



CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Connors Wealth Management Bringing Value to Brevard

Many high school students in New England dream of attending a college where the campus is bathed in sunshine, shaded by palm trees and students walk to class in shorts and sandals, instead of through snow drifts in parkas and boots. On the other hand, few Cocoa Beach High School graduates select a school in Vermont, Norwich University, which also happens to be a military college.

Yet for those who know Justin Connors' disciplined, focused, data-driven approach to financial management, perhaps it isn't a surprise. How many people decide when they're 11 years old that they want to be a financial advisor and begin tracking the market using their

VALUE PROPOSITION

Explaining their approach, Connors said, "I always hope clients ask me the tough questions like, 'How do you get paid?' 'How is your firm different?' I then encourage potential clients to interview two or three other firms so they can understand who we are and why we are unique."

To Connors, his value proposition has two key components. The first is an investment process, which every firm has and they think is good. Yet the important differentiator is to deliver consistently on what they promise, we do. "The other factor is our service and communication," Connors said. "It is exhaustive, but we're committed to it, because it gives us a deep understanding of the people we are serving. The deeper we know our relationships the better we can serve them; everybody wins. We let the client tell us we're over-communicating versus the other way around."

Describing the company as "a relationship-based practice," which for

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Commodore 64 computer? The surprise is that he returned to his roots in Cocoa Beach, instead of Wall Street, and built a wealth management firm, Connors Wealth Management, founded on a deep relational connection with each client, with locations in Cocoa Beach, Viera and Vero Beach.

Describing his journey, Connors said, "I was a semi-pro triathlete and moved out to Colorado to compete with the big boys. Soon I realized I was a very good recreational athlete, but couldn't compete with the elite, so I said, 'I'm done.' Then I went back to graduate school and worked in corporate finance with Disney and then a cruise line, but I ended up helping manage everyone's 401(k) at work. So I called a firm in Cocoa Beach that I had interviewed with years earlier, took a position and once I became an independent advisor, I realized I wasn't really working. I love it so much, my challenge is to disengage so my life isn't imbalanced."

people who are just looking for an advisor who is a means to an end, he concedes they probably aren't the firm for them. "Some investors don't fully embrace our approach, therefore they may not achieve the best results they could have. Our mission is to inspire our clients to make informed financial decisions, so they can pursue true wealth – that which money can't buy and death can't take away – a much better use of their time, in our opinion."

The company has an astonishing 96 touches with their clients every year. Some of which consist of market commentary every week. "But," Connors adds, "it isn't just a canned presentation that comes from corporate; it is something we prepare and make legible to our clients. Plus, we are developing tools to make it more and more specific to every investor, simple to grasp and useful to them. Then we have mandatory quarterly reviews. I can do up to two per year on the phone, but I insist we have at least two in person. Also, we hold 12 client events a year, so that they have an opportunity to engage with the whole team that is serving them, then they understand why we take such pride in our human capital."

Intentionally limiting their client base per advisor, Connors realizes they can't be all things to all people. "We want those we work with to get the full benefit of the experience."



The Connors Wealth Management team

THREE-FOLD FINANCIAL CORD

Connors Wealth Management has made some valuable strategic alliances with three entities to deliver the value proposition which undergirds their company and allows them to be client-centric, rather than centered on what is best for a parent corporation. "There is a major shift taking place in this direction," meaning the move toward independent financial advisors. "I saw it and wanted to be ahead of the change curve, which innovation and technology is driving," Connors explained.

The first is with LPL Financial, one of the leading financial services companies and the largest independent broker/dealer in the nation according to *Financial Planning* magazine (June 1996-2014, based on total revenue). For more than 40 years, LPL has been providing financial solutions to advisors. LPL provides extensive resources, training and technology platforms that help advisors run their financial services practice more efficiently. That, in turn, means advisors have more time to do what they do best, which is to provide objective financial advice to help their clients pursue their financial goals.

Secondly, Independent Financial Partners (IFP) provides a unique blend of wealth management, wealth

counseling services and enterprise retirement plans to high-net-worth families, individuals and businesses of every size. As Connors put it, "Simply put, independent advisors have a lot more autonomy to serve their clients, without any responsibility to outside shareholders." Partnered with LPL Financial, IFP supports a broad network of truly independent financial advisors by providing operational and strategic resources, and are the largest group at LPL, which provides for an enhanced client experience given the extra resources.

Explaining their approach, Connors observed, "Because of our independence we are able to invest our resources where it does the most to serve our clients, to add more human capital, more technology, or invest in our professionals which enhances our value proposition further."

The latest alliance, which could have one of the greatest long-term impacts on Brevard, was the announcement that they were recently named the exclusive wealth advisor for clients of Marine Bank and Trust in Vero Beach. "I knew an advisor, James Caldwell, who wanted to come to work with us and when he joined, he mentioned knowing a CEO who was looking to align with a financial advisor firm. Banks don't usually seek out advisors, because they see us as competition," Connors said with a look of bewilderment. "But Bill Penney, chairman and CEO of Marine Bank, saw the opportunity, did the due diligence for almost a year and began working with us. You see, one of the biggest challenges in financial planning is debt management. So we don't take business from the bank; we actually bring them more business than they had."

Penney praised the partnership, stating in the November 2014 issue of *SpaceCoast Business*, "Because of this relationship, we are considering expanding into Brevard County in the near future. We feel there will always be a market for sound financial guidance backed by a solid process and excellent client service, and that is what we can offer through our partnership with Connors Wealth Management."

When seeming competitors, who share common values and goals align, it is more than the companies and their clients that are the benefactors, it is the community as a whole. "We will deepen the existing relationships with the bank through our financial planning and investment management services, while introducing our clients to the bank for business and residential lending services. We are already working on loans for existing clients to use their taxable accounts as collateral to lower the down payment requirements on loans.

"Our next move will be Orlando once we add a few more Financial Advisors to plug into our Viera and Cocoa Beach offices, with plans for Marine Bank and Trust to have a presence in each location." ♦

Securities offered through LPL Financial, Member FINRA/SIPC. Investment advice offered through Connors Wealth Management, a registered investment advisor and separate entity from LPL Financial.