



EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

A Northwestern Mutual Advisor's "Jerry Maguire-Style" Breakaway Story

With Brett Gilliland, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Visionary Wealth Advisors

Mindy Diamond:

Welcome to the latest episode of our podcast series for financial advisors. Today's episode is a Northwestern Mutual Advisors, Jerry Maguire style breakaway story. It's a conversation with Brett Gilliland, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Visionary Wealth Advisors. I'm Mindy Diamond, and this is Mindy Diamond on Independence.

Mindy Diamond:

This podcast is available on our website, diamond-consultants.com, as well as Apple Podcasts and other major podcast platforms. If you aren't already a subscriber and want to be notified of new show releases, please subscribe right in her favorite podcast platform or on the episode page on our website. For Apple Podcast users, I'd be grateful if you'd give the show a review. Your input helps us to make the series better and alerts other advisors like you, who may find the content to be relevant. And while you're at it, if you know others who are considering a change or simply looking to learn about the industry landscape, please feel free to share this episode or the series widely.

Mindy Diamond:

The theme of incongruence we've through many of the stories shared by advisors who've changed firms or models. It's this feeling of misalignment between an advisor's goals and that of their firm, which drives change more than any other motivator because when your vision is conflicting with that of your firm, it becomes difficult if not impossible, to serve your clients and grow your business. As the Managing Director at Northwestern Mutual, Brett Gilliland found that the lack of alignment could not be more apparent nor more limiting. In his role, he wore multiple hats from serving as a financial advisor plus recruiter with the responsibility for the training and development of novice advisors. But as he became more successful, he also became less satisfied. The feeling of being at odds with the goals of Northwestern became more apparent.

Mindy Diamond:

He wanted greater agency over how he served clients. He wanted to be able to freely market. He wanted to give unbiased, unconflicted advice without feeling pigeonholed into selling insurance. And ultimately as he put it, he wanted to play in a different sandbox. So after 13 years with Northwestern, he decided it was time to build something that was more aligned with his vision. In March of 2014, RIA firm Visionary Wealth Advisors was born, but it's his Jerry Maguire exit story that's really compelling and a true testament to the respect and trust he developed with his team at Northwestern. Today, Visionary manages some 1.8 billion in assets and has 30 advisors on the team.

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In this episode, Brett talks with Louis Diamond sharing details about the motivation behind his move, his unique perspective as a Managing Director at Northwestern, how he's able to fully realize his vision as an independent business owner, and of course shares a resignation story unlike any other. Plus much more. So let's get to it.

Louis Diamond:

Brett, thanks so much for joining us today.

Brett Gilliland:

Absolutely. It's good to be with you.

Louis Diamond:

Very good. Why don't you tell us about yourself and how you got started in the business?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. I went to Eastern Illinois University and right out of college, I decided I wanted to be in the financial planning business back then. This was the early 2000, I guess, 2001 and they were called stockbrokers back then. That's what I wanted to do and knew that right out of college and it really goes back to when I was about 15 years old. My cousin Dean was actually a stockbroker and they drove the gold BMW, had the speakers in the headrest and that was pretty cool, right when you're 15 years old. So I thought for sure, I wanted to do that. I went to a job fair and found the financial planning stockbroker world and here we are almost 20 years later.

Louis Diamond:

Perfect. And your most recent employment before launching your own RIA was as a Managing Director at Northwestern Mutual. Can you talk a little bit about that role and your day to day? Because my understanding is you weren't a full-time advisor. You had some other duties and responsibilities as well.

Brett Gilliland:

Absolutely. So I was a managing director at my previous firm and we were responsible for recruiting. That's a big recruiting world where I was at previously and so we were in charge of recruiting advisors to what we called our district office. I was in Edwardsville, Illinois. We still have an office there to this day, but that's what I was doing. I was recruiting advisors into this business and we also had a college internship program where we would have anywhere from 20 to 25 interns. I had a team of people that, whether it was a college unit director or field directors or mentors, recruiters, a great team of people around me, but that's what we had to do. We had to go out and recruit new advisors to the firm. These



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weren't like industry folks. These were people that were brand new, just like myself, right out of college, didn't have any experience.

