



Portfolio Objective: The Balanced Equity Income portfolio combines equity and fixed income allocations in a single account. The equity portion is focused on companies of any size capitalization that collectively generate an above-average stream of dividend income, while also providing capital appreciation potential. The fixed income portion is invested in fixed income Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), diversified across maturities and sectors.

Portfolio Overview

Balanced accounts are an efficient way for long-term investors to combine equity and fixed income exposure in a single account, while providing diversification and a more tailored level of volatility. Five different portfolio allocations are available, ranging from 30% fixed income/70% equity to 70% fixed income/30% equity, in increments of 10%. The Balanced Equity Income portfolio is suitable for clients seeking dividend income and capital appreciation from equities, along with income and stability from bonds.

Background

Due to the different risk and return characteristics of fixed income, the inclusion of bonds within an investment portfolio has historically been an effective way to address risk and lower volatility. The challenge, however, is that bonds are denominated differently than stocks and trade in unique ways. Because of these differences, bond investments are often managed in a separate account from stocks.

With the development of the fixed income ETF market, Confluence is able to efficiently bring together common stocks and securities that have the characteristics of bonds into a single account. Fixed income ETFs trade in similar fashion to stocks (in fact, often on the same exchanges), while still providing the volatility and income stream characteristics of bonds. In addition, many ETFs trade with greater liquidity for a broad range of position sizes, accommodating the needs of small and large accounts. These characteristics enable Confluence to efficiently handle deposits, withdrawals, systematic withdrawals and periodic rebalancing, while avoiding the higher transaction costs often associated with smaller trades in traditional fixed income securities.

It is important to note that fixed income ETFs are not bonds. An ETF can be viewed as a portfolio of investments, created with unique, transparent specifications, with each share representing a pro rata interest in that portfolio. In this manner, the ETF structure is similar to open ended mutual funds. So while a fixed income ETF isn't a bond, its attributes tend to mimic that of a bond portfolio. Fixed income ETFs are available in a wide range of maturities across corporate, agency and treasury sectors. The overall fixed income allocation average maturity can be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the focus on ETFs with longer or shorter maturities.

Investors should be aware there are limitations in utilizing fixed income ETFs. There may be times when the performance of an ETF may vary relative to its targeted benchmark. And while ETFs generally trade very close to their net asset values, during times of market disruption, they can trade at discounts or premiums, which can directly affect an investor's performance. Liquidity is also generally good, but can vary depending upon market conditions. A fixed income ETF also does not mature like an individual bond. These and various other differences highlight the fact that fixed income ETFs may vary in performance relative to direct investments in bonds.

Experience

The professionals at Confluence have utilized fixed income and equity ETFs in separately managed accounts for over a decade. Through the management of the fixed income allocations, Confluence professionals developed a solid background in understanding the mechanics of ETFs, as well as how to blend the various sectors and maturities to pursue specific objectives. This collective experience is applied in forming the fixed income allocations in Confluence Balanced accounts.

Equity Characteristics

Table with 2 columns: Metric and Portfolio. Rows include Equity Wtd. Avg. Market Cap.(\$B), Equity Income Dividend Yield, Number of Securities, and Annual Turnover.

Fixed Income Characteristics

Table with 2 columns: Metric and Portfolio. Rows include Benchmark Profile, Fixed Income Yield, and Number of Securities.

Ten Largest Equity Holdings¹

- List of ten largest equity holdings including Martin Marietta Materials Inc., Broadridge Financial Solutions Inc., Progressive Corp., Kraft Heinz Co., Fidelity National Financial Inc., Digital Realty Trust Inc., Microsoft Corp., Northern Trust Corporation, PepsiCo, Inc., and 3M Company.

¹ The listing of "Ten Largest Equity Holdings" is not a complete list of all stocks in the portfolio or which Confluence may be currently recommending. Furthermore, application of the investment strategy as of a later date will likely result in changes to the listing.

Five Largest Fixed Income ETF Holdings²

- List of five largest fixed income ETF holdings including iShares Corporate ex-Financials Bond 2023, iShares iBoxx Corporate Bond, iShares Corporate ex-Financials Bond 2018, SPDR Intermediate Term Corporate Bond, and Vanguard Intermediate Term Corporate Bond.

