ACCOUNTING FOR THE FUTURE

Forvis Mazars' Impact Adds Up

By Matt Ottinger

Forvis Mazars, LLP has seen several name changes and mergers since its inception as George S. Olive & Co. in Indianapolis in 1917.

Indianapolis Managing Partner Kevin Pahud has been with the company for over 30 years. An Indiana University alumnus, Pahud is a CPA and began as an auditor. While he knew that might not be his desired career path in perpetuity, he truly enjoyed the firm's culture, its people and his work with clients.

"I stuck with it and sure enough, it started to evolve into more of a trusted advisor role versus an audit role, and that very much did appeal to me," he reflects. "So, I ended up sticking around and have been asked to wear several hats over the course of my career."

Forvis Mazars focuses on assurance, tax and consulting services and has almost 500 employees in Indiana (with approximately 40,000 globally and 7,000 nationally). It serves clients in the manufacturing, private equity, financial services, healthcare, non-profit, governmental and higher education sectors, among others, and provides private client services to high-net-worth individuals.

"The neat thing about how we're structured is we have a lot of local autonomy and I, along with assistant managing partner JoAnna Simek and the rest of our local leadership team, am responsible for the results of our local operations," he explains. "We certainly can't act like cowboys, but we do have a lot of local autonomy, and what that has created is an entrepreneurial mindset and a focus on long-term success versus short-term gains."

Pahud emphasizes the culture is "long-term focused."

"While we understand a career in professional services is not necessarily the correct path for everyone, we firmly believe our responsibility is to train our team members to be the best they can possibly be during their time with us," he offers.

Foundational impact

The company has invested over $20 million (nationally) in its communities.

The Forvis Mazars Foundation also aims to enrich the communities it serves through financial donations and volunteerism. The foundation gives to a variety of nonprofits and focuses on three pillars: combating hunger and achieving food security for all; promoting good health and well-being; and ensuring an equal opportunity for all students to access quality education.

Its website states, "By focusing on organizations where partners or staff are currently involved, we help foster a culture of volunteerism. In addition to investing in the communities we serve, the foundation provides an opportunity for our people to give back by donating their time and talents."

Driving home visibility

With the recent creation of its global network through its combination with international firm Mazars, the company significantly expanded its global footprint.

"We are growing our new brand in the marketplace. While it has only been around for two years, we have more than a century of experience as a firm," Pahud relays, noting Forvis Mazars recently took advantage of professional golf's international Presidents Cup contest, won by the U.S. team in late September.

Pahud calls the Presidents Cup "our big coming out party," noting the firm was one of the event's global partners.

Expanding reach

The company's tax and advisory practice serves higher education institutions, but the company also partners with Indiana's schools to recruit talent.

"From a recruiting standpoint, we have set up a function whereby we donate to all of our local colleges and universities that we recruit from," Pahud notes. "Indiana University and Purdue are our largest such partners, along with Butler and Ball State universities, as well as smaller schools like Marian University, Franklin College and the University of Indianapolis."

Furthermore, Forvis Mazars recently launched an apprenticeship program in partnership with NABA Inc. (formerly known as the National Association of Black Accountants). The program allows high school graduates to obtain almost two years of free college academic credits while learning real-world financial skills and working 25 paid hours per week as part of Forvis Mazars' client service teams. The curriculum was initially created by Howard University, and the program is accredited by the U.S. Department of Labor.

"We brought in four high school graduates ranging in age from 18 to 20 last October, and from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., they spend time on academics, attending live classes virtually," Pahud outlines. "They have homework and other things they need to do after business hours, but from noon to 5 p.m., they are embedded in our client service teams."

He adds, "They're actually learning what our people do on a daily basis, and they're being supervised by our more senior professional staff. They're attending training, meeting clients and supporting our teams in meaningful ways."

Pahud considers the program a win-win, helping new colleagues succeed and benefiting the company in the bigger picture.



Forvis Mazars partnered with Indy Parks to help enhance local parks for its community service project as part of IMPACT Days, a firm-wide effort to give back to its communities.



Forvis Mazars' recent partnership with NABA Inc. has allowed it to bring young people into the company to help them begin accounting careers.

"In my opinion, this program is simply part of our broader responsibility to support our local community," he conveys. "It allows us to expose the profession to some that may have never considered accounting or consulting."

"It also allows our professionals to work elbow to elbow with some kids that may not have gotten this type of opportunity, and to watch what they do with it. From 12 months ago to today, our apprentices are like different people. Their (personal) growth has been incredible. We are extremely proud of them."

Building blocks

"Be builders" is one of the company's core values, with the intention to elevate clients, people and communities.

" 'Being a builder' talks about not only building new client relationships and expanding existing client relationships, but it also talks about bringing that next group up underneath you – building the people that you work with on a daily basis," Pahud asserts. "Our industry is going through a lot of change. New ownership structures, including private equity and the public markets, not to mention AI, are keeping us on our toes, but we remain steadfastly 'proudly partner owned.' We believe our role as partners is one of being a caretaker – building our firm and people so that what we leave behind is better than how we found it."

It's all part of a larger story of a company with an esteemed history and an eye toward future growth and impact. Outreach and external engagement, such as joining boards and volunteering, will remain priorities for Forvis Mazars.

"That's a big part of what we try and do, especially for our younger staff," Pahud states. "It helps them create that connection to the community that is essential for understanding the big picture and what people around them are going through on a regular basis."

He observes, "Young professionals are in a busy season of life and it's not always easy to find the time for civic involvement. But we are intentional about helping them take hold of those opportunities because we believe they are important to both their personal career growth and our firm's long-term commitment to Indianapolis."

RESOURCE: Kevin Pahud, Forvis Mazars, LLP, at www.forvismazars.com

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