Brett Gilliland:

So there was tons of recruiting, training, development, mentor meetings, one off drive by meetings, maybe being about how do you prospect, how do you make more phone calls? How do you find more prospects and so on and so forth, but then also I was a financial advisor and did that at a high level as well. So it was one of the things I really enjoyed because I was doing multiple things throughout the day, wearing lots of different hats.

Louis Diamond:

Excellent. It sounds like the Northwestern model of recruiting, it's like churn and burn. You're expecting that a lot of folks aren't going to make it through the program. So I'm curious what separated the advisors that ultimately made it and went on to have successful careers?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. I mean, there's so many different things we've looked over the years. And so when I looked at the success that we had from a recruiting standpoint, I learned that they grew up with what I would call, I'm using air quotes here, since you can't see me, but a normal background. What I mean by that is they were blessed with a great family life. They had support at home, whether that was growing up as a child, but also in their adult life. Again, when I just called this normal life, which is maybe that's fair, maybe it's not fair, but it seemed like they had a lot of support around them from loved ones. I think that's so important. This business can be very lonely, especially when you're a 23, 22, 24 years old, and you're running around trying to find prospects and it was completely different.

Brett Gilliland:

The ones that we found that were successful, a lot of more career changers. We had a testing program if they did certain tests on this personality, we found that they did well, but also saw an athletic background. I mean, at one time we had, I think it was 16 advisors that I had recruited that were all college athletes. That doesn't mean you're going to only be successful if you're a college athlete, but for us, that's what we found one of the college athletes were working in that environment. Because you had to go out and make a name for yourself. You had to go out and prospect, you had to be driven. You had to go out and make 40 or 50 or 60 phone calls every single day and you had to get 25 referrals a week.

Brett Gilliland:



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All these activity drivers that you had to do that quite frankly, I probably wouldn't be in this business if it wasn't for those things when I was in my early 20s, but I had to do it. I found that people that were competitive and wanted to be great in things in life, those were the ones that were the most successful.

Louis Diamond:

Very interesting. I mean, so much of the industry's attention, I know our whole business not to mention is focused on recruiting experienced advisors because obviously they come with clients, they can hit the ground running already pre-trained. Do you have a viewpoint though, on if someone is building a firm from the ground up, what do you think is a better approach? Is it bringing on experienced folks with books or what you did at Northwestern, which was career changers, ex athletes, and entry-level advisors?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah, I think it's a great question and what we did was... I don't know if necessarily we meant to do this and I say Tim Hammett, my business partner who co-founded Visionary Wealth Advisors with me when we started visionary. So he was just a and I say just meaning he was a wealth management advisor. He was doing fee-based financial planning at Northwestern and I was doing the recruiting, developing, training, and still being a financial advisor as well. And so the two of us came together and almost immediately thought we could do this differently. I always say the sandbox I was playing in was let's just say a size of a piece of paper and I wanted it to be the size of the football field. That's what I saw in the RIA space that was out there, that the sky's the limit and you can do so much for your clients that I couldn't do at that time at that role.

Brett Gilliland:

We immediately went to no longer doing any career changers, no inexperienced people, we just like literally cold Turkey. I just went to starting to recruit experienced advisors. What we found was that people were looking for a platform where they could go and have some independence, but also be interdependent. And so the advisors that we have now are just doing so well because there is an interdependent relationship with us, with visionary and with those advisors. They own their own book of business, they own their clients, but at the same time, they're not in business by themselves. They're for themselves, but not by themselves and we just found that there was a really, a big market out there for experienced advisors that want that type of platform.

Louis Diamond:

Understood. Let's go back to when you're still at Northwestern. Of course, you could have just stayed at the firm. You sound like you're a successful advisor in your own, right. Kept recruiting, kept leveraging the infrastructure, but instead you opted to transition to form your own RIA firm back in 2014. Can you



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elaborate on what some of your frustrations were and maybe what you felt you couldn't do for your clients there?

Brett Gilliland:

For me, as I was becoming more and more successful, I was becoming less satisfied with my career and really what did it for me is I was fortunate enough to make what they call forum inside of Northwestern Mutual, which I think it's, I don't know, the top 250 advisors let's call it. I remember not being real, real happy, even though I just had a phenomenal year with production. We had just led the company in recruiting for managing directors. So there was a lot of things going well, but for some reason I still wasn't satisfied and I didn't know what that was. And so I just kept looking internal for me and I wanted that entrepreneurial spirit. I wanted to go out and build something. I wanted to go out and build a brand. I wanted to build something that our clients were excited about and proud of and who they were working with.

