Which broker/dealers are getting it right? Which broker/dealers go above and beyond in serving the needs of both their reps and their reps’ clients? We asked our readers, and after our own due diligence, we are proud to announce this year’s Broker/Dealer Excellence Award winners — Raymond James, Investment Centers of America, Summit Brokerage Services and Advisory Group Equity Services.
Bismarck, N.D.—not exactly a hub of financial activity, which suits Investment Centers of America reps just fine. They marshaled their numbers and voted ICA in as the best of the mid-size firms. The reason, says president and CEO Greg Gunderson just happens to coincide with the mission near and dear to that of our magazine.

“Our reps are focusing on life planning issues. They’re learning to ask different types of questions and really listen to their clients. I’ve got 13 different relationships here at ICA—everything from mortgages to retirement to investments. The last thing I need is another product. What I need is someone who can help see me through it all, and get me comfortable with retirement and legacy planning issues. And that’s what our reps do. They’ve embraced the life planning aspect.”

Gunderson also credits a top notch financial solutions support team as another reason for the win.

“Our reps know and use the team’s expertise. They help with life planning, income distribution planning, investment management, risk management and wealth transfer planning.”

That’s not to take away from the firm’s other specialized areas of support. ICA houses a dedicated team to assist advisors with marketing themselves at each stage of their career, and this includes everything from something as simple as placing outgoing calls to providing dedicated support.

AdvisorPath, its practice management platform, is designed to help advisors increase revenues and productivity while reducing costs. The module-based AdvisorPath is designed in five parts to help advisors assess, plan, grow, manage, and protect their practices.

Other reasons to brag? Gunderson claims their transition team is trained to make it as seamless as possible with the absolute minimal interruption to the advisor’s business.

And of course, there’s the peer support. The firm stresses a family culture (still small enough to do that). ICA’s top reps are always willing and able to take a call from an advisor in need of advice, whether it’s talking about current market environments or a sales idea.

And we have to say we’re impressed with the technology the firm offers. Redtail Technology, Albridge Solutions, NetExchange Pro—quality names all.

“When my father founded ICA in 1985, his vision was to foster an atmosphere of personal integrity, long-term relationships and strong values. Today, that vision forms the foundation of our company and sets ICA apart from other firms in the industry.”