

Vinton Fountain

FOUNTAIN FINANCIAL ASSOCIATES
Creating a better financial future

STORY BY ALLISON BALLARD
PHOTO BY LESLIE KOEHN

As someone with many years of experience in the financial industry, Vinton Fountain could see the problems with the status quo, which tended to benefit Wall Street but often failed to meet the goals of clients.

"When we founded Fountain Financial Associates in 1998, the investment industry was struggling to solve investor goals for advice," he said.

He was aware of structural conflicts of interest, and larger institutions selling what was most profitable for them. "Investors were getting flawed or mediocre product with high sales expenses that caused unsatisfactory results."

He wanted to help create a better business model.

"Things have changed dramatically since that time," Fountain said. The company is now the oldest and largest independent firm in the Wilmington area. "We anticipated and innovated the new model that is needed for investors."

One reason is providing the need for effective decision making, he said. It's best accomplished through a relationship where the goals of client and adviser are shared and aligned.

"The old model of the adviser getting paid while the client is exposed to mixed results and flawed strategies has been eroded by innovators and disruptors such as our firm," he said. "Our model is built upon the idea of independence."

In the years since, technology has made it easier for smaller firms to access the best tools and resources. It's also now easier for investors to find those people.

"The most important questions to be asked and answered are: Do I have enough money to be independent, safe and afford choices? How much income can I expect? How long will my money last? And how much risk is needed to achieve my goals?" he said. It's also important to ask what you're paying for — and what you're getting in return.

For anyone interested in thinking about their own financial goals, Fountain suggests they spend time thinking strategically.

"Spend time learning and exploring the value of having someone helping you navigate your decision making. Build a blueprint and have a co-pilot help you travel the distance with support. The greatest value of an adviser is courage, instincts and experience."