Brett Gilliland:

I say all this in there is a ton of great people at Northwestern Mutual. I still have friends there to this day. They're doing great work for people. So it wasn't necessarily that. It was just more for me was I wanted to do something more. I wanted to, again, to build something. I think there, we were building a nice income, but we weren't building an asset and we weren't really building a firm because you're doing it for the mothership, if you will. And for me, it just became again, that I wanted to play in a different sandbox and whether it's going to have a podcast or do some things that we do now, we just couldn't do there in comprehensive financial planning where you're not biased on either a product or what avenue they need to go down as a client. We wanted to be unbiased and have this independent firm that we could just say, "This is how we're going to serve clients going forward."

Louis Diamond:

Definitely, and being in more of a managerial role, seeing how the sausage was made, did that change your vantage point on, I guess, your motivation to leave. Did you get a better look or different look on what was slowing or limiting down the advisors that were under your tutelage?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah, but I think too is, and I can't say this for that previous firm in every city around the country, obviously. And again, there's great people everywhere, but for us, it was this stereotype as well. When I threw that business card down, people would automatically just, "Oh, I'm good. I don't need insurance." I got so tired for 12 and a half years of doing that. That really drained on me over the years and it got to a point where that's not what I'm about. It's not coming in just trying to sell you insurance. This is insurance certainly part of a financial plan, of course it is. I think we all know that people that are doing



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comprehensive wealth management planning, but it's not the only piece, right? I think that's where I think we got pigeonholed into thinking you're just the insurance person and that feeling wasn't great.

Brett Gilliland:

Again, even though it can have some good products, it wasn't great and so we wanted more and we wanted to go out. I keep saying comprehensive financial planning, but that's what we wanted to do and where we weren't pigeonholed into this corner of you're just that sales guy. It was more about the relationship and the impact we're having on the community and the impact we're having on those client's lives on more ways than just a life insurance or an investment and what have you. There's more to it than that and I think that's really what we're focused on is the whole person here. Visionary is building that with the right people. I don't know if we can curse on here, Louis, but we call it the no a-hole rule, right? So no a-hole is the recruit criteria here and that's the first step is making sure that we want to be around you.

Brett Gilliland:

You want to be around us and that we're going to be a good fit. I found that you had more control over that as I was researching what this RIA thing was, is I had control over that versus just having to recruit quite frankly, a bunch of kids like me. 22 years old, right out of college and I was joked that I couldn't even spell investments or insurance when I started, but it was like, I want to do more with higher, more sophisticated people because that's what the community wants. That's what they want in their financial advisor. And I just, quite frankly, I always say my gray hair and the wrinkles aren't from four kids. It's from having to recruit people that hopefully one or two out of 10 of those people would make it long-term in the business and I just couldn't do that any longer.

Louis Diamond:

Yeah, definitely. I think what you're mentioning around feeling like you and your practice were at odds with the mantra or the reputation of Northwestern is the term in congruence. We hear it often from advisors at many different types of firms, whether they're at a bank dominated firm saying, "I'm not a banker." I like recommending bank products where it makes sense similar to how you probably enjoy recommending insurance products, where it makes sense, but you don't want that to be the driving force. If you have a vision that's different from what the firm really wants you to be, then many advisors look at it as a means to escape that box and build their own. So that's perfect pivot point here.

Louis Diamond:

Before we get to what you coined your Jerry Maguire style moment, kind of a teaser for what's to come. And let's talk first about your due diligence process back probably 2012/2013 before launching the firm.



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So you founded Visionary Wealth Advisors as a RIA hybrid, but what else did you look at before settling on this route?

Brett Gilliland:

It's actually amazing. I didn't really look at too many things. I would literally go into my office. I can picture it to this day clear as can be and I would look up independence and I would type in financial independence and different things. I knew I wanted to stay in this industry. I love what we get to do every day. I love that we get to help people achieve a future greater than their past. That's our firm's mission statement and that is so critically important for me, for our advisors and for the things that we do for people. But it was just one of those things and I kept coming back to this independent RIA, Registered Investment Advisor, and growing up in the insurance at Northwestern Mutual world, I didn't even know what an RIA was, but everything I read I'm like, "I want that."

