

# STAYING AHEAD IN THE ADVICE INDUSTRY

**H**ow have some independent financial advisers achieved success in their different markets? We review how three advisers operate and identify some of the practices that have helped them accomplish their goals.

Success starts with a plan. Successful advisers adhere to a detailed business plan and regularly update it to enhance business sustainability. Ray Bechoo, director of Major Money Management, said, "You need to believe in your plan for it to work."

Rodney Kotton, owner of Cherrod and Associates in Johannesburg, realised that a one-man show is becoming less viable due to the cost of compliance. He has revised his business plan and is now seeking to expand.

Pretoria-based adviser Kobus Ackerman\* recognises the risk of having a small base of corporate clients. He has focused his business plan to double his book, "move fast in the slow lane" and improve his BEE rating.

The right product offering. The product offering should match the needs of customers in the selected market. For instance, focusing mainly on high net worth business people, Bechoo provides a comprehensive service.

"People need to manage their risk in both their business and personal capacity, so we provide an holistic risk management service and fulfil the role of accountant, legal adviser, tax adviser and financial planner," said Bechoo. "We are not product pushers and are highly selective in what we offer clients."

Kotton is a long-term specialist who shops around to find the best possible product and rate. "I refer clients with short-term needs or who require tax services, wills and trusts to other specialists," he said.

Ackerman specialises in payment guarantees, offering a quality solution. "Being one of only a few advisers to focus on this niche currently works in my favour."

## Working for clients

Understanding customers and focusing on forming stronger customer relationships to maximise value are further keys to success.

With some 80 clients, Bechoo can deliver maximum service to each. Based on a business decision, he does not take on more than 10 new clients annually to ensure he can maintain service levels.

Bechoo meets with each client about 10 to 15 times a year. Client interaction is often conducted on a social basis. To add value, he creates opportunities for his clients to network with each other.

Kotton's clients are his number one priority. "I look after them and they look after me," he said.

Ackerman's clients prescribe what they want and how often he can meet with them. Annual meetings are not ideal for building relationships, he maintains. However, he fulfils requests in line with his clients' expectations.

## Processes

To manage time, meet regulatory requirements and maximise interactions with clients, you should have proven processes in place.

Bechoo relies on CRM tools to assist in delivering good service and will soon enable clients to access their information online. Kotton "runs a tight ship" and

emphasises the importance of having structures in place and working smarter.

## Partners for support

In today's challenging environment, it is wise to partner with an organisation that has the expertise and capacity to support an advisory business.

Bechoo, Kotton and Ackerman are Masthead members. Bechoo, a founding member, makes full use of our compliance services, while Ackerman has received assistance in practice management.

Kotton said, "Success is strongly related to who you know, while what you know comes a close second. Masthead assists me in both these aspects."

If you would like Masthead to support your business, please contact your regional Masthead consultant for details or visit [www.masthead.co.za](http://www.masthead.co.za)

*\* name changed at adviser's request to remain anonymous*

