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Investment ADVISOR
THE VOICE OF INDEPENDENTS

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SOAPBOX

First, Focus on the Client

FOR THE INDEPENDENT registered investment advisor, the view of the market is very different from that of the large wirehouse advisor. The key drivers for the independent firm are not product focused, but rather encompass independent research, flexibility, and service delivery to clients. It is these factors that make all the difference in our everyday decisions.

Moreover, the independent RIA provides a unique skillset in the marketplace. Today's hot products are tomorrow's busts. While fads come and go, providing a skill to make today's dollar worth more tomorrow will always be valuable to clients. Moreover, we also believe that an independent business model allows for a much clearer alignment of priorities between a firm and its clients.

The unique process by which we analyze companies—and remaining steadfast to that investment philosophy, is critical to our long-term success, allowing us to navigate the markets in ways that are best for us and our clients.

At our RIA, while we spend time focusing on quantitative analysis and valuation, it's the time we spend on qualitative factors that has not only made our clients money, but more importantly has saved them money. Specifically, we focus heavily on the management and culture of a company that we are analyzing as a possible investment in our portfolios. It is our belief that there is a tremendous amount of information that we can learn about a company that cannot be found in a third-party research report. That's why we visit with the management of companies in which we are interested. Being independent also allows us to stick to our knitting, to stay disciplined with our investment process, since we only have to provide value to our clients, and ultimately only answer to those clients.

A key differentiator for the independent RIA is having the flexibility to develop systems and processes that maximize productivity, and that keep the client's best interests in mind. We can create a corporate culture around a clear message: Do what is right for the client and the results will follow. With the proper systems and processes in place and by providing clients with access to each individual within the independent firm—from sales and marketing to administration—clients and employees alike inherently understand the value we are providing to clients.

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That's how the cornerstone for your daily activities becomes what you want the client to experience. Developing your unique best practices distinctly separates the independent firm from the traditional, non-independent firm.

At Biondo Investment Advisors, our best practices include always making sure that a client reaches a live person when he or she calls, having employees invest their personal assets into one of our investing strategies, and providing direct access to the money manager for our clients or for the clients of the advisors that we work with.

Having this focus on always doing right for the client makes a difference to that client, and we believe it has been a significant factor in our own success.

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The IA Soapbox is reserved for Investment Advisor readers to sound off about an issue of importance to them. Please e-mail Jamie Green at **jgreen@investmentadvisor.com**.

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