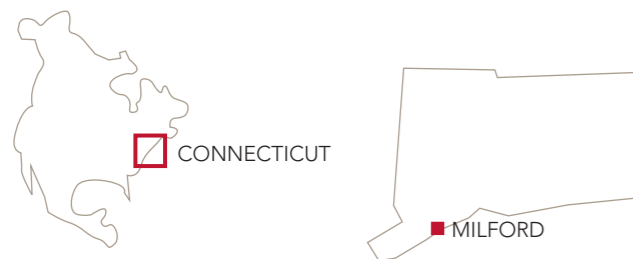




DREAMS OF BEING AN ATHLETE DIE HARD: AVID HOOPS PLAYER GENE HELM IS 50 AND STILL CAN'T HELP HAVING THE ODD WISTFUL THOUGHT ABOUT THE NBA. AT WORK FOR WRIGHT INVESTORS' SERVICE, THOUGH, HE'S A POINT GUARD IN HIS OWN RIGHT – AND SUNGARD'S STN MEANS HE'S MORE ABLE TO ASSIST THAN EVER



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CONNECTICUT

MILFORD

“Investors have almost endless options and opportunities to choose from,” says Gene Helm, voicing an insight that will resonate with money managers everywhere. “So, like other organizations, we need to find a way to shine – to make it in our clients’ interests to choose us.” An independently owned investment firm with \$2.4 billion under management, Wright Investors’ Service appears to have found such an approach. It has fine-tuned its capabilities to the needs of its target markets and supported them with highly effective information technology. As Wright’s president and COO, Gene has been involved at every step.

With a staff of 45 located in suburban Connecticut, Wright manages institutional investment accounts, operates a private wealth management subsidiary, and runs a highly successful business focusing on the trust departments of community banks. Wright provides its bank clients with outsourced investment advisory

services and a range of support activities to help them retain existing clients and compete for new business in their home markets.

“These banks,” Gene says, “have deep roots in their communities, provide great personal service, and therefore excel at creating enduring relationships.” For its part, he says, Wright provides the banks with a robust investment capability that few could afford to develop independently. Still, it is a demanding business. “For a variety of reasons,” Gene explains, “trust departments tend to be restrictive on fees, yet the business they bring us is complex. You can’t simply plug their assets into a model portfolio.” Because of tax implications and client preferences, Wright follows a process through which each trust account is gradually transitioned into a recommended portfolio. “This requires that Wright be flexible and efficient,” Gene says, “something we’ve become very good at.”

A KEY TO SUCCESS

Wright strives to provide its clients with strong investment performance, a range of portfolio choices, and cost-saving efficiency, and the SunGard Transaction Network (STN) has helped deliver all three. “We first went with STN because we were looking to expand

HOME LIFE

COMMUTE: “It is 35 minutes. But I traveled into Manhattan every day for 10 years – so from my perspective, this is great.”
FAMILY: “I am married – in fact, to my high-school sweetheart, and we have two sons, aged 25 and 18.”
HOMETOWN: “Wantagh, on Long Island. It is the gateway to Jones Beach.”
EDUCATION: “B.S. in math from Fairfield University.”
PASTIMES: “Basketball is a passion. I still play four times a week, and supplement that with weight and cardio training.”

beyond our proprietary funds,” Gene says, “and we found that STN gave us access to every national mutual fund company we wanted. We also saw the chance to deliver greater efficiency to our clients.”

He explains with the example of a typical client, invested in six or eight mutual funds, whose portfolio is going through a policy change: “Say we’re going to reduce exposure to equities and increase fixed-income. That’s going to create trades across all those fund families – maybe 2,000 or more trades in a night. Without STN, we would have to go out to each fund company, tell them what we’re selling, wait for the wire on the redemption of the shares, then reinvest the proceeds. The problem is the client could be out of the market for up to three days, depending on the settlement cycles and fund families involved.”

In contrast, STN enables same-day trading across fund families. “The trades come out of our system, go out for execution, and come back confirmed,” Gene says. “The client is never out of the market, and errors and manual data entry are eliminated.” To add further efficiency, Wright has established direct interfaces that allow trades to be posted at the individual account level, not only in its recordkeeping system but also to those of many of its client banks. “About 60% of them are using SunGard’s Charlotte trust accounting system,” Gene says. “We took advantage of that fact to establish this seamless connection. It saves our client time and money on their back-office operation and, all other things being equal, it can be a decisive advantage at the point of sale.” Wright, with help from STN, has extended this straight-through processing capability to its management of separate securities accounts for its bank clients.

BUILDING TEAMS, LETTING GO

As Wright’s president and COO, Gene is responsible for most

WORK LIFE

HOURS: 8:30 a.m. until 7:00 or 7:30 p.m.
LOCATION: “Milford, Connecticut, about an hour from New York City by train.”
OFFICE: “Mainly traditional offices rather than an open-plan. If you are focusing on something that needs sustained attention, you need a door you can close.”
VIEW: “We are in the woods and my view is of trees, but in reality I am in meetings or looking at my computer screen most of the day.”
DESK HYGIENE: “It is an organized desk, but a busy desk.”
PERSONAL ORGANIZATION: “Heavy use of the phone and e-mail, and a contact list and calendar on my PC.”
DRESS CODE: “Business casual, unless clients are coming.”
CORPORATE CULTURE: “Informal. We know each other well. I’ve been here 19 years. The CEO’s been here 40.”

aspects of the firm’s operation except actually shaping investment strategies, which is the duty of Wright’s CEO and chief investment officer. That means Gene oversees the sales and client service staff, the portfolio administration group (which handles the customization of client accounts) and the IT group.

He focuses on providing his employees with strategic direction, facilitating communication, and – most importantly – letting them do their jobs. “What I enjoy most is building teams then watching them perform,” he says. “I’ve always loved basketball, and one of the things I like best is that raw talent doesn’t always win – it’s the team that utilizes its strengths the best that succeeds. Sports metaphors are overused, but I find this one appropriate.”

THE SUNGARD SOLUTION: STN & CHARLOTTE

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