

Ryan Poterack has created a financial advisory team based on a revolutionary idea.

They listen!

And their clients have said...

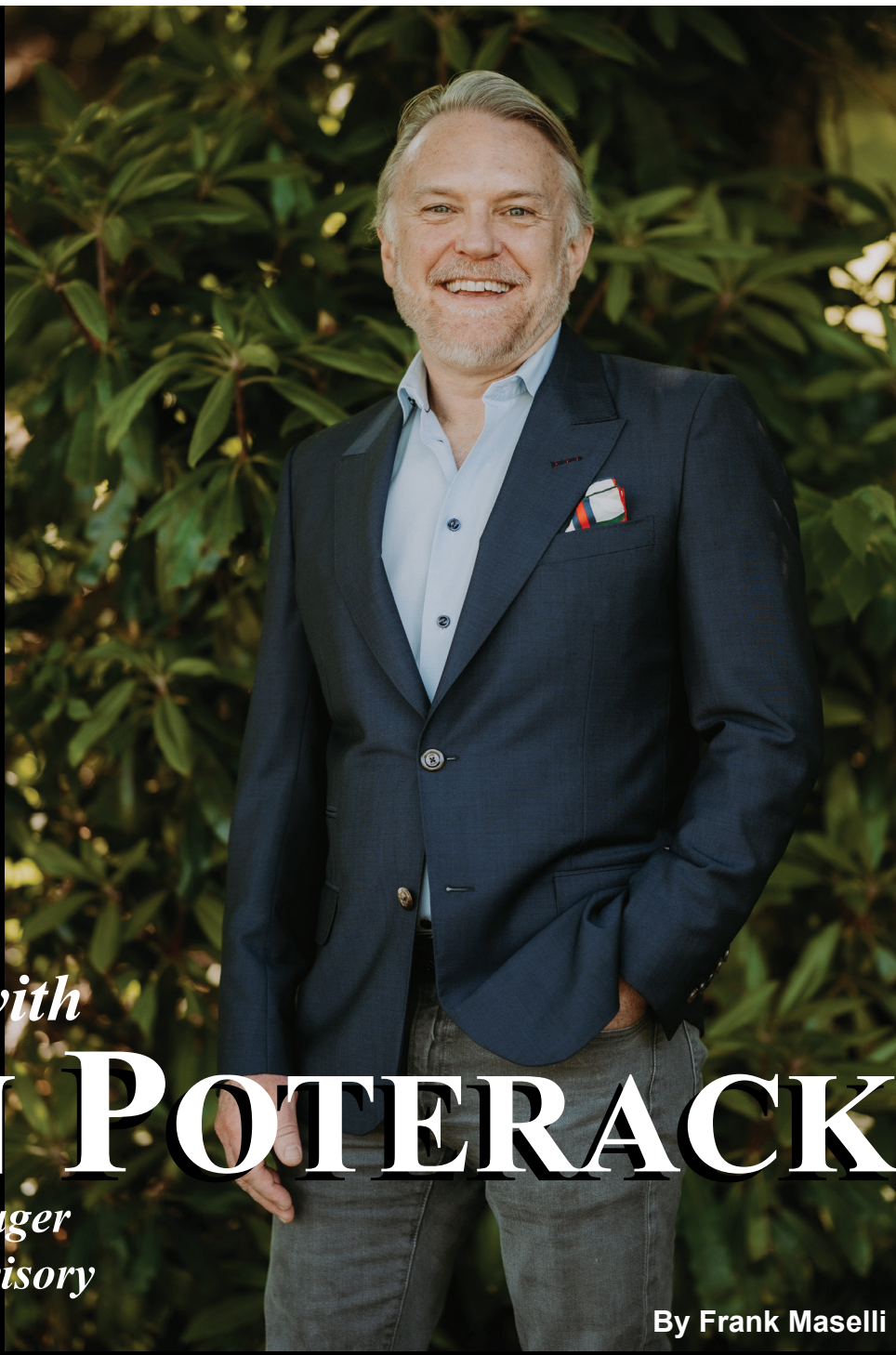
"You guys don't miss a thing!"

In a era when everyone is shouting and information is an assault on the senses... his approach helps people find the calm in the storm and reach their goals with tremendous confidence!

An Interview with

RYAN POTERACK

**CEO & Wealth Manager
Poterack Capital Advisory**



By Frank Maselli

So take us back...how did you get started in the financial profession?

