

Being Hustled By Financial Planners!

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The forthcoming book ***Terrible Truths About Financial Planning*** is a discourse on my unique experiences gained while reporting on financial planning, and while working as a multinational media advocate providing image branding for some of the world's premier financial planners, insurance agents, and other financial professionals. For over two and a half decades I've been involved in these pursuits. (Yes, I'm old!) Thus, I have a unique perspective by virtue of my wealth of resources and valued contacts within the financial planning industry since its inception. I literally sat at the knee of **Loren Dunton**, the founder of financial planning in the USA, and **Ed Morrow**, the founder of financial planning in China and all of the Pacific-Rim countries.

Today I am torn between two bodies of thought – **(1)** being appreciative for the trust of great professional men and women, plus the resulting privileged position I have enjoyed and been honored to experience, -- and the perspective from **(2)** being appalled by the many clowns in this profession. These clowns harm you!

This close involvement eventually made me cynical about clown financial planners – for the same reason that people who lose their money because of clown financial planners also become cynical about the entire planning industry. The clowns ultimately harm the entire profession and clowns especially harm you, though you serve honorably. You are honest. You compete with “planners” who are not honest. You are ethical. You compete with “planners” who are not ethical. You are responsible. You compete with “planners” who are not responsible. I could go on-and-on but you get the idea!

Terrible Truths is simply a book about the world in which you and I live and work. This book confronts realities that most of our industry leadership prefers to not recognize or acknowledge..

This title contains accurate observations from a seasoned media based “image brander” for financial planners over the last twelve years. That is to say, over the last twelve years I have been a constant note taker in an attempt to document certain experiences and observations. While I have worked for financial planners as a media advocate for almost three times this long, I only started recording or documenting these occurrences twelve years ago. Thus the various detailed eye witnessed events that I noted all resulted during the last twelve years. ***Image branding for financial planners is accomplished by a financial media advocate who is highly skilled in this demanding specialty discipline!*** A media advocate is similar to – but more advanced than -- a public relations generalist.

I Never Called Myself “A PR Man”

I purposely never called myself a public relations practitioner having learned that many financial planners and insurance agents ...

- Have very low opinions of PR practitioners.
- Have been “burned” by experiences with PR people.
- Have low opinions of public relations.
- Do not understand the use and value of PR.
- Do not know how to use PR even when they pay for it.
- Have unrealistic expectations of PR.
- **Believe they are PR experts.**
- Know that PR people routinely over-promise and under-deliver.
- Fail to respect the public relations person’s talent or skill.
- Believe they can create their own public relations.
- Think their public relations will sufficiently take care of itself.
- Do not know how to work with a public relations professional.

And I have my own additional thoughts about public relations.

- I believe that some financial advisors reasoned the above negatives since public relations practitioners, no matter how professional, seem to always rank at the bottom of polls that measure credibility.
- Early in my career I learned that in-house PR people and staff PR people usually felt threatened by me and urged that

I not be hired. If I was hired they would often try to undermine or sabotage my efforts.

Today in the **USA** and Canada there are hundreds of people working as media advocates for financial clients. Most of these are former PR people who now work in this specialty discipline. Many loath being called “public relations practitioners.” Most of these financial media advocates do an excellent job when they **service their financial clients**. They **research** the appropriate financial product(s) or service(s) **and obtain the appropriate knowledge necessary to use their** marketing communications skills **through their** related financial or consumer media **connections**. Most of their clients are financial corporations but some of their **clients** are financial planners and insurance agents. These are usually the industry leaders. Others they serve include broker dealers, bank trust departments, insurance companies and agencies, tangibles companies, tax accountants, tax lawyers, estate management firms, banks, savings & loans, mutual funds, financial recovery law firms, etc.

Do You Work For Free?

Twelve years ago I started using the term media advocate rather than public relations practitioner. Simultaneously, I began to carefully take notes based on my observations in various areas. Clients are not the only people who are hustled by financial planning clowns. Often the same planner/clown falls into many of the below categories. Here, in summary, are a few results of those observations.

- On average, when I attend a financial planning gathering of over 40 planners -- two financial planners will ask me to go to work for them for **free**. **They actually want me to work for them for no pay**. They are supposed to have financial common sense but they fail to acknowledge the obvious fact that I, or anyone else, would go broke in a New York second by working for no payment. I could even starve.
- On average, when I attend a financial planning gathering of over 50 planners, two financial planners will ask me to work for them on a percentage basis. This also means “for **free**.” They offer to keep the score of what is owed. They encourage me to work on speculation for them. **Again, I**

would become destitute fast if I did this. Surely they have enough common sense to know this! How they try to con me. Possibly they assume that I am an idiot who deserves to be exploited.

- During the past twelve years, only one out of forty planners who told me he (or she) was going to hire me ever actually hired me.
- During the past twelve years, approximately twenty-two planners fired me but never told me – they just stopped paying. Most often they were disappointed because they could not dictate what I do and dictate the results we obtain. Eighteen of these allowed me to work for as long as three months for them for **free**.
- Thirty-one planners got behind in paying me and promised to catch-up but never did.
- Eleven planners have promised me – for over ten years now – that they were going to hire me. They never did. They never will.
- Twenty-one financial planners have hired me and then fired me **within two weeks** for the following states reasons ...

