

Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered

by Vern C. Hayden, CFP®



Vern C. Hayden, CFP®, is president of Hayden Financial Group LLC in Westport, Connecticut, author of *Getting an Investing Game Plan*, and contributing editor to *TheStreet.com*.

Frank Sinatra immortalized the song “Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered,” targeting the romantic riddle between a man and a woman. My staff and I relate it to corporate bureaucratic bumbling.

In January 2012, our superiors decided to create a sizable financial services division by buying more firms. (I sold the business in 2007.) The idea was not the problem. The man hired as a consultant to implement this idea was ignorant of our profession.

Our small firm lived with the daily threat of a forced merger of clients and staff, switching broker-dealers, and changing our investment philosophy, resulting in the total ambiguity of the business.

His time as a consultant ended at the end of 2012, but, we felt like we had experienced a train wreck. Fortunately, our superiors gave us support in developing a strategy to rebuild and recover.

Rebuilding Your Practice

In March, our chief investment officer, Gerard Gruber, and I attended FPA’s Business Solutions conference. We were quickly drawn to a session conducted by Ginny Hudgens, president of The Strategic Implementer. We followed up with her and were able to retain her services as a

coach. I don’t think there is a one-size-fits all concept when it comes to coaches. There are two broad categories. The first consists of some of the biggest names in the coaching business. They have processes and templates for everything. The other category has a more customized approach to assessing the situation and adapting their coaching skills to it.

The latter is Ginny’s approach and she is almost like an extension of our staff. She framed her approach with us within the context of a discovery process. She had each of us take the Kolbe assessment. The outcome of this is very effective in emphasizing the strengths of each of us and determining how to effectively interrelate them.

If you are needing to rebuild your practice, there are many coaches to choose from who can help. Here is a look at some of the work we are doing.

Client Acquisition

To acquire clients, we clearly identified our mission and vision and how we are differentiated. This led to a decision about developing a niche. I had never developed a niche. In the beginning of my career, I did an effective series of public seminars. I’d send 5,000 invitations and end up with about 125 people in the room, and 80 percent to 90 percent of attendees signed up for interviews. Then, for 12 years starting in 1995, I did 317 interviews on CNBC, Bloomberg, and other TV programs. Bill Griffeth of CNBC branded me as “Mr. Mutual Fund.” That really built the existing business. Now, we are targeting a specific niche, and we already have some traction.

Service Model

Our service model is client-centric and it addresses the comprehensive needs of clients, not just investment management. Most important, we are developing service tiers to protect our margins. That means we have clearly defined what we provide for A, B, and C clients. By consistently implementing our services, we will make sure we don’t lose existing clients as we acquire new ones.

Team Development

Our staff consists of four people, and we are making sure we are all invested in our vision and strategy. We are discussing incentive plans and the kind of leverage we can use for rainmaking. We also want to outsource non-revenue-producing tasks where applicable.

Technology

Our firm’s technology will be cloud-based and integrated. Our CRM will be the hub of the firm’s operations. We are making sure we all have the best technology available, including mind-mapping software that we will use with clients.

Ginny also had us use Advisor Impact to do a client audit. We are now implementing the various facets of the audit results to help grow the business.

If you find yourself and your business in a need of structuring or restructuring, you will likely benefit from using a coach who fits your unique situation. You cannot grow by remaining bewitched, bothered, and bewildered. Please keep in mind the ultimate winner in this process always will be the client. ■