

EXCELLING BY GETTING CLOSE TO CLIENTS

Tom Burroughes, Group Editor of *WealthBriefing*, talks to **Christophe B Sierro**, Founding Partner of Mt Fort Advisors (MFA), on what it has taken to get to the winning level.

What sets you apart from your peers this year and why?

Current times are truly exceptional in all respects. The pandemic has transformed our lives with deep cultural, social, technological, and economic changes over the past year. Financial markets also showed extraordinary patterns in 2020 with extreme movements but still finishing the year with a remarkable result despite the severity of the pandemic. In those circumstances, it was essential for Mt Fort Advisors team to remain very close to its clients and stand by their side despite the limitations to travel and meet face to face.

We spent extensive time reviewing and discussing portfolios with a particular focus on ensuring investment profiles were well in line with their current aspirations, risk appetite and liquidity requirements. We have also developed a more intensive communication by producing two series of in-house quality content called:

“Something interesting to read” and “Compendium of interesting charts”, gathering enriching facts/data and analysis from various sources; in addition to our punctual newsletters informing about our developments; and our traditional investment strategy papers published twice a year.

With the absence of travelling, we took advantage of those particular times to keep improving our infrastructure and tools. We have pursued our digitalisation efforts with most of our processes now fully integrated into “Wize by Teamwork”, not only our own proprietary consolidation reporting, but also our AML process, client database, prudential risk monitoring and on-boarding process, including “suitability and appropriateness” assessments. Referring to new regulatory requirements, we have submitted our license application to our supervisory organisation SO-FIT in September and should be able to file it with FINMA imminently hoping to be among the earlier groups of newly licensed Swiss financial intermediaries under FinIA.

Mt Fort Advisors has also kept innovating its investment process with the implementation of a proprietary “quantamental” model combining a traditional qualitative process with quantitative tools based on multi-factors. Moreover, on the investment front, we remained engaged with “club deal” transactions with a recent success in an environmental-friendly investment in a Swedish clean-tech company, which makes electricity from the industry’s residual gases with the world’s highest efficiency and net zero CO2 emission. It generated so far a 55 per cent internal rate of return and 2.4 times multiple of invested capital in two years, in addition to contributing to a greener world.

How have your colleagues contributed towards the success of your organisation?

Mt Fort Advisors has always put its clients at the centre of its preoccupations. More than simply managing wealth, we do manage relationships. We are not product driven, but client focused.

Acting as a multi-family office, MFA provides its clients with a complete ecosystem looking after the management of their banking infrastructure and assets using a holistic approach covering three key facets of wealth management: structuring (including tax and estate planning with the support of international experts), banking (across multiple jurisdictions) and investments (360-degree view from treasury to private equity investments, lifestyle assets to traditional financial instruments and financing). We also get involved in specific missions, such as strategic advisory roles and representations in boards of directors.

We cannot fulfill our mission without a highly qualified, loyal, and dedicated team of professionals. We are proud at MFA to be able to count on a solid and fully committed group of talented people in their respective fields. It is thanks to our discipline and effectiveness that we can keep our clients happy and bring them “peace of mind”. More importantly, we are all driven by deeply rooted values in our culture: independence and integrity, performance and innovation, excellence in service and long-term commitment.

I would like to congratulate and thank our whole team for their commitment and enthusiasm to their work and clients.

What are you going to do to stay on the front foot in a fast-growing but also challenging region such as this?

Within two years, MFA has been able to build a sophisticated and dynamic multi-family office. This is a good base, but we remain a small organization and have to prepare for our next round of expansion. Indeed, reaching a certain size is becoming a necessary step forward in order to keep delivering the highest level of service and expertise to a demanding and evolving clientele, while ensuring the continuity of our organisation.

The wealth management industry is facing many challenges from increasing regulatory costs, the permanent need to invest in people and systems, low interest rates, increased competition, more complex requirements from clients... all factors which require more financial substance and expertise. Growth however should not be achieved to the detriment of our values and our quest for excellence. We will focus on integrating talented and engaged new

partners and managers sharing our aspirations and values and who have the capacity to bring a notable contribution to Mt Fort Advisors. We will also explore external growth opportunities.

Whom do you look to for inspiration and ideas?

Without any hesitations from our clients. We have the privilege to look after an exceptional group of very successful and entrepreneurial clients through whom we can come across a number of opportunities in various sectors and geographic areas. It is thanks to our clients and the quality of their projects that we have been successfully involved in “club deals” by creating synergies among our clients sharing mutual interests.

We are truly honoured to support and advise them in the management and administration of their affairs. They are by far our most valuable asset and I would like to thank them for their trust and support.

What do you hope will be the result of receiving this accolade?

We are cheered to receive those two awards and particularly for the first edition dedicated to external asset management in Switzerland, one of the bastions of wealth management in the world. Those awards are a strong testimony and endorsement of our strategy and commitment to excellence for our clients from a highly regarded international panel of professional experts.

We hope it will enhance our credibility and convince talented profiles in wealth management to join us and contribute to our future development. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my whole team at Mt Fort Advisors, to thank *WealthBriefing* for taking the initiative to organise those first Swiss EAM awards with the highest standards of professionalism and, as a final word, a big thank you to the judges for their vote of confidence in Mt Fort Advisors. ■

