



AN INTERVIEW WITH:

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Lou, you are one of the leading Northwestern Mutual Wealth Management Advisors across the country and were the first practice ever awarded the Financial Security Award (FSA). What is this award all about?

Yes, we are very excited about this recognition in particular. In looking back over my last 20 years, establishing this practice within Northwestern and its Wealth Management Company has proven to be very valuable and beneficial in the extent of services that I am able to provide my clients. It almost goes without saying that Northwestern is a leader in providing advisors and their clients the tools to plan and reach financial security.

The FSA award recognizes the fact that our practice focuses on numerous aspects of our clients' planning. To achieve this award an advisor must demonstrate a commitment to providing comprehensive planning advice, not focusing on just insurance, investing, estate or business planning, but all areas. It is a natural reflection of what is actually getting done within our practice. We were honored to be the first practice ever to be recognized as a leader in overall financial planning.

Are not most practices comprehensive and did you make it a point to be comprehensive?

Actually, no. Many may say they are but from their activity you can easily tell their focus is on one or two aspects of financial planning.

When I first started in the business, the emphasis was always on overall planning. The mission was to help my clients achieve their goals. I was taught early on it was not about me and what I thought my clients should do. It was about the client and getting them first to clearly articulate their goals. Then we would review what they had done already to achieve those goals and most importantly identify their biggest obstacles in their way. From that point, it was about discussing all the different areas of their planning, how they interact with each other, and the different planning techniques available to help them reach their goals. We would then formulate the plan, execute and constantly monitor the progress.

In everything that you do for your clients, what do you think is your true added value?

That's a great question, for I try to verbalize this early on in the relationship. Many people that are referred into the practice believe the hardest part of my job is to decide how to invest the money, what insurances to execute or which estate planning techniques are needed. Reality is all of those are just tactics and tools and the easier parts of the process. The true added value that we provide are all the conversations we have with the clients during the year. Our first goal is to help the client develop and clearly articulate their mission, vision, values and goals. We call that being "above" the planning horizon. Once you know exactly what you want to accomplish, then we go below the planning horizon, where we now enter the world of tools and tactics. If you have clarity on what you are trying to accomplish, which tools or tactics to use is quite simple. Most importantly however, I learned early on clients do not care how much you know until they know you care.

You have clients across the country, in 38 states. That seems quite unusual?

It is! Most planners tend to be local planners. For us it just seems natural. If our clients move or are transferred by their company, there's no reason for us to stop working together. Furthermore, when they reach their new place of employment and/or town, we quite often are referred onto their new co-workers and friends. I do make the effort to travel the country to visit my clients, but the technology nowadays allows us to travel 3,000 miles with a click of a button. Via the internet, we can bring the client into our office via video conferencing, reviewing all their planning together on the screen, and they never have to leave their office or home. The practice not only prides itself on the strong long-term relationships we develop with the client that overcomes distance, but we have always been a large consumer of new technology. If you have provided the right service and advice over the years, quite often the client does not want to stop talking to you. To me it just seems natural to continue the relationship.

What do you get out of these long term relationships?

Our mantra in the office is simple. We all realize, respect and honor the fact we provide for our families by helping others provide for *their* families. If we help families get what they want out of life, our families will never want for anything.

You seem to have half of the alphabet behind your name. What do all those credentials mean?

All those credentials and my 20+ years of experience mean that I might have an outside shot of knowing what the heck I'm talking about. No, seriously, I am a very big believer in not only being credentialed in what one does, but continuing their education over the years. Since our practice does focus on various aspects of planning, I felt it necessary to have the education and credentials in these areas, and so does my team.

I see you are actually a Registered Employee Benefit Consultant (REBC). What do you do for business owners?

Business planning is a large aspect of our practice. Quite often a business owner cannot separate the business from their personal planning. Actually, their business usually is their whole life! For the business owner, we look at all of the typical business planning concerns—health insurance, retirement plans, benefits etc—but more importantly, how do we structure those plans to most benefit the owner and help them accomplish their personal goals. We also try to have the owner focus on an exit strategy. Quite often clients build their business but never plan on how to sell it or allow it to provide an income long after they have stopped working.

This all sounds great but don't other advisors do what you do for their clients?

Oh a "tough crowd" I see! Well my initial answer is talk to our clients. We actually walk the walk. I believe if you speak to our clients, they will articulate their experience in this fashion: "*Lou and his team actually seem to care, were involved in our lives through our planning and were always there for us. Lou may have been a pain in the butt at times bringing up the tough conversations but he kept us on track by making us address topics we would have easily pushed to the "back burner" on our own.*"

Over time, as our clients look back, I hope they feel they are better off because we were the engine of their planning process.

Lou thanks for your time and candid answers. I assume if someone reading this wants your assistance or is looking for a second opinion on their planning they can simply reach out to you?

My pleasure. We all know everyone loves to talk about themselves.... so thanks for the opportunity! Of course they can feel free to reach out to set up some time to talk. ●