

Combating the Negative IMPACT OF WEALTH

How One Man Tackles the Problem of Unsuccessful Wealth Transfer

by *Laura A. Roser*



“**T**he defining moment was when I was sitting with a client in our conference room,” says Shawn Barberis, Founder of Aspida360. Shawn recounts staring into his client’s eyes and seeing real sadness there, which didn’t make sense to him at all. This client had millions of dollars. He had a beautiful life, a wife who loved him, and great children.

“What’s wrong?” Shawn asked and looked down at the estate planning documents his client just signed. Maybe there was an error. Had he done something wrong?

The client shrugged and said, “I’m really concerned that this is just more money to mess up my kids.”

Shawn couldn’t stop thinking about it. He had advised hundreds of clients throughout his career as an attorney and in the financial services industry. The focus had always been on preserving assets, passing along wealth, reducing taxes, and mitigating risk. But the emotional success of a family? The thought had never occurred to him.

Were other clients concerned about messing up their kids with their wealth?

Over the next week, Shawn called seven or eight of his top entrepreneur clients and asked them a simple

question: Are you concerned about the negative impact of your wealth on your family?

They all said yes.

That's when Shawn got to work. His solution to reducing the negative impact of wealth is The A+ LIFE Family Pentagon (A+LIFE), a comprehensive planning software platform that allows clients and their advisors to track their intangible assets. "It fills what I call the hole in the middle of the professional planning doughnut," says Shawn. "What I call More Than Money planning: core values, education, family traditions, life experiences, and philanthropy."

Intangible Problems Lead to Tangible Failures

In his book *For Love and Money*, Roy Williams writes, "91% of all wealth transfers fail by the time the assets reach the wealth creators' grandchildren." And if you look into the reasons for failure, only 2% is due to legal or technical errors. So, something else is certainly at play. Much of the problems have to do with communication issues among family members and inadequately prepared heirs.

For years affluent clients and their advisors have been aware of the problem of wealth transfer. The odds are not in the family's favor, but the question still remains what to do about it? I've spoken with various experts and they all have their processes from creating family mission statements to structuring asset transfer so that it holds heirs accountable to conducting regular family meetings. It's a tough problem because there is not one solution and it's often relative based on a family's situation, background and a million other factors. There are, however, best practices that increase the success of a family's wellbeing and odds of retaining wealth for generations.

In my legacy consultation practice, I like to compare creating the proper environment for successful wealth transfer to planting a garden. You buy the right seeds, put them in the right soil at the right time of year, water them, weed around them and hope for success. Usually it turns out pretty well, but sometimes a freeze or ravenous insects can ruin your hard work. That's the risk of life and the risk of wealth transfer. Still, it's definitely worth the effort because when it does work out, the benefits are enormous.

Healthy, nourished families produce children who are grateful, competent and resilient. They manage to retain and, often, grow their wealth generation after generation. They give to their communities and make the world better.

I've spoken with Shawn a couple of times about A+ LIFE and one thing that truly impresses me is his attention to

Shawn Barberis co-founded Premier Planning Group, an independent financial services firm with several offices up and down the East Coast. After several very good years, his entrepreneurial spirit got the best of him and he decided to move away from that partnership and start Aspida360. Shawn knew the key to acting in his clients' best interests was delivering solutions that fit in the palm of one's hand. He launched a mission of "Creating an army of like-minded advisors to improve our world one family at a time." To learn more about Aspida360 and A+ LIFE, visit www.aspida360.com



best practices. He didn't just jump into the software business based on a hunch and his own conversations with clients. He studied the experts, gathered research, conducted interviews and focus groups and came up with 22 tactics that are based on what is working with other high net worth families.



When you login, the dashboard looks quite technical—with bar graphs and charts. It's the kind of look you'd expect from a top-tier wealth management firm, but the content is certainly unique. The system walks you through inputting your family mission statement and stories about how you met your spouse and so on.

In a world where what made the wealth—a certain mindset, talents, skills, values and wisdom—often is lost or fades away with each successive generation, the team at Aspida360 is doing its best to preserve what really counts and providing the mobile technology platform to other like-minded professional advisors. ■