only highlights one client's experience, but we hope it helps you understand the kind of work we do.

**Data as of October 2025. Subject to change.*

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Kenora Financial Process

While Sarah and John's commitment to tax-free accounts showed financial discipline, it wasn't the most tax-efficient path for their situation. We helped them shift their focus to strategically balancing contributions across tax-deferred, tax-free, and taxable accounts to minimize taxes over their entire lifetime.

Our Strategic Solutions

- We identified that Sarah and John were likely in their highest earning years, so we shifted focus from maximizing Roth contributions to increasing tax-deferred contributions. This reduced their taxable income now, when they're more likely to be in higher tax brackets.
- To underline the efficiency of this approach, we modeled a future withdrawal strategy for them using controlled distributions from both taxable and tax-deferred accounts.
- By carefully managing their distributions before Required Minimum Distributions would begin, we can keep them at zero capital gains taxes and minimal ordinary income tax rates. The result is lower lifetime taxes and faster wealth accumulation.
- We also helped them establish Roth IRAs for their children, creating tax deductions for the business while setting the next generation up for financial independence.
- Throughout our work together, we've focused on what they wanted most: accessibility, clear explanations, and education. They follow the plan we've built because they understand it, own it, and trust it.

Where They Are Now

Nine years after beginning their relationship with Kenora Financial, Sarah and John have made remarkable progress toward their retirement goals. Their investable assets increased from $318,000 to $2.0 million in just ten years. They're also on track to retire when John turns 55 and Sarah turns 52, as they had wanted.

Not only have their assets accumulated faster than expected, but they feel "at ease and comfortable" knowing their early retirement goals are within reach. Now that they're about 10 years out, they're confidently looking forward to the day they can retire early.

The Power of a Head Start

Starting comprehensive planning at ages 36 and 33 instead of waiting until their 40s gave Sarah and John nearly a decade of strategic advantage.

The impact of this decade on the compound interest in their accounts cannot be overstated.

Combined with tax-efficient positioning, this head start put them on track to retire 12–15 years earlier than traditional timelines.

Comprehensive planning is not just for the wealthy or those a few years out from retirement.

Strategic tax planning and early action can significantly accelerate your timeline.

Having an advisor who aligns with your goals, helps you see your complete financial picture, and listens to what matters most to you can help you accomplish more than you thought possible.