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# How can my advisor help me organize a successful family meeting?

BY SARAH K. SIMON



Left to right:  
Jim Pratt-Heaney,  
Kevin Burns,  
Bill Loftus

## LLBH PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGEMENT LLC

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### PARTNERS

**Kevin Burns**, Founding Partner

**Bill Loftus**, Founding Partner

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### ASSETS UNDER CARE

\$1.6 billion (approximately, as of 12/31/2015)

### MINIMUM FEE FOR INITIAL MEETING

None required

### MINIMUM NET WORTH REQUIREMENT

\$10 million

### FINANCIAL SERVICES EXPERIENCE

200 years (combined)

### COMPENSATION METHOD

Asset-based

### PRIMARY CUSTODIAN FOR INVESTOR ASSETS

Pershing, A BNY Mellon Company

### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PROVIDED

Financial planning, asset management, concentrated stock hedging, lending, cash management, alternative investment, due diligence and family office services

### ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

Financial Planning Association, Investment Management Consultants Association

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families gather for many reasons, such as to celebrate birthdays and holidays, weddings and reunions; they come together for special events or merely “just because.” Less frequent, but arguably even more important, is the occasion to come together for a designated meeting to discuss family finances.

Many of the families we work with at LLBH want to pass on their values and ambitions to multiple generations and to achieve a seamless transition of their wealth. As such, we encourage our clients to engage in these important gatherings.

Of course, these can be sensitive matters to discuss and may give way to underlying emotions and tensions. Therefore, we encourage our clients to contemplate a well thought out approach to organizing a family meeting. At LLBH, we strive to set the stage for a successful gathering, by considering a host of key factors:

**Role of facilitator:** Those who facilitate the management of substantial family wealth must recognize that significant issues and family dynamics will likely come into play. Managing a family’s finances is similar to running a business; and, as such, it is helpful to have an independent party facilitate financial-related discussions. We at LLBH are often asked to play this role. Accordingly, we serve as the facilitator, to create an environment that fosters communication, education, and engagement. When sensitive issues are discussed, we strive to deliver unbiased and holistic views that can help diffuse any tension and emotion that may occur.

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When thoughtfully considered and carefully planned for, a family meeting can be a practical and beneficial institution for any family.

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**Agenda:** A well-planned agenda with specific items will aid the family in staying on task. It is important to keep all family members in mind as the agenda is created. Topics will vary by family, but may include business-succession planning, investment updates, private investing ideas, estate-planning reviews, philanthropy, financial literacy, real estate updates and family milestones. Even seemingly less critical items may require attention. For instance, we recently had a discussion with a family about who was to receive certain family heirlooms. In other words, whatever is important to the family is important to the family meeting.

**Frequency and duration:** Selecting a location that is comfortable for all participants is important. Some families prefer a conference room while others might want to meet at the patriarch’s or matriarch’s home. This personal

choice will vary, but what’s important is a location that will encourage dialogue among all attending members.

**Timing:** We have found that families who have successful meetings hold them at least annually and coordinate well enough in advance to achieve the best turnout. Holding the meeting at the same time each year can boost attendance, and establishing such meetings around a holiday or during the summer when families might already be together makes good sense. The duration of the gathering is driven by the agenda. As with any meeting, it is important to stay on task but also allow for some flexibility.

**Attendees:** Deciding on the attendees of a family meeting can cause controversy in and of itself and should be approached thoughtfully. Sometimes, extended family, including aunts, uncles and cousins, are included. Oftentimes the cutoff is based on age, or may involve young adults only for certain portions of the meeting, such as philanthropic or financial literacy discussions. While LLBH is often the coordinator, we advise our clients to include other trusted advisors such as CPAs, attorneys and even psychologists, as well.

When thoughtfully considered and carefully planned for, a family meeting can be a practical and beneficial institution for any family. At LLBH, we consider it a key role to aid in the coordination of these meetings, while considering the key elements of a successful gathering and working to deliver effective solutions for our clients and their families.

*Sarah K. Simon, JD, is an associate advisor at LLBH Private Wealth Management. ●*

## ABOUT US

**LLBH PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGEMENT IS AN INDEPENDENT REGISTERED INVESTMENT ADVISOR OFFERING A FULL RANGE OF WEALTH-MANAGEMENT SERVICES.** Often referred to as a “virtual family office,” LLBH strives to bring clarity and control to the financial lives of its clientele by delivering customized personal and business solutions. From its offices in Westport, Conn., and Los Angeles, LLBH services high net worth individuals, families and foundations on both coasts and nationwide. ●



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