



CASE STUDY

How This Group Leveraged the CEPA® Credential for Success

DEFINING SUCCESS

Finding success can mean something different to every person. Some measure success in financial metrics—how much money they have accrued or how many businesses they have sold. Others measure success in their happiness or personal satisfaction in life. Success can also be measured by how well a business is performing, or the outlook of the marketplace.

The Value Acceleration Methodology™ asks us to align these Three Legs of the Stool™ to find a robust and holistic sense of not just success, but also significance. As a Certified Exit Planning Advisor (CEPA®), it is vital to define what significance means for yourself as well as for the business owner.

This is the question that Financial Advisor, Managing Partner Neil McPeak Jr., CFP®, CEPA®, had to ask himself as he began his journey with the McPeak

Wealth Management Group in 2010. At the time, Neil was building portfolios and taking on smaller accounts. Now, as of March 12, 2025, Neil manages roughly \$650 million for high-net-worth business owners throughout the country.

Neil's success was built on a solid foundation of knowledge, and a commitment to hard work. Alongside his early work at McPeak Wealth Management Group, Neil rowed crew professionally for the Junior National Team where they won a World Championship. From there, Neil joined the U.S. Under 23 National Team, the U.S. Senior National Team, and trained for the London 2012 Olympics.

As Neil shifted focus toward his financial practice, he made a realization that came at a multimillion-dollar high price.

FINDING YOUR FLOW WITH SUCCESS

It began with a missed opportunity.

"We had an opportunity to work with a business owner who was selling his business for hundreds of millions of dollars. We have helped worked with the business owner for 20 years, and helped him build the business from zero," Neil explains. "We thought it was a slam dunk, but we lost it."

When the business exit and sale were completed, the client split the money between two other advisors, one of whom was a CEPA in California. The CEPA credential gave the advisor a focused framework on exiting a business, and that branding was key in setting him apart from other advisors, like Neil. Knowing they had lost out on this multimillion-dollar sale as a result of not being (or working with) a CEPA, Neil and the team realized they needed that edge to help them and equip them with a new tool to enhance their business.

"After we lost that opportunity, we said we can't ever be behind in a sale again." Neil says.

Now, four members with the McPeak Wealth Management Group as well as Neil are CEPAs, branding themselves as a "business owner and business sale wealth management team."

For Neil, business sale management and the CEPA process are all about finding "flow," a concept which has carried over from his experience rowing crew professionally.

"One thing with rowing is what they call flow," he says. "Flow is where you are all in sync. Rowing is a big team sport, so you have to be in sync with the person in front of you and behind you. That's when the boat goes the fastest. It's the same thing when you're working on a team. You want to be in sync, and you want to make sure your team is in sync with your clients. That is flow."

Important for both finding this flow, and being a CEPA, is setting expectations, according to Neil.

"We thought it was a slam dunk, but we lost it."

"Putting in work with no expectation of reward for quite some time is a big thing with business owners. In rowing, we had to put a lot of work in for a race four years down the line. That was a long runway," he says. "For business owners, it's the same way.

You're helping them organize and grow the little things. You know how to move money and how to help make them comfortable. It takes a while until you get to that sales point, so there is a lot of investment in these people up front and you have to be comfortable with putting in a lot of work without immediate results."

This long runway allows the crew to row in sync, to push that boat faster, to be more efficient, and to find their flow with each other. In exit planning, this long runway allows the business owner and the CEPA to move through the Three Gates of the Value Acceleration Methodology efficiently and effectively, to find their flow and achieve the desired exit.

CEPA GUIDES THE WAY

With CEPA, Neil and the team at McPeak Wealth Management Group believe they have enhanced their practice, and brought in more success, shifting into a mindset of growing and cultivating significance.

"Because of CEPA and the shift in mindset, we were able to better serve the client and retain the business," Neil says.

Neil credits the CEPA credential with helping his group find a new flow.

"CEPA has completely changed our mindset and focus," he says. "Our goal now is to help business owners optimize their business for their families and for potential sale. We have a process to help business owners presale and post-sale."



“There is room for a lot of CEPAs in the world to help business owners, because there are a lot more business owners than we think.”

WHAT'S NEXT?

With new possibilities unlocked with the CEPA credential, Neil and the team have been offered new opportunities with business owners.

“Because we have positioned ourselves as the business sale advisor, I believe we have been able to coordinate and quarterback things like lending, charitable planning, purchasing a jet, and opening a captive insurance company for taxes,” he says. “We’ve been really lucky. The growth here has been exponential for us, and I’m curious to see how the next five to 10 years will go with this mindset. So far, ever since being part of the CEPA process, it’s just gone up in terms of business growth. I’m curious to see what the next iteration of that is and how to expand on it.”

With more small- to mid-sized business owners than ever before, the opportunity for exit expands every year. It places CEPAs in a position to align personal, financial, and business goals—a concept that may not be so obvious for a lot of business owners. Exit planning is needed now more than ever, and Neil believes leveraging that can make all the difference.

“As a CEPA, you’re in a very unique spot. You are the specialist in a field that a lot of people need advice on. There are a lot of really great business owners who need help here,” he says. “And the upside to this is much higher than I thought initially because there aren’t a lot of advisors who do exit planning. There are a lot of business owners and a lot of wealth there.”

For Neil and the team, the realization was not that people did not want to exit plan, it was that people did not know where to start. As a CEPA, the ability to deftly navigate exits is a unique skill, setting the CEPA apart from their peers in the advisory space. The lost opportunity for Neil and the team was a wake-up call to this fact.

“We talk about that a lot, about how there is so much opportunity here and people just aren’t leveraging it. Not because they don’t want to, but because they just don’t know about it,” he says. “There is room for a lot of CEPAs in the world to help business owners, because there are a lot more business owners than we think.”

Investment products and services are offered through Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network, LLC (WFAFN), Member SIPC.

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