Brett Gilliland:

I kept reading it and I kept studying it. When I say kept, I mean, this went on from November of 2013 to January of 2014. So this was about a month and a half. I can't even tell you how much stuff I read on RIA and what it meant. I scheduled a meeting with one of our custodians and they came to St. Louis and I went and had a meeting with them and that was where Tim, my business partner. It was just one of those things when I called Tim and I said, "Hey, what keeps you here at Northwestern?"

Brett Gilliland:

I was hopeful that he was going to give me this long drawn out reason why it was the greatest place on earth and what happened was four and a half hours later, we got off the telephone. From one phone call, four and a half hours later in January of 2014, early January and said, "Okay, I can't do this without you. You can't do this without me. Let's go build something great." Literally fast forward, not even 90 days later, Visionary Wealth Advisors was started. It was an incredible 90 days and it was a lot of fun and still a lot of fun to this day. I just look back at that and I'm glad we took the risk to make the jump.

Louis Diamond:

The ecosystem seven, eight years ago, was very different than today, but did you consider either plugging into an existing infrastructure or hiring more of a platform or service provider?

Brett Gilliland:

Didn't know. Did not even look at those opportunities at all? Not one of them. I mean, it was just one of those things we knew early on we wanted to build something and we just went all in, burn the ships. It's let's go, let's make it happen and we did. Like I said, met with our custodians and hired our legal counsel firm to help us build the RIA and then literally just the way it went.



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Louis Diamond:

Amazing. Okay. So this is the exciting part of the interview. You told me this story, when we were preparing for this interview. I want to hear the story in as much detail as you can share about resignation day, you coined your Jerry Maguire style moment and I think it's such a unique story. It's very different than how I think many folks would approach this, but it's instructive and I think demonstrates your conviction for why this was the right move for you.

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. It's one of those days, I wish I would have just been able to film somehow. I like had this camera above my head or something. The emotions that went into it. I remember it was March 24, 2014. It was a dreary Monday in St. Louis and our managing partner was in St. Louis. I was about 30 minutes outside of it and I remember texting him that morning and just saying, "Hey, I'm going to swing by your office. I can't remember 7:00 or 7:30. Do you have a couple minutes?" And he said, "Is everything okay?" And I said, "With my health I'm with my family, everything is okay." And that was the end of it. What you don't know about me Louis, I'm a very nervous person. I grew up very anxious and I call it my comfort zone callus. Calluses on your hands from playing golf or working in the yard or doing whatever you're doing.

Brett Gilliland:

I think that we as humans can get these callouses around our comfort zone and we don't want to break through those. I've tried now for 20 years to constantly break out of my comfort zone. This was one of those defining moments. It was arguably one of the biggest decisions professionally, if not probably the biggest decision actually that I've ever made in my life. So I went and resigned and there was splashing water on my face in the bathroom before I went in there. I was so nervous and then I walked down because again, I was doing what you needed to do and I was on the board for the managing directors at their home office, their national headquarters. I was doing the things that you needed to do to be successful, but I just wasn't happy and I thought at the time, I think I was 36, 37.

Brett Gilliland:

I didn't want to do that the rest of my life and I needed to take this risk. And this risk was, I had 23, 24 advisors in my district office. I owned the building that I was in. So I had my own lease because Northwestern does it sign the lease. At least I didn't at that time. I had my own lease in my own building and all these people, right? That worked with us. So it was very scary. It was a very big risk. I went in, I resigned and he said, "What would you like to do?" And I said, "Well, I feel like I would like to go at least tell everybody in our office that I'm leaving. I'm resigning. I feel like I owe that to them. I've recruited and trained and developed every single one of these people, and I've spent countless hours and blood, sweat, and tears with these folks. I owe it to them."



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Brett Gilliland:

And he said, "Okay, I can be there at 11:30." So I went and just sat in my car for a couple hours and just what just happened moment and then went into my own district office and had everybody in the firm there and was able to tell them what I did and that I was leaving and that I started at this place called Visionary Wealth Advisors named probably like a week before that, because everything was happening so quickly. So long story short, that was about an hour and 20 minute meeting and a guy in the back of the room. Joe's his name? Joe Reiniger that raises his hand and he says, "What about all those people that want to go with Brett?" And my internal body was screaming and jumping up and down, but I had to stay really calm and collective.