My wife is divorcing me.

I'm going on a vacation to Europe.

My broker dealer is reorganizing.

As a small business we changed our marketing plans.

We are merging with another agency.

We can not handle any more work.

I'm going to prison.

My mother is having an operation.

You failed to get me on one single magazine cover.

We are moving to new offices soon.

I'm going to have an operation.

We now have serious ongoing litigation.

You failed to get me my own national TV show.

My mother is sick.

I'm cutting back on my work-load.

God told me to not continue with you.

I don't like your attitude about fee-only planners. (I believe that fee-only planners do not necessarily hold the moral high ground.)

... Often the above folks simply made-up a lie and use that as their justification for the terminating. They always ignored our two weeks or so of work, and never offered to pay for the two weeks of work. They never once offered to reimburse the money we spent on them during those two weeks. Of these five, three promised to hire us again in six months but never did.

- Nineteen financial planners have hired me and fired me within three weeks because the results we obtained for them were not adequate or sufficient. Of course only a super-idiot would expect the Golden Gate Bridge to be built in three years. Such a feat could not be accomplished even if some stupid hustler demanded this. I suspect that in every case the real reason for dismissal was never revealed. The reason given was most likely just a lie.
- Thirty-six hired us and the relationship lasted less than three months. All left owing us money that was never paid. All wanted books in that time, plus TV shows, plus magazine covers – all absurd demands -- hugely unrealistic demands for such a brief period.
- I was unable to keep track of the number of clowns who wanted me to get lies published about them.
- Only one client – during the past 12 years, -- talked out loud to God. She would pull over and park her car along the street, and start answering questions she heard from God. She would also interrupt conversations to answer the questions that God asked her. She was the only person who could hear God speaking. God often butted-in by speaking to her when I was trying to talk to her on the phone.
- Seventeen planners told me that God lead me to them.
- Twenty-six of the financial planners I made proposals to went broke and out-of-business during this time period. I thought they were doing well and could do better.

- One financial planning client would phone me most every night (while drunk) and ask for reassurance of his worth and value.
- One financial planning client would often phone at night while stoned and demand a nightly updated report on our work for him.
- One financial planner would call me every two or three nights to tell me about his sexual conquest.
- ***Over fifty financial planners have asked me to ghost write books for them for free.*** But they stop~~ped~~ped talking about this when I mention getting paid for my work.
- I have lost count of the number of times I caught financial planners in lies. These are the clowns. Never the real producers. I stopped trying to count when I passed one thousand instances of lies and “fabrications” during this 12 year period.
- Sixty-one told me they were writers but could reveal nothing they had written. They could only produce canned newsletters (ghost written by someone else) with their address printed on them. Or they offered other ghosted copy, especially articles available to them free from the Financial Planning Association. (These same articles are available to their competition.) Often they simply stole other writer’s material and placed their name on it.
- Seventeen financial planners asked me to write articles to see if I could write good enough for them or appropriate for their needs. All of these did not hire me. Thirteen of these seventeen, stole the articles and had them published under their names. Most of these so called “test articles for evaluation” are still being used today by those financial planning thieves.
- I did not attempt to count the number of financial planners who told me they were highly skilled platform presenters (speakers). I think almost every financial planner I ever knew claimed to be a highly skilled professional speaker. Most are not. It is possible that all of them really believe they are skilled speakers? Far too many follow the Sally Principle and deliver talks that are “Same As Last Years.”

You Too Should Avoid Working For No Pay!

- Real journalists (not low-paid editors of financial magazines) don't respect planners in general because they know the realities involved with the many-many clowns. **Some of these real journalists say they pity me** because I **have become** identified with planners.
- Forty-seven financial planners have asked me to edit their articles for free. This so-called editing would actually entail a major rewrite. I no longer do this. Yes I was stupid and formerly did this.
- Sixty-three financial planners have asked me to write their speeches for **free**. I no longer perform this **free** work either.
- One hundred and nine financial planners have asked me to write their resume or their biographical sketches for **free**. I no longer do this either.
- Four hundred financial planners have promised to return my phone calls to discuss something – but they never returned my calls.
- I've been told **over 200 times**, "My check was in the mail." I've lost count on this one. But I have documented twenty-two variations of this.
- **Twenty-six clients told me what to do to such an extreme that they obliterated their promotion plans and killed the possibility of any meaningful results! Not one of them ever realized they did this. Not even if I explained this to them. They simply concluded that I am a jerk pursuing a jerk's mission.**

- My greatest problems were always with husband and wife teams. They gave contradictory orders. Behind each other's back they would give me different directions! They continually changed directions, interrupted the orders of one another, altered the instructions of their partner, etc. They always denied there was any problem. One was usually afraid to sand-up to the other. They conned each other while hustling me.

- Nineteen clients were control freaks, who wanted input or reports every two or three days. They wanted to have daily phone conversations, wanted to personally rewrite, instruct, and supervise all details and aspects of their account. They were true **clients from hell** who prevented maximum results from being obtained. They wanted weekly reports.

