Pension Industry Changes Over the Last 18 Years: A Comedy of Errors and Triumphs

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When Avgi Gregory and Mark Hodgkinson decided to create Muse Advisory in September 2006, they probably didn't expect to become superheroes of the pension world. With Avgi's pension consulting skills and Mark's corporate pensions expertise, they were like Batman and Robin, but with more spreadsheets and fewer capes.

By the time the financial crisis hit in 2008, Muse Advisory was already offering a smorgasbord of services, from investment governance to pensions project management, worthy of any Batcave, ready to tackle any problem.

Coming of Age in the Pension World: A Rite of Passage

Navigating the pension industry is a bit like coming of age. Remember those awkward teenage years when you were trying to figure out who you were and what you wanted to be? Well, the pension industry has had its fair share of growing pains too.

Just like a teenager getting their first job, the industry had to learn the ropes. There were moments of triumph, like finally understanding how compound interest works (it's like discovering that pizza tastes even better the next day). And then there were the inevitable missteps, like realising that not all investments are created equal (kind of like discovering that not all fashion trends are worth following).

As the industry matured, it faced its own version of the "quarter-life crisis." Auto-enrolment was akin to moving out of your parents' house for the first time — exciting but also a bit daunting. And pension freedoms? Think getting your first credit card and having to resist the urge to buy all the things you don't need (Lamborghini anyone?).

But just like growing up, the pension industry has come a long way. It's learned from its mistakes, celebrated its successes, and continues to evolve. So here's to the pension industry's coming of age—may it continue to grow wiser and more resilient with each passing year.

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But it has been a rollercoaster ride:

2006 – A-Day: Pensions simplification, they said. It'll be fun, they said.

2012 – Auto-enrolment: Every employer had to put their employees into a pension scheme. It was like Oprah giving away cars, but instead of cars, it was pensions: "You get a pension! And you get a pension! Everybody gets a pension!" And in many cases, you had to pay more than half the cost.

2015 – Pension Freedoms: Suddenly, everyone had more options for their retirement income. It was like being a kid in a candy store, but with more financial advisors telling you not to eat too much candy.

2019 – Auto-enrolment minimum contributions increased to 8%: Employers had to contribute at least 3%, which was like being told you have to bring snacks to the office party.

2020 – Covid-19 Lockdown: Working from home became the norm. Suddenly, the biggest challenge in the pension industry was figuring out how to look professional on Zoom calls.

2020 – The FCA banned contingent charging: Financial advisors could no longer only get paid if a client transferred their pension. It was like banning commission-based sales in a used car lot.

2024 – The new Labour government announced a landmark pensions review: Stay tuned for more plot twists and cliffhangers!

As the pension industry continues to evolve and consolidate, Muse Advisory remains the independent, practical, solution-finding voice of reason. Our mission: to deliver improved governance and management for pension schemes, while occasionally donning superhero capes (metaphorically, of course).

Why did the scarecrow retire? He was outstanding in his field!