I'm basically doing exactly what I wanted to do ever since I was a teenager. I always had a fire in the belly about being an entrepreneur and owning my own business. I graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Finance and started in the industry with MetLife.

That's a good firm to start with.

I was there for over seven years and became a manager very quickly. That was a great experience and I really enjoyed my time there.

And then you went independent.

I eventually reached a point where I wanted to work with a wider array of clients in a much more holistic fashion and not be limited only to the financial products a firm has to sell. Being independent lets me help people much more comprehensively and it appeals to my analytical side.

And your practice is completely virtual, so you're working with people from all over.

Yes...that's a major difference. We cover the whole country. With our technology these days, I can do everything you could ever want right from my office in Blowing Rock, NC. With



Ryan, his wife Dawn, and their youngest child, Lincoln.

geography and physical barriers removed, we can focus on families and individuals that are an excellent match with our firm. We are seeking to provide exceptional advice and value without regard for zip code.

Why did you settle in Blowing Rock?

We were living in Iowa and it can get pretty cold up there in the winter. I had been invited to speak at a conference in Charlotte and just fell in love with North Carolina. Everything was so green and warm. Blowing Rock is just beautiful, and the people are wonderful. We enjoy outside activities and living in the Blue Ridge mountains.

You mentioned your analytical side. Talk about that for a minute.

My dad was a mechanical engineer and I seem to have inherited his innate affinity for logic and analysis. So the idea of holistic planning really appeals to me. I developed an approach largely based on the extraordinary power of asking great questions and being really active in listening. When you do that well, the proper solutions to a problem become pretty self-evident.

So I spend a lot more time up front with my clients seeking to understand what's important to them. That approach has been with me for years and has become a lot more formalized today.

Formalized...how so?

Our process today generally starts with a 30-minute Zoom or phone call. I explain in detail how we work with families and very candidly how I am compensated. I like to be certain people understand that clearly. As you know, that's very different than what most folks in our industry do. It just never

made sense to me why many financial professionals are not forthright about how they get paid.

That's funny but very true. What comes next?

The next step is a questionnaire that we send out that helps them organize all of their information. Once we have that, we will prepare something we call a Smart Fit Analysis.

How does that work?

I will go over all their data and prepare a written document (Smart Fit Analysis) where I give them an analysis of their tax-efficiency, fees, expenses, conflicts of interest, investments, and estate planning documents.

So you're doing this analysis and these folks are not even clients yet?

Correct...we are still in the information and analysis stage at this point.

Is the Smart Fit Analysis a free service?

Absolutely. If qualified, and they agree to share their information with us, we will prepare the Smart Fit Analysis at no cost.

That sounds like a lot of work for you up front.

The analysis takes us several hours but we believe it's the only way to build a quality relationship with serious clients. It's our promise to them for sharing their information and it will tell us both if there is some value in working together.

So you're not taking on just anyone as a client.

Not at all. We are very selective in our practice. In fact we are almost 100% referral based. Almost all our new clients come to us from our existing clients who have been pleased with our value and service.

That's the dream for most advisors.

It's the best way to control the growth of our practice. We just cannot provide this level of service if we were mass-marketing the way most advisors do. There's nothing wrong with that, but it just doesn't fit our style.

What happens after they do the Smart Fit?

Within the Smart Fit Analysis, we quote a "Project Fee." This is like a retainer you might pay an attorney. If they agree, write a check and move forward, then we do a deep dive on everything uncovered by our initial analysis and proceed with in-depth interviewing. Our work is thorough and strategies are customized based on the unique values and desires of each family or individual we serve.

So, what exactly is the project fee for?

The Project Fee is compensation for my time and expertise in our Discovery Process. This creates a consultative environment as opposed to a selling environment. During this process, we discuss everything that may impact our client's wealth, and not how quickly the client may transfer accounts to our firm. We may or may not recommend moving accounts

to our firm, depending on the best interests of each client.

It sounds like your Discovery Process takes a tremendous amount of time on your part, correct?

Absolutely. Our Discovery Process is highly interactive and involves thorough due diligence. The goal of Discovery is simple, but it's vital to building a great relationship. It needs to be crystal clear to our clients, and to us, how we can add exceptional value to their situation before we would move their accounts over to our firm to manage. We feel this patient and comprehensive approach really sets our firm apart from others in the planning industry.

