

Building Bridges Instead of Walls

Learn to break down the barriers that wealth creates

Wealth and its associated power often create walls. Wealth and power separate the affluent. Wealthy people are targets for anyone who is trying to sell anything. They have encountered a never-ending stream of vendors hawking their wares. As a result, the wealthy often rely on purchasing power to buy replacements for close friends and family relationships. In a time of need, the wealthy often seek help from strangers.

What looks to outsiders like a life of ease is often a life of considerable emptiness and loneliness. A wealthy person seldom recognizes this truth. Often their materialistic abundance keeps them emotionally and mentally occupied. They seldom, if ever, consciously feel the emptiness. There are golf buddies and bridge club friends, but these relationships seldom are intensely close, caring relationships. The wealthy tend to engage themselves in superficial social interactions that make up part of the landscape of “hobnobbing.” Superficial conversations center on subjects such as their latest trip, their last financial conquest, or a recent purchase. Sadly, they rarely feel completely free to come out from behind the “wall” of wealth to have open, honest, and real relationships.

Buying the newest luxury car or the extravagant vacation home – flying to Florida in the new company jet or taking another Caribbean cruise – does not completely satisfy the soul. Like most toys, the newness and excitement wear off quickly. Seeking to fill the void, the wealth goes on to the next, more expensive toy for another round of entertainment. Rarely do any of us have the insight to recognize that this repeated sequence is a hollow pursuit. But some have. Family Wealth Counselors have realized that it is possible to reach affluent movers and shakers. We have shown them opportunities that are continuing to touch their lives, their communities, and the world. We have shown the wealthy how to retain control of their Social Capital, the money most people think is irrevocably designated for the IRS. We explain how to self-direct latent wealth to achieve something more worthwhile. Imagine the power that could be harnessed if all the empire builders could catch a vision that would reenergize their creativity, experience, and motivation. It might awaken an emotional, sleeping giant. In fact, it might awaken an army of sleeping giants.

What is a Family Wealth Counselor?

A Family Wealth Counselor has command of a revolutionary new approach to working with wealthy families that is sweeping across the country. Family Wealth Counseling addresses the financial, social, spiritual, and emotional aspects of a family's life and wealth within a broader context of life planning instead of the more traditional and less effective context of estate planning.

Family Wealth Counselors help families seize their remaining time, employ their unique talents, and mobilize their accumulated treasures to find fulfillment and significance as they discover and carry out their life purposes.

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Until now, the wealthy and their advisors have largely ignored the whole idea of Social Capital and have mistakenly seen it as the enemy. Traditional planning teams focus all their planning decisions strictly on what produces the most financial benefits to the family. These planning teams never bother to explain the other option – give Social Capital away to charity. Why? Because planning is typically done in a financial vacuum ignoring the spiritual, emotional, and social components of a person’s life.

Since the traditional thought is that Social Capital doesn’t directly help a wealthy family and it *only* helps society, many clients and advisors disregard serious discussion about the effective uses and distribution of Social Capital. Often a wealthy couple is offered some vague general question from one of their advisors. The couple may be asked whether they have a particular interest in giving some of their wealth away to charity, “Do you have any charitable interests?” This question is usually void of any meaningful conversation about the possibilities the act of giving can achieve. Never are clients directly challenged to make a personal investment in any social cause. Giving, if suggested at all, is listed as just one of the many possible transactions, one more optional expenditure.

With an advisor’s one ill-thought-out question, wealthy individuals respond in knee-jerk fashion, “No, charity begins at home. I want to make sure I take care of my kids.” The topic of Social Capital is closed.

There is an occasional exception here and there, no doubt. But more often than not, this powerful area of financial and life planning is sadly misrepresented. There is no discussion of the benefits charitable giving can realize for the wealthy individual, the family, the community, and the world. By allowing this vacuum to continue, we are doing the wealthy and the world a grave disservice.

In contrast to traditional planners, Family Wealth Counselors spend a substantial amount of time with wealthy families delving into the emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of their lives. We discover where their passions lie. We learn what is truly important to them. We bring to the service the virtues upon which they have built their lives. We help delineate the values they hope to communicate to the coming generations. We help them uncover the best ways to accomplish their goals. Family Wealth Counselors help wealthy families, and in turn, are changing the world in significant ways – far beyond anything they ever imagined possible.

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To achieve these significant results, Family Wealth counselors know that advisors must talk about more than financial statements and legal documents. We discuss their heart and soul, dreams and desires. We help leverage untapped resources to make a difference. Out of these very personal, fulfilling relationships, we can help make a difference that impacts lives for generations to come.

A Family Wealth Counselor does this by asking questions that no one else will ever ask the wealthy. We ask the hard but important questions of life. Our Life on Purpose Questionnaire and Retreat helps families to identify what it is they really care about. The Family Wealth Counseling process will resurface those long-ago times and places where they remember being deeply touched, where help of influence has come when needed. Then, we explore the ability to give back to those same causes. Such work can ensure that those who follow will also be deeply touched.

As the Family Wealth Counseling process progresses, a metamorphosis takes place. New opportunities arise to enjoy life to its fullest – to create new meaning – to find new richness. Pretense disappears. Masks are dropped. The “walls” of wealth are dismantled and bridges are built to others. These bridges help produce meaningful relationships. Knowing that a legacy will endure, prosper, and grow generates an explosion of energy and a sense of renewed vitality. This new breed of the affluent are not watching the clock tick away the minutes of life, not waiting to die in luxury – alone. They have found meaning in life and meaning in relationships. Their energy is focused on creative challenges that feed both body and soul. Life has new meaning.

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