

PRACTICE PROFILE

Focusing on what you can control

Patrick L. Carney of Foresight Capital Management Advisors

By Bridget McCrea

As a young fee-only professional, 28-year-old Patrick L. Carney knows that people are going to assess and interact with him differently than they would, say, an advisor with 10-plus years of experience in the profession. This reality doesn't bother the director of personal wealth management at Foresight Capital Management Advisors in Saline, MI, but it has pushed him to accelerate his education and learn as much as he can about financial planning.

“One thing that's very difficult for new advisors in general is getting started and gaining the respect of current and prospective clients. A lot of people come to us looking for an advisor who has a vast array of experience, education, and knowledge,” says Carney. “When you're first starting out, you don't have that decade—or multiple decades—of experience that many clients are looking for.”

Carney says he stopped worrying about things he couldn't control (e.g., his age, years of career experience, and similar measures) and instead has been working hard over the last six years to earn certifications that position him as a high-level fiduciary. So far, he's earned his CFP[®], AIF[®], and CIMA[®] credentials, the last of which he attained by completing the education requirements at the Yale School of Management.

Carney says these educational experiences helped him understand the entire financial planning process and its intricacies. More specifically, the Certified Investment Management Analyst course provided a strong background in portfolio management and the analytical side of financial planning.

“I think it's very important to develop and push for that education upfront,” he explains, “because it may be difficult to revisit that later in life and obtain some key certifications that clients are looking for from an advisor.”

Fostering the new generation of planners

Founded in 2008 by President Laurie Stegenga, Foresight Capital Management Advisors has 10 employees, 461 clients, and \$237 million in AUM. The company has stuck with the core beliefs and principles that it was



founded on, but has expanded its staff numbers, the educational levels of its staff members, and its investment offerings over the last 14 years.

When Carney joined the firm full-time in 2018, after graduating with a major in finance and a concentration in financial services from the University of Michigan-Dearborn, the company consisted of a handful of analysts and advisors who all wore multiple hats. “They were running client meetings, doing the investment analysis, and managing a lot of paperwork,” says Carney. That changed in 2021, when the company was divided into four separate departments: financial planning, portfolio management and trading, compliance, and paraplanning.

As part of its evolution, Foresight Capital Management Advisors has helped cultivate the “new breed” of fee-only financial planners through an internship program in which Carney participated. The company recruits both college and high school students for the program.

“I got to learn from our president and from other advisors in the company,” says Carney, who said the program was both welcoming and inclusive. “As interns, we were all encouraged to bring our own backgrounds and perspectives to the company.”

Hitting the jackpot

Reflecting on his career choice, Carney says he was initially drawn to the financial services profession while taking financial literacy courses in high school. “Those courses really sparked my interest,” he says. “In fact, finance was one of the few things that I was interested in academically while in high school. After learning the basics of budgeting, financial planning, and investing, I was fortunate enough to go to college knowing pretty much exactly what I wanted to do.”

For Carney, that meant focusing his efforts specifically on financial advising and financial planning. A NAPFA member since 2019, he joined the organization just before he passed the CFP® exam. He’s a member of NAPFA Genesis, a peer-to-peer networking group that encourages professional growth and development among members who are 33 years old and younger.

“I utilize the resources on the NAPFA website a lot, whether it’s for the continuous education opportunities, to watch a webinar, or to read an article,” says Carney. “Also, the fee-only advisory directory on the website has helped generate new business, especially for a firm like ours that now has two NAPFA-Registered Financial Advisors (Laurie Stegenga is also a NAPFA member).”

Their eyes and ears

With a wide variety of clients at all different stages of life, Foresight Capital Management Advisors provides fee-only financial planning services that start with a full review of the client’s current situation. An advisor then takes the client through the entire financial planning process, providing comprehensive fee-only fiduciary advice that’s in the individual’s best interest along the way.

The firm’s AUM is split pretty evenly between individual wealth management and retirement plans, and it offers comprehensive and complimentary financial planning for all retirement plan participants, whether they’re in a 401(k), 403(b), 457, or traditional pension plan. “That’s another avenue we’re able to help with,” says Carney, “not only the plan as a part of their retirement assets, but also in terms of taking a comprehensive view of their complete financial picture.”

In most cases, clients come to the firm to make sure they’re on track for retirement and able to live the lifestyles that they desire during their retirement years. “We act as the eyes and ears for our clients by staying up to date on world economic and market events,” says Carney, “and acting as coaches who guide them through their complex and busy lives.”

Focused on in-depth research and client advisement, the team at Foresight Capital isn't tied to any specific fund company, bank, or insurance company, which Carney says helps eliminate some conflicts of interest.

"We have a wide variety of stock portfolios that fit our clients' different needs," he explains, "ranging from high dividend-paying 'aristocrat' stock portfolios for retirees to speculative stock portfolios (e.g., blockchain, cryptocurrency, etc.) for some of our wealthier clients, who may put 1% to 2% of their wealth into those options."

It's a win-win

Looking ahead, Carney says the firm plans to continue building out its departments and taking on new clients. It will also expand its exit planning services for business owners (see "Planning a successful exit" below) and focus on pooled employer plans like 401(k)s that allow it to group together many different small and midsize companies in a way that helps participants and businesses benefit from favorable tax treatment and retirement savings.

"The businesses get a few tax credits and write-offs for that, and they can also allow their participants to invest in a larger plan at lower costs," says Carney.

The company is also beginning to see the benefits of a new marketing plan that it put in place in 2021 and onboarding numerous smaller companies to participate in these group plans. "Once we group them together, it ends up being a sizable plan as a whole," says Carney. "This benefits the businesses, in addition to all the participants in the plan. It's a real win-win."

Planning a successful exit

When Foresight Capital Management Advisors President Laurie Stegenga obtained her Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA) credential in 2020, it opened the doors for the firm to become a specialist in this area. Developed by the [Exit Planning Institute](#), CEPA is for professional advisors who want to more effectively engage business owners.

Through the exit planning process, business owners can build more valuable companies, have stronger personal financial plans, and align their personal goals. Over the last two years, Patrick Carney says the firm has been entrenching itself as a trusted resource for business owners that want to leverage these and other benefits of effective exit planning.

"We've been offering exit planning services to a lot of small and midsize companies in the area, either as consultants or by also managing 401(k) or retirement assets," Carney explains. "Given the aging population and the transition taking place within the older generations of Americans, this has been a growth area for the firm."

Carney says exit planning services provide a unique value proposition that meshes well with the financial planning, investment management, and life coaching that the firm is already doing. "It's another avenue for expanding our services," he adds, "and providing a more comprehensive service to anyone who needs help transitioning his or her business."

Foresight Capital Management Advisors Inc., at a glance

Location: Saline, MI

Website: fcmadvisors.net

Year founded: 2008

Number of staff: 10

Number of clients: 461

Amount of money managed: \$237 million

Description of typical clients: A broad spectrum of clients at various points in their lives, from teens to families who are retired.

Typical client needs: Fee-only financial planning services, fiduciary advice, and retirement planning.

Favorite financial planning website or app: [NAPFA](#)

Favorite nonfinancial planning app: [Twitter](#)

Piece of advice to fellow NAPFA members: “Use the NAPFA website for the continuous education opportunities, and read the blogs and different resources that are offered. Specifically for young advisors, focus on the educational aspect of financial planning. Whether that’s obtaining a license, working toward a certification, or obtaining an MBA, it’s the one thing as a young advisor that’s really within your control.”