Brett Gilliland:

Joe and I still to this day, who's with us, we talk about that. It was just one of those moments, right? It was like, "Wow, hopefully this happens. This is my Jerry Maguire moment. I'm leaving, who's coming with me?" I literally left my own office, we went to a restaurant and I got the biggest table that you could get. I sat there for 10 or 15 minutes by myself and I'm like, "Oh goodness, this is not good." And then all of a sudden, and it gives me chills thinking about it. All of a sudden, one by one incomes these advisors, and it's the big hug. It's the big bear hug of, "Oh my gosh, let me hear more. Let me hear more." And within 24 to 48 hours, 15 of those advisors left and came with us.

Louis Diamond:

Holy cow. Wow.

Brett Gilliland:

And it was incredible.

Louis Diamond:

That is incredible. And what was the pitch? Obviously you built up trust and respect and all of that. That's earned, it's not pitched, but obviously these advisors are trusting their life's work to you and their families. So what did you say to get them over the finish line?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah, it was painting a vision. I mean, hence the name, Visionary Wealth Advisors. I mean, it's what the future can and will be like, if you look up the definition and so we wanted to paint this picture for what the future will and could be like for these advisors. I mean, I think anybody that's in an environment where this isn't just a Northwestern thing, this is any environment where every single month, you're starting over at zero and you've got to go out, eat what you kill and you got to just stay on all day long every single day.



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Brett Gilliland:

It's hard to build true long lasting values, based deep relationships with clients when you're constantly in sales mode. I think those advisors knew that. Some of those advisors at that time were seven years in the business. Some of them were two years in the business and it goes back to, yes, you talked about trust and respect, but it also went back to a relationship.

Brett Gilliland:

And that relationship was built over two, five, seven years of being in the trenches with them and being with them every single morning, literally Monday through Friday at 7:30, we would have meetings and it was training meetings. Just sitting down and talking meetings. It was accountability meetings. It was ideas sharing meetings. And you do that for that long, you build this relationship and then they see a future that's greater than their past and then they literally, and I don't take this lightly, right? They literally resigned from their careers to go and follow this vision in this dream. I look at them now, seven years later, seven plus years later, they're all doing better than they were doing before. Every single one of them is doing better than they were before.

Brett Gilliland:

So their future is greater than their past. Their present is greater than their past. And it's just cool to look back at that and see the things that are happening now in these people's lives and it's just unreal to me that to think that people would put their trust in something like that with literally no business cards, no website done, no logo done, nothing and they said, "Let's go, we're all in."

Louis Diamond:

Just in idea and so different than most advisors that are breaking away to establish their own independent firm. There's likely the key advisors are on board. They're probably involved in the due diligence or at least consulted throughout the process. It's oftentimes though it's the support team that's left in the dark just for confidentiality purposes, but you really took this confidentiality and discreteness to a whole new level. It's a pretty insane story. I'm curious too. I mean, anyone who goes independent is taking a risk.

Louis Diamond:

They're taking the risk of what if my business doesn't come? Taking the risk of not having an income for a period of time. Taking the risk of not getting a big check by going to a broker dealer firm. So not only did you take that risk, but you also own the building you're in and did this without really knowing what the base of the business will look like. How did you reconcile doing this and just going for it?



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Brett Gilliland:

A lot of faith and hope. I mean, literally just faith and hope and trust. I believed in relationships, I believed in myself, I believed in what we were going to go build. I believed in the advisors, in our team, and our staff that came with us as well. And that was just the advisors we also had, who's now our COO. Hurt is her name now, but Kate Sollberger, she came with us from day one and Robin Edwards and so many others that just came with us, Lauren Huber. They were with us from day one back at that firm and they said, "You know what? Yeah, we're also going to come with you as well." It just was one of those things that I think in life sometimes you don't make that big decision until it hurts enough.

