Advisory Board

In the early '80s I met a new friend, ophthalmologist Bob Wankum. And he introduced me to a friend of his from St. Louis, a financial planner named Dennis Hammond. Dennis and I became fast friends. Hammond was gregarious; bigger than life. And smart. In time, he suggested I meet two other St. Louis men who slowly became an advisory board for my business.

It was 1985 and I was alone having bought out all of my shareholders. So Hammond, attorney Phil Kaiser and insurance executive, Joe Mathews, began to advise our company. Obviously they all profited by the relationship: Hammond setting up our employee benefit package; Kaiser handling legal work and Mathews our insurance planning. It was to their benefit that we really succeed financially. We'd meet monthly--usually in St. Louis. And topics ranged all over the place. It was from this group that we started a Supplemental Executive Business Plan for senior executives to keep them here--sort of a golden handcuff. When the economy tanked in 1990, they helped me through layoffs and a restructuring. It was of tremendous benefit to me through 15 years. The stories of these three is fascinating too:

Dennis Hammond: Owns Hammond and Associates. When he was small he did personal financial planning for physicians and the like, but began to grow his portfolio. Recall I was Board Chair over at Central Methodist and invited Dennis to join our board, where eventually he began advising the College on its endowment investment; a niche he scaled to the point where today he works for many, very large, retirement and endowment funds across America. His CFO is former Learfield CFO, Rob Robinson. Dennis and his wife, Shelia, remain good friends.

Phil Kaiser, a Bostonian, came to St. Louis out of law school joining a silk-stocking firm but left upon its demise to enter solo practice. We liked him and his business understanding so much that we've stayed with him to this day and consider him one of the family. He's gifted and has given so much to Learfield through the years. Phil and his wife, Ilene, have one son, Andy, who now practices with his dad. Andy played football for Indiana.

Joe Mathews, serves on a number of boards in the St. Louis region--public and private--and may write more life insurance than any other person in St. Louis. Certainly he's written enough to us! The guy's got a firm understanding of business and remains thoughtful about those he's serving. He's come up with solutions to sticky problems confronting us. Pretty nice guy for an insurance salesman!

When we restructured again early this decade, we dissolved the Advisory Board. Yet, I believe, it had many advantages for Learfield.

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