- Two suicide notes were given to me by loved ones of two financial planners who killed themselves. A third planner (he was a client no less) mailed his suicide note to me. I still do not know what to do with these suicide notes.

Five planners were absurdly demanding (“I want to be on the cover of **Time** for my birthday.” “I’m gonna be in Atlanta next **Tuesday** so you arrange for **Ted Turner** to meet with me.” “Get me a speaking gig at the **MDRT**. They have lots of bums. I know you can get me on their next program.” “I want a best-selling book in three months!” “I have one of those show-off wives like **Donald Trump** has. You can get lots of mileage for me out of her.” “I want a TV series based on my life.” “**I discovered the Rule of 72.**” “Get me a Pulitzer Prize next week!” All of these refused to pay because I could not meet their excessive demands. I lost money trying to work for these clowns. Seeking realistic goals within realistic time periods was not acceptable for them. They pretended that we had no expenses involved. I was always unable to reason with them. Some consumers actually hire these clowns to be their financial planners!

- Of 57 planners who asked me to make proposals to them, 54 **did not** have the courtesy or professionalism to inform me of their decision (if they were going to hire us or not).
- Sixty-four planners paid me with checks that bounced. **Forty-nine** of these were never made good. Five planners paid me with a second check that also bounced. Three of these planners paid me with three different additional checks that each bounced during a seven-month period.

- Yes I know lots of public relations practitioners who will not accept politician clients or financial planner clients. They have their reasons for this.

Among my undocumented but certain observations, is the following fact: There are great and honorable financial men and women like **Mehdi Fakharzadeh, Lew Nason, Jerry Reiter, Norman G. Levine, Phil Calandra, Jeff Ushem, Bill Kelly, Connie Luttrell, Lester W. Anderson, H. Stephen Bailey, Rosilyn H. Overton, Rubin Ruiz, Michael Zmistowski, Ed Ledford, Marvin Feldman,** and many-many others. These are among our best and brightest. Financial professionals like these make us proud. The clowns make us ashamed, embarrassed, or even angry.

The list of outstanding financial professionals goes on-and-on. There are many honest and responsible professionals – each an actual role model -- who have allowed me the honor of working for them and they enabled me to become a valued member of their team.

Together we have obtained some very exciting achievements.

We have enjoyed lasting relationships that are mutually beneficial.

Each year I charge my clients less for each of the first five years of our relationship.

I wish the clowns were not out there is such great numbers. Clowns harm my clients! I no longer accept clowns as clients. God knows they harm me. But you have most likely lost more money to clowns (or because of clowns) than I have! Must we tolerate clowns forever?

Loren Dunton, the founder of financial planning, died broken hearted because of the many financial planning clowns who hustled him.

Loren's wife, the beloved **Marta Dunton**, retains negative feelings about the many financial planning clowns who hustled them. **Paul Richard** who now heads the **ICFE** and was **Loren's** long-time associate has contempt for the financial planning clowns. This article reveals how I feel about them. At this moment the clowns are harming you.

Convicted Clowns

In ***Terrible Truths About Financial Planning***, is a chapter titled ***Convicted Clowns***. On these pages I quote word-for-word from official court proceedings and public records. Again, ***Terrible Truths***

is a volume about the realities you and I face. These are the same realities that clients also confront.

You can read about what became of the pushy and ego-centered man who billed himself as “**Mister Insurance.**” (Prison was his fate. And now he is out but he is in serious trouble again.) He recently sent me a one-sentence note that read: “I’ll bet I make more money than you.”

You can read about the clown who’s excessive bragging and obnoxious manner motivated me to write the original clown articles in the first place. He bills himself as a (self-described) “Celebrity Planner.” He was ordered to repay \$315,000.00 to a 71-year old widow in Deerfield Beach, Florida. Yes, she really is a widow!

You can read many other examples of financial planning clowns confronted by courts, the **NASD, SEC, FTC**, dispute resolution judges, and arbitration panels. I wish all consumers could experience only financial planners who are responsible! Oh how I wish you and I lived in a world without financial planning clowns.

Forrest Wallace Cato, RFMA, FMM, RFC, provides media based image branding for financial planners. ***Financial Record*** called Cato, “The leader in image branding for financial professionals.” Long-time financial industry sales trainer, **Jack Kinder**, proclaimed, “Cato’s impact is enormous.” During the annual **IARFC Forum Convention** he presents **The Cato Award** for “Published writing that promotes greater understanding for and acceptance of financial planning.” Cato is former editor of ***Financial Planning*** Magazine and ***Trusts & Estates: The Journal of Wealth Management***. Today Cato is Editor-In-Chief of ***The Inspirator International*** Magazine, presently circulated in all of the Pacific-Rim countries. **Contact: Intergroup II/Atlanta, Inc.**, 915 River Rock Drive, Suite 101, Woodstock, GA 30188, 770-516-9395 **(Phone)**, wcato7@juno.com **(e-mail)**, 770-366-8441 **(Cell)** or www.CatoMakesYouFamous.com **(Web Site)** or 770-516-9396 **(FAX)**.