Brett Gilliland:

For me, the upside was so great. The downside, I was just so less than worried about it. Because I thought if I can make a career and do this, and the amount of sales and the activity and the grit that you have to do, which I'm thankful for. I thought, you know what, even if this thing doesn't work, we'll figure it out. But honestly, I mean, there was a few sleepless nights, but I would say 95% of the thought was all positive and just the expectations of what would happen.

Louis Diamond:

Yeah. Just thinking about what was possible. So end of your first year as Visionary, you had around 300 million in assets, across 12 advisors. And today you shared you're north of 1.8 billion in assets and about 30 advisors. How have you grown the advisor ranks and what's responsible for the very impressive growth in assets?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. I would just say, it's going out in what we call playing in traffic. It's getting to know people in the industry. It's getting referred to great people in the industry. And whether they've been at a bank channel, an insurance channel, a wirehouse channel, an independent channel, it's just us going out and talking to other individuals. But also our advisors referring us to individuals. I mean, so our advisors they're happy, they are fine with referring us to people that they think would be other great advisors inside of our firm.

Brett Gilliland:

It's a collaboration of people coming together for the greater good and building a platform and look, the better we do at visionary, the better the does because we can offer more and more to them that ultimately helps their bottom line become more profitable. When you're brand spanking new and you have 300 million, well, you're charging for technology, you're doing this, you're charging for that.

Brett Gilliland:



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Well, as we've grown, we made a major investment into our technology platform and we pay for that for our advisors. Well, seven years ago, we couldn't even think about doing that, but today we can. And now what's the next three years and the five years and seven years and 10 years ahead of that, what does that look like? So our vision is not about size. It's not about X billions of dollars under management. Our vision is the platform that we build and what it ultimately does for the interdependent advisor. That's on our platform that chooses to partner with Visionary Wealth Advisors. How efficient can we make their practice and give them the best platform possible.

Louis Diamond:

Can you explain this concept of interdependence versus independence? What does it mean to you?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah, it's a great question. And just in all transparency, I think you will have people come on, especially a firm like ours, where you have individual advisors coming in to the firm. We've lost a couple of advisors. What happens is those advisors, as they grow, they see the greatness in running and doing your own thing as well. So I can't blame those advisors for that. Now, what can I learn from it? But I can't blame them for wanting to do their thing and have their name on the wall. And that's what some of these advisors, a couple that have left that's what's happened. But the interdependent relationship is I know the costs that it takes and the time that it takes and the compliance and the marketing, the branding, the website, the cybersecurity, all the stuff that goes along with it.

Brett Gilliland:

Most advisors don't want to have to worry about things like a lease on a printer, right? They don't want to sign their lease and personally guarantee a lease on a commercial building. They don't want to do that and so what we want is the advisor that's interdependent that wants to be independent, but doesn't want to be in business by themselves. They want a platform, they want people, they want teams and that's what we provide and that's what I think we're really good at is providing that for our advisors.

Louis Diamond:

I think each advisor who joins you, even though they own their book of business, they all adopt the visionary brand. Is that correct?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. So 90 something percent of them have just Visionary only, but a few have Visionary Wealth Advisors and then they're like the insight group, for example, which is a team here with two of our advisors. They're the insight group of Visionary Wealth Advisors or the very good group of Visionary Wealth Advisors.



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Louis Diamond:

What's the benefit of doing it that way. Can the advisors that join you, of course they have the option of having their own brand and many people are excited by creating their own DNA and building their own identity versus helping build something existing. So what's the rationale for that.

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. Look, I don't think there's a right or wrong. I think it's just going to, again, find that person that wants to be interdependent versus independent is what we're looking for is the rationale behind that is in my opinion, take Apple. For example, they don't have the Diamond Apple Store. They don't have the Gilliland Apple Store in St. Louis and in Brooklyn, New York, it's the Diamond Apple Store. It's Apple. What do you know about Apple? It stands for a great product with efficiency, easy to use, good-looking. All those things you understand, just using Apple as the analogy here, you understand what Apple stands for. No different than what I see and what we see is what we call the impossible company is we're trying to build this impossible company. Don't say, I can't say, "How do we do it? How do we build this?"