² The listing of "Five Largest Fixed Income ETF Holdings" is not a complete list of all ETFs in the portfolio or which Confluence may be currently recommending. Furthermore, application of the investment strategy as of a later date will likely result in changes to the listing.

There can be no assurance that a purchase of the stocks or ETFs in this portfolio will be profitable, either individually or in the aggregate, or that such purchase will be more profitable than alternative investments.

Equity Investment Process

Stocks are selected through Confluence's independent research, evaluating the fundamentals of individual companies to identify businesses that either pay a high level of dividend income or have the ability to grow the dividend over time. The equity portfolio is positioned to have its dividend income grow faster than inflation. The equity portfolio typically is comprised of 30-35 holdings and is expected to result in low to moderate turnover.

Confluence's equity investment philosophy seeks to identify companies that have the ability to generate high levels of cashflow through a business model that maintains a competitive advantage over time. These advantages may include strong brand names, highly differentiated services or products, dominant market share, flexible pricing power, protected technology or specialized industrial skills sets. Confluence looks for management teams with proven track records of value-enhancing capital allocation decisions.

Confluence defines risk as the probability of a permanent loss of capital. To protect against this risk, we invest in quality businesses at attractive valuations diversified across a variety of market sectors. This discipline helps to protect against losses, while enhancing upside potential. Over time, Confluence believes that this approach positions the portfolio to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns.

Security Selections – “Great Companies”

- Suitable companies possess substantial competitive advantages which are reflected in their ability to maintain pricing power and generate high returns on capital.
- These companies generate more cash than needed to sustain their market-dominant position.
- The businesses are led by management teams that have proven ability to allocate capital and whose interests are aligned with shareholders via inside ownership.
- These businesses are purchased only when trading at significant discounts to Confluence's estimates of fair value. This “buy limit” discipline may at times result in higher than usual cash balances at the inception of a new account.

Sell Discipline

To help preserve capital, portfolio positions are continually reviewed. A company's stock may be sold if:

- The share price reaches or exceeds Confluence's estimate of full valuation.
- More attractive opportunities are identified.
- The company's fundamentals deteriorate.

Fixed Income Investment Policy

Within the fixed income allocation, Confluence strives to deliver the income and lower volatility traditionally available from a diversified bond portfolio. An appropriate benchmark comparison is the broadly diversified bond index Merrill Lynch Government/Credit Index. Confluence may vary the allocation to adjust the exposure to corporate, government agency and U.S. Treasury sectors. Confluence may also adjust the combined average maturity to be longer, shorter or in line with the benchmark. The allocations will incorporate Confluence's viewpoints regarding Fed policy, the shape of the yield curve, relative yields (known as spreads), default rates and other market factors.

Confluence's focus is on fixed income ETFs following investment grade benchmarks with a domestic orientation. Confluence continuously monitors fixed income allocations, rebalancing at least annually, but may elect to rebalance over shorter time frames.

Allocation Adjustments

Clients are encouraged to establish long-term strategic allocations. However, allocations may be easily adjusted to address changing objectives and risk tolerances.

Firm Overview

The Confluence Team

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The Confluence Mission

Our mission is to provide our clients with superior investment solutions and exceptional client service with the highest standards of ethics and integrity. Our team of investment professionals is committed to delivering innovative products and sound, practical advice to enable investors to achieve their investment objectives.

About Confluence Investment Management LLC

Confluence Investment Management LLC is an independent Registered Investment Advisor located in St. Louis, Missouri that was founded in 2007. Confluence provides professional portfolio management and advisory services to institutional and individual clients. Our investment philosophy is based upon independent, fundamental research that integrates our evaluation of market cycles, macroeconomics and geopolitical analysis with our value-driven, fundamental company-specific approach. Confluence's portfolio management philosophy begins by assessing risk, and follows through by positioning clients to achieve their income and growth objectives.

The Confluence team has more than 300 years of combined financial experience and 100 years of portfolio management experience.

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