

Today's Financial Services Agency ▼

High Touch Approach to Clients and Advisors Keeps Boston Financial Partners Group On Top

by Susan Bumstead Chanley

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When you love what you do everyday, it shows. In the challenging world of growing a successful financial services firm, it shows through sales results, by attracting quality professionals to your firm and keeping them, and in client satisfaction. This is particularly true at Boston Partners Financial Group, LLC, an independent office of John Hancock Financial Network (JHFN)* based in Andover, Massachusetts.

Mark Marroni, JD, LLM, CLU, ChFC, Managing Partner of Boston Partners, started his career as a trusts and estate planning attorney engaged first in private practice in Boston and Manhattan and then with John Hancock's Estate and Business Planning Group. But he found that he simply wasn't connecting to clients in the way that he wanted. "I really wanted to be involved with clients in their lives and in their businesses. As an attorney, I was focused on fixing a problem and then moving on. As a financial representative and manager, however, I am helping better the lives of clients in a much more dramatic way," explains Marroni.

In 1998, he made his career move to financial services and became a manager for John Hancock Financial Network located in Portland, Oregon. Marroni came back to the Boston area in 2001 to establish Boston Partners Financial Group which has grown to an 82 person organization and a leading member of JHFN with \$17 billion of insurance in force and assets under management exceeding \$1 billion. These impressive numbers don't tell the entire story, however. The team at Boston Partners boasts a 65 percent 4-year retention rate. More than half of the managers and financial representatives qualified for the Million Dollar Round Table in 2007 and 33 members of this team were also invited to attend JHFN's

prestigious recognition conference to celebrate their achievements in sales, productivity and client service. In addition, Boston Partners recently received the Trophy Award, the highest honor JHFN can bestow upon one of its independent career firms.

Pat Tannler, Associate Managing Partner and Executive Vice President of Boston Partners, sums up the firm's success this way, "The culture here is as close to that of a high school athletic team as you can get. We focus on the team and camaraderie. We care about our clients and their well-being, and we care about each other. We love what we do; we love doing it together. And, we only hire people who have the same view and enthusiasm for this work." Tannler, a perennial MDRT qualifier, has been hiring, training and developing financial representatives for 27 years.

In addition to this close knit, no nonsense culture, the firm emits strong attraction power for both inexperienced financial representatives and seasoned professionals. According to Marroni, the philosophy that pervades Boston Partners is that every person brings certain skills, experience, and knowledge to the table and everyone in the firm is free to access that expertise. In fact, the firm prides itself on providing all the resources a financial representative might need to help their clients.

"If an associate here needs help with a particular aspect of a case, with opening or closing a case, with overcoming obstacles, the entire team is available to assist, not just a sales manager. The managers either jump right in ourselves and help, or direct the associate to the right person within the firm or outside who can best get the job done," says Marroni.

Boston Partners also offers an open product platform for objectivity in product recommendations, comprehensive education in the classroom, role playing, case study reviews as well as mentoring and joint work/client site visit opportunities -- all of which help associates thrive and succeed. But, perhaps more important is the tangible feel that Boston Partners is all about partnership. "I never feel an "us" as associates versus "them" as managers at Boston

Partners,” says Sid Tyner, a financial representative with 22 years of experience. “You are treated as a strategic partner, someone the firm wants to work with and include in its growth and success.”

Tyner points to the firm’s Advisory Committee and Best Practices Group as evidence of Boston Partners’ commitment to its financial representatives. “While there is an open door attitude at the firm, the Advisory Committee is another way for financial representatives to have in depth discussions with the management team. We meet regularly with the managers to come up with ways to differentiate ourselves from the competition, to overcome challenges, to take advantage of opportunities and to discuss problems and concerns,” he explains.

The Best Practices Group was recently formed by 15 of the more experienced financial representatives at the firm. They meet for a brown bag lunch and discuss topics including products, point-of-sale approaches, marketing ideas and advanced sales concepts. “This is just another example of how everyone is willing to share and that is a big attraction to financial representatives,” comments Tyner.

When Marroni, Tyner and Tannler are asked about the “secret” of success in this business, they all answer: relationships and offering a high touch consultative approach to wealth management. They believe that you have to have the long-term best interests of people in mind, whether they are your clients or your financial representatives or both. Trusted, lasting friendships have formed among clients, associates, and managers which go hand-in-hand with how successful the firm has become.

Says Marroni, “I truly feel that it’s a privilege to do what I do. I wake up on Monday mornings smiling because I can’t wait to come to work. I just love what I do.” It shows.