Brett Gilliland:

We're getting feedback from our advisors and our team and our executive team and so how do we build this impossible company? How do we build the quote-unquote, Apple of financial planning? And so Visionary, my vision, our vision is when I see that logo or somebody in the community sees that logo, they know what it stands for. They know that they do comprehensive, high-end white glove service, high touch, financial planning. They know they are really good people in the community. They give back whether it's their place of worship or it's a charity for cancer or it's their kid's school or their coaching in your kid's baseball team in the community. They know what that stands for and that's what it's about for people, in my opinion.

Louis Diamond:

Amazing. That's a good segue into my next question, which is about Visionary's mission and how this flows into your business.

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. So our mission statement is to help people achieve a future greater than their past. I mean, if I had everybody that was listening to your show right now, Louis, and I said, "Raise your hand if you want a future greater than your past." I would assume everybody listening would raise their hand." Everybody wants a future greater than your past. And so our job is to slow down with our clients, take them off the treadmill of life, set them down for an hour, three hours, 10 hours a year, whatever it takes for that



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client and really open that Pandora's box and find out internally in their soul, what is important to them? What makes them tick?

Brett Gilliland:

It's our job to unlock that and then help all those things come out. And so then it's again, to help those people achieve a future greater than their past. I know a lot of people say that and they do that. They're doing great jobs in our industry of doing that, but that's just to our core. That's what we believe is to see that future be greater and helping them daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, whatever it may be helping them achieve that.

Louis Diamond:

Love it. How about charity work and community engagement?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah, that's huge. I mean, we have a lot of people involved in tons of charities and whether they're sitting on boards, it's being involved in running events. My wife and I personally, we have a charity, a foundation we started 14 years ago called Swing Fore Hope, F-O-R-E because I'm a big golfer. It's Swing Fore Hope and we raise money every single year to give back to those that have been affected by cancer. My mother-in-law three of her sisters... Mom and two of her sisters all got diagnosed with cancer. My dad was six weeks after we started the foundation had cancer, her dad a year after that got cancer. So three of our four parents have cancer or had cancer and thankfully, so far they've beat that disease. And so we just make it our mission. We feel like if we've been put on this earth to get, we all make great money from our wonderful clients, but we also have to give back to that community.

Brett Gilliland:

That's just what we believe as a firm, but just individually as well for Swing Fore Hope. It's a passion of ours that we just want to help as many people as we possibly can. And we help pay mortgages, pay their power bill, pay for them to get to and from chemo, whatever it may be. That's what we're about. It's amazing. Our clients come out, our advisors come out and support the cause and we just have three or four events a year to really make a big impact.

Louis Diamond:

That's incredible. We'll put the link to the charity on the episode page so folks can check it out and hopefully contribute.



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Brett Gilliland:

Thank you.

Louis Diamond:

That's really cool initiative. So two more questions for you. I know you're the host of the Circuit of Success Podcast. You've been doing it for four to four and a half years. So want you to give a plug for it. What do you talk about? Why did you do it and ultimately, how does it impact your business?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. Thanks for talking about that. The Circuit of Success, it's been around since February of 2016, I think and so we've had lots of shows and lots of great guests and really what it's about I always say it's to give people the best tips and tools for their life. Whether that's through wealth management, it's through mindset, it's through business topics, it's through goal planning, all the things that we want to do. We've had hall of fame athletes, to big time business people, to your normal everyday business owner, running around on the streets that we can learn from. It's really picking their brains and finding out what's made them tick over their lifetime, over their career and what's made them successful. For me, it comes down to the four things that are the circuits of success.

Brett Gilliland:

It's your attitude, your belief system, the actions that you have to take every single day to ultimately get your results. And when you follow those beliefs and those attitudes and that action, you will get results in your life. So it's really peeling the onion layers back on so many great people from the men and women around the world and finding out what's made them successful in those areas and how it's helped them personally, professionally, emotionally, intellectually, financially, et cetera, to really live the life of their dreams. And again, to help people achieve a future greater than their past.

Louis Diamond:

I mean, of course you're doing that podcast because it's something you're passionate about. You're not getting paid to do it. So as a business person, have you been able to track it all? What sort of growth it's led to and I'm asking you because a lot of our adviser listeners, one of the things they envision is having a podcast or at least having the ability to, and being able to generate business in a different way, scale to communication. What's been your experience of that?

