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WINNER

# Competitive Edge

Working only with high-net-worth clients and serving them well led to success for this N.J. advisor.

Michael H. Olivia



**M**ichael H. Olivia has built a successful financial-services practice by focusing on specific types of high-net-worth clients and developing referral-generating relationships with them.

He works with business owners, high-level executives and high-income-producing professionals who generate an income of at least \$500,000 per year, or clients who otherwise have a significant net worth. “I work with people that I like and enjoy being with,” Olivia says. “I contribute to them, and the expectation is that they contribute to my organization by introducing us to others who are in a situation that is similar to theirs.”

Olivia’s father died when he was 17, and that inspired him to enter the life insurance industry at age 23. He vowed to “help as many people as I possibly can to protect those who cannot speak for themselves.” His mother, who has owned a beauty salon for 35 years, also fueled his interest in business while he was growing up in diverse Lakewood, N.J.

**“I was and still am a rigorous competitor.”**

—Michael H. Olivia

“She worked so hard when I was growing up, earning tips, to give me a wonderful life. My family grew when my three cousins came to live with us, just after my aunt and uncle’s passing. We lived in a small apartment ... and she raised us all by herself. I have no idea how she did that, and I admire her courage,” he says. Watching his mother sparked an entrepreneurial spirit in Olivia and pushed him to seek “the autonomy that the financial-services business offered.”

He also developed a competitive streak. “Each day presented a new challenge. I had to navigate through what could be interpreted as tough situations and times. I would speculate that this likely led me to not give up. I was and still am a rigorous competitor,” he says.



## Focused on the top

At 34, Olivia leads a practice, Cambium, that has 500 clients and 17 employees with offices in Purchase, N.Y., and Brick, N.J. He and his partner, Kenyon Lang, handle the top 20 percent of clients. “We have developed a team structure in order to provide an extremely high level of service to the other 400 or so,” Olivia says.

“We have developed a family office platform that takes care of a wide array of concerns, including estate planning, executive benefits and investment advice,” he says. “We often work with some of the highest-level estate-planning attorneys and accountants in the country, and I am amazed at the level of advice that we often access to help our clients.”

Olivia and Lang developed the Cambium Client Launch, a meeting over lunch or coffee at which they talk to new

clients about their friends and relatives who may be open to discussions with the practice. This provides access to highly recommended prospects and “takes away the urge or necessity to involve ourselves in traditional marketing techniques such as seminars, which we don’t believe work in our business,” Olivia says.

What works is finding out what matters to his clients. “When we find out what their interests may be, whether it [is] music, the arts or sports, we may send them small gifts such as tickets to an event, a book or a movie. We are very clear about what our clients’ interests are and we capture these interests inside our computer-based client-management system. This way, any member of my team will know what they are into, because it is posted within their contact record,” Olivia says.

“I see Cambium being a nationally recognized organization. We are recognized for providing planning exclusively in the top 1 percent of [adjusted gross income] and the high-net-worth marketplace. We specialize in holistic planning and take care of multiple concerns by utilizing the most knowledgeable advisors in the United States in order to craft uncommon and meaningful strategies for the successful entrepreneur. I see myself continuing to build and lead my organization to be able to provide uncommon strategies for the uncommon person,” he says.

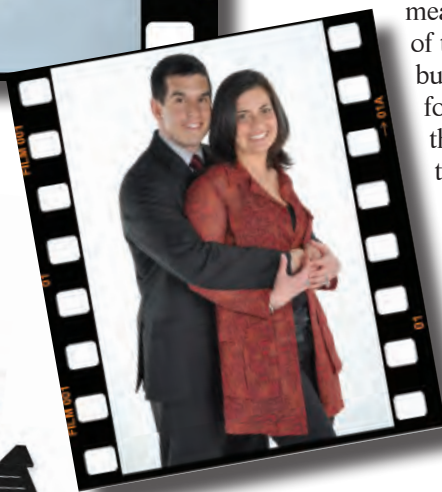
Olivia, a NAIFA-Monmouth/Ocean (N.J.) member, recognizes the importance of NAIFA participation—for himself and others. “I have been able to ... influence others to join NAIFA, and I have seen the impact they’ve made at their local agencies and firms. Knowing that people I care about are touching people they care about, and so on, has provided me with satisfaction.”

## Family support

Olivia gives his wife plenty of credit for helping him succeed. “I have an amazing wife. Tara is incredibly supportive, and we are the best of friends. By supportive, I mean that she appreciates and respects the amount of time and energy that it takes to make it in this business,” he says. “It was a pretty long road before we reached some level of comfort, and now that we have it, we want to enjoy it and expand to include the people we care about.”

He and Tara “focus on creating experiences that we enjoy and are beneficial toward the creation and manifestation of ‘successful’ children,” such as putting them in good schools, traveling, and enrolling them in martial arts and swim classes, Olivia says. “We all acknowledge the financial-services business for providing this lifestyle and autonomy.”

Photography by Sissy Starr-Norman.



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