That's fascinating. Do many people take your guidance at this point and try to implement it on their own?

Very few, and that's fine. They've paid us for our time and expertise. If you think about it, when you work with a typical financial advisor they only give you two choices. You can either move all your assets under their control or you can walk away and try to do it all on your own.

We give people a third alternative. Our process allows them

to avail themselves of our expertise and execute the ideas we provide however they wish. I never forget it's their money!

Do you examine their tax and estate planning situation as well?

Definitely. It's impossible to build a comprehensive financial picture without taking all the client's needs and various concerns into account.

I have to say, this is a unique approach. I don't think I've met any advisors who do it this way.

It's a much more flexible and less threatening process for some people.

"My philosophy has always been that if I feel uncomfortable being treated a certain way, why would we treat anyone else that way?"

So after they pay the project fee, they can take your ideas and leave?

Yes, but that's uncommon. So much has been learned and trust developed in the process, that most people choose a full partnership relationship. But a few folks are happy to pay the fee for our work and future reviews, without establishing accounts at our firm.

You could actually be very helpful to the Do-It-Yourself investor.

We are. It's probably not surprising, that most DIY'ers are men. But what's fascinating is that at some point many of them realize that when they pass away they will be leaving the management of their portfolios and their estate entirely to their spouse who may have other interests and may not have had any role in the financial process up to that point.

Many die-hard DIY'ers eventually choose to work with us for that reason. They come to recognize the benefits of our professional wealth management. We've found that a huge percentage of DIY'ers are very smart, fantastic people who simply haven't met the right financial advisor yet. We assure good strategies get implemented and hold DIY'ers accountable. But either way there is never any pressure. That's just not how we operate.

This is definitely not your typical Wall Street sales culture.

My philosophy has always been that if I feel uncomfortable being treated a certain way, why would I ever treat anyone else that way? A key exception is that truth and candor is uncomfortable at times. I'm not a "yes man."

Isn't that The Golden Rule?

I'm pretty certain it is.

Tell us about you team for a minute. It sounds like you have a very high level of client service.

We have a fantastic team here at PCA. Anna Hopkins is our Client Relationship Manager and is extremely focused on our client experience and responsiveness. She can probably answer that better than anyone.



Anna Hopkins has been PCA's Client Relationship Manager since 2007.

Thanks Anna. Can you give me an overview of how you like to work with clients?

Little things matter a lot! At PCA we pay attention when clients happen to mention an upcoming vacation, a child being accepted to their college of choice, a wedding anniversary on the horizon, those kinds of things.

I coordinate something thoughtful such as mailing a nice luggage tag, or a college sweatshirt, or a bouquet of flowers. These thoughtful touches remind the client that nothing goes unnoticed here at PCA. I don't know how many times clients have told me, "You guys don't miss a thing!"

That's a wonderful compliment.

Beyond the special events, each month, I send out a very short online survey for our clients to take. One month may be on their communication preferences, another month may be on how confident they feel about their estate planning documents (or lack thereof) — the survey topic changes each month.

Those answers allow us to learn more about everyone's unique situation and preferences. It also allows us to improve our services and processes.

Do you get a good response from the surveys?

It's usually a great response. Then we follow up each survey with a video to our clients highlighting what the overall results of the survey were, and plans of actions we are taking based on those results. The clients feel validated with that follow up video communication.

Do you sense any advantages or drawbacks to virtual communication versus in-person meetings?

I have to say that virtual seems a lot easier for our clients and allows us to be much more consistent in our contact. No one needs to drive downtown, park their car and walk over to an office. We are instantly accessible to anyone anywhere in the world. And it's every bit as personal and comfortable as an in-person meeting. Actually a lot more relaxing.

Have you seen many changes in client service over the years?

I've led our Relationship Team since 2007 and even though



Ryan in cycling gear. His Christian-based fitness group (F3) is an important part of his life.

some of the technology has evolved and actually improved quite a bit, our core values have never changed. We approach each client relationship with intention, thoughtfulness, and genuine interest. That has created a firm foundation for us to continue to grow with people we enjoy working with.

Ryan, any last thoughts?

We know our practice model is different, but we're convinced it makes the most sense for people who want a deeper, more thoughtful approach without sales pressure. Times have changed and modern investors seem to be ready for education and fiduciary work. We think we've found a better way and our clients seem to agree.

Thank you!



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