Brett Gilliland:

Yeah. There certainly has been business from that. There's no doubt about it. I mean, it's one of those things you get done having a conversation with somebody for 45 minutes and getting deep into their life and their story and their mission and what's made them tick as I always say. I've just built a different



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relationship with that person, right. Versus me just going and having coffee and having a nice coffee in meeting and talking about whatever. I'm not doing it to try to get them as a client. I'm really not. I'm doing it because for me, I jokingly call it my weekly therapy. I'm sitting down with some of the best people in our world on leadership and the books they've read and the failures they've had, the successes that they've had, what do they do from an exercise? How do they eat better? How do they become a better dad or a husband or wife, whatever it may be.

Brett Gilliland:

I selfishly get to do that every single week with these people, right? I'm learning. I'm going through therapy, but what does that do? That allows me, in my opinion, to give more to our advisors. I'm learning, right? I'm growing. I'm in the trenches as well as an advisor. So I know what's going on out there. I know the questions we're getting from people. It allows me to be better for our advisors, it allows me to be better for my family, it allows me to be better for the community, and if we're continually getting better day in and day out, we're all going to win.

Brett Gilliland:

And yes. Do we get clients? Absolutely. Do I track it? No, because the point of that is I want to get better. I want other people to get better that are listening to it and are following our listenership continues to grow week after week and it's just one of those things that I know we're helping people get better. If I'm at a board meeting or I'm somewhere in the community, weekly, something comes up about the podcast and people want to talk about it. So it's a great conversation starter as well.

Louis Diamond:

Final question then we'll let you get on with your day. Something we always ask, any advice to advisors who maybe thinking about making the leap to independence?

Brett Gilliland:

Absolutely. I would say trust your gut is usually right. I shouldn't say usually. For me, it's always right. Maybe not at the level you think it will be as quick as you think it will be, but I do believe whatever your gut is telling you is what you should follow. Because if you go to your head right to your actual brain, your brain is going to give you reasons. It's wired to tell us why it's going to be so difficult and it's going to tell us why you shouldn't make that leap. Why all of your clients won't come with you, why this won't happen and why that won't happen. But what your gut's telling you is I want more. I want to be part of an interdependent or an independent relationship. That's what I'm seeking and trust me, you will have more clients come with you than you think will have come with you.



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Brett Gilliland:

We've seen it happen time and time again and the number one fear people have and I'm sure you see this Louis is what? My clients won't go with me. My clients don't want to move. My old firm or the firm I'm at they're the reason they're my client. Oh, that's just not true. They're with you because of who you are. Even as a leader of Visionary Wealth Advisors, I'm not naive to think the only reason somebody is a client of a guy or a gal at our firm is because of Visionary. No, it's because of that advisor. They own the relationship and if you truly own your relationship, I say, take the jump because you're going to be very successful and your mind will be blown six months from now when you make that jump of what actually happened.

Louis Diamond:

Yeah. That's powerful advice. Brett, this has been a really cool interview. Thank you for enlightening us, sharing your Jerry Maguire moment and also just giving us some great parting words of wisdom.

Brett Gilliland:

Absolutely, Louis, always good to be with you and love what you guys are doing. You're helping tons of people and just absolutely love it. So keep up the great work and appreciate you having me on the show.

Mindy Diamond:

It's easy to understand why Brett's team was so eager to follow him. He himself is a visionary with sage advice rooted in authenticity, but it's his threshold question that I found to be the most powerful takeaway from the episode and one every advisor should ask. What keeps me here? I thank you for listening and I encourage you to visit our website diamond-consultants.com and click on the tools and resources link for valuable content. You'll also find a link to subscribe for regular updates to the series. And if you're not a recipient of our weekly email Perspectives for Advisors, click on the articles link to browse recent topics.

Mindy Diamond:

These written pieces are an ideal way to stay informed about what's going on in this space without expending the energy that full-on exploration requires. Feel free to email or call me if you have specific questions. I can be reached at (973) 476-8578 or at mdiamond@diamond-consultants.com. Please note that all requests are handled with complete discretion and confidentiality. And again, if you enjoyed this episode, feel free to share it with a colleague who might benefit from its content. And if you're listening on the Apple Podcast app, I'd be grateful if you gave it a star rating and a review. That will let other advisors know if it's a show worth their time to listen to. This is Mindy Diamond on Independence.



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