

24 HOURS ...IN MELBOURNE

THIS MONTH PROFESSIONAL PLANNER SPENDS 24 HOURS IN THE MELBOURNE CBD AS WE CONTINUE OUR FOCUS ON THE DAY-TO-DAY GOINGS ON AT LEADING FINANCIAL PLANNING BUSINESSES ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

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WITH ... **ANDREW PETERS** *managing director, Semaphore Private*

THE MEANING BEHIND the name of Andrew Peters' planning firm, Semaphore Private, is usually lost on the younger generation, but his older clients know exactly what he is referring to.

"Semaphore is an old signaling system and my wife, who has a marketing background, helped me come up with the name," Peters says. "The idea behind the name is that we will point you in the right direction."

The small Semaphore team has been steering clients to safe ground for seven years, but it wasn't always smooth sailing in the early days.

Luckily for Peters, starting Semaphore has been one of the best decisions of his life.

He has a small team of three other employees – including financial planners – and refuses to take on too many clients because he likes to give them value for money and undivided attention.

"I think if you have more than 200 clients on your books, you are not really able to do a proper job," he says. "And I like to give my clients consistency with who they deal with. Often with the bigger firms they are moving people around and they are getting a different advisor each time."

WORDS JO LEGGATT

- 6.30** ▶ Up for a walk with the dog and think about some of the things in the day ahead – I know we need to finalise speakers for the Boutique Conference late in the year.
- 7.30** ▶ Breakfast and discussion with my wife about who is where tonight, as my two children, aged 18 and 20, are usually borrowing a car for one of their sporting events.
- 8.00** ▶ Up to the local secondary college where I sit on the finance committee; and monthly reports and board meeting minutes need to be prepared. Been involved for six years now, but will step back soon.

JULIET CALLAGHAN

Certified Financial Planner

After a late night spent hitting the books – finishing off my Masters in Financial Planning – a coffee will help! Putting the finishing touches to a statement of advice (clients love seeing their life in pictures). For this new client, we are able to illustrate their dream retirement is achievable in 10 years, with simple redirection of cash flow, the correct asset allocation and effective budgeting. Happy clients equals happy planners.

- 9.00** ▶ After catching the train into work, where I usually browse the national papers on an iPad, I normally start the day with tea or coffee at a local shop, check off all the mundane emails,



10.00

have a quick look at markets and take note of any work in progress (WIP) sitting on our planning software. I find this also allows my colleagues Tracey and Juliet a free run at things before I arrive, so when I'm in at 9.30 there is usually a pile of documents for me to action first up.

We are in the process of bulk switches on a couple of assets across the entire client base. Need to work with the wrap platform on this to make sure nothing is missed, no clients are left with low cash balances and importantly all statements of advice and records of advice are documented. At Semaphore our model is to have no more than 70 clients per adviser, so we do not run separately managed accounts (SMAs) or individually managed accounts (Mas) or limited managed discretionary accounts (MDAs) – hence any investment changes need to be done at a client-by-client level.

11.30

Reviewed some accounts for a client's self-managed super fund – once again the details come to us late in April for the prior June 30. I really do wonder when the traditional accountants will catch up to technology and we can have something resembling real-time reporting. For this client we'll need to check in with him that he's satisfied his minimum pension requirement, as his tax refund in excess of \$140K is something we simply couldn't estimate 12 months ago.

12.00

Call a client down on the Mornington Peninsula. They are about to sell the family home over the weekend and downsize to a new apartment closer to the city, and closer to the facilities they'll need over the next 10 years. Lots to consider here as the kids have blended families and we definitely

12.30

need them to put in place that corporate trustee they've been wavering on for the past five years.

Lunch with an overseas manager we use in our portfolios. Interested in their expectations on distributions for June 30, as we have many clients in pension phase, either account-based or transition.

TRACEY PACE
Certified Financial Planner (CFP)

Meeting prