

# MPA Financial Management

Throughout the scandals in the financial services industry in the 1990s and 2000s, MPA Financial Management Ltd was steadily growing, giving good, honest, quality advice to a myriad of clients. The founding father of MPA, Mike Paul, would never let a quick profit get in the way of a moral and ethical approach in an industry that is not known for such qualities.

When I was appointed Managing Director in 2010, MPA was doing quite well, but with the oncoming Retail Distribution Review and the abolishment of commission on financial products we had to alter how we offered our services to clients.

My vision was to run an efficient business where the staff were engaged in the process and had the client at the heart of everything they did. We did not want to be judged by the standards of the financial services industry but by the normal standards of running a successful business.

We appointed Eddie Ball as Compliance Director, who set about ensuring that all the processes, from beginning to end, were robust and repeatable and fit in with the new regulatory requirements. To make the administration solid, we employed extra staff and trained them up before taking on new business, so that when we were in a position to expand we knew we could cope with increased capacity.

## Inform – Educate – Inspire

We wanted to take our clients on a journey of *Inform – Educate – Inspire*. By informing and educating clients about personal and corporate finance decisions we could engage them in making life-changing decisions. This would then inspire them to invest more money with us and recommend the MPA way to friends and colleagues.

We asked clients what they wanted from us and set about finding appropriate solutions and service standards. We wanted investment solutions and products that had a low entry cost, were transparent and had no exit costs. The reasoning behind this was that clients felt uncomfortable with a pension or investment that they were tied into for any length of time.

Fees would be transparent and agreed at the outset according to the level of service required by the client. We wanted to provide choice so that clients could be offered a range of solutions that could achieve their goals at different advice, and therefore price, levels.

The service propositions were designed with the help of Hannah Price from Mischievous Marketing to differentiate MPA from its competitors. We then branded the different solutions so that we really stood out from the competition.



Phil J McGovern FPFS, Managing Director

## AT A GLANCE

### **MPA Financial Management**

- » Founded in 1988
- » Chartered financial advisory practice
- » Specialists in complex pension and investment planning
- » In Citywire's top 100 independent financial advisors 2013 and 2014

“We wanted to take our clients on a journey of *Inform* – *Educate* – *Inspire*”

Initially we launched the following suite of service levels:

- » MPA Lite – a low-cost passive solution for clients with small funds (up to £75,000) using five risk-rated model portfolios from 7IM, and ongoing advice when clients need it.
- » MPA Wealth – for larger clients with pensions and investments under £500,000 who can choose from a range of active, risk-rated model portfolios, passive solutions or a bespoke portfolio service. They are offered reviews at least annually, with tax-planning advice, cash-flow modelling and even a probate service.
- » MPA Discretionary – for clients with larger sums to invest, where we appoint a Discretionary Portfolio Manager to manage the funds on a discretionary basis, along with quarterly reviews and tax-planning advice.
- » MPA Civil – designed for Senior Civil Servants who need advice on their pension and redundancy options.

We are currently launching a Private Client proposition for our top 100 clients as we continue to evolve our business and give clients what they want.

All the while we have been honing and training our advisers and administration staff so that they provide the best service they can. As Maya Angelou said:

*‘people will forget what you said,  
people will forget what you did,  
but they will never forget how  
you made them feel’.*

We carried on looking to improve the service we gave to clients.

I employed a psychologist, who has made a huge difference in the management staff and how they work and interact together.

We needed to instil a culture of no fear so that if errors are made they are reported and corrected immediately, lessons are learnt and we move on.

We needed to engage staff in the decision-making process and get them involved, so they could be part of the fabric of the company and what we were trying to achieve. A number of committees were set up, so that all administration staff sit on at least one, with the management team, and are part of the decision-making process.

Last year I decided we should stretch our horizons and do a charity walk along Hadrian’s Wall for a local youth charity. Twelve of the staff volunteered immediately, and we began training on Sunday mornings so that we would be up to the challenge. Immediately the team bonding was there, and we completed the 90 mile walk over 6 days in April, raising £7,000 for the charity. The camaraderie and bonding was exceptional, and made me realise what a fantastic bunch of people I work with.

Since 2010 the changes we have made have resulted in:

- » an increase in the assets that we manage from £40 million to £205 million
- » an increase in recurring revenue from 40% to 80% of total turnover
- » an increase in the average case size from £80,000 to £175,000
- » an increase in staff from 9 to 25
- » an increase in turnover from £600,000 to £1.7 million this year
- » being listed in Citywire’s top 100 independent financial advisors in the UK in 2013 and 2014
- » being one of Citywire’s cover stars in 2014.

It is an exciting time in the financial management industry, with all the pension changes coming along, and we are in a fantastic position to take advantage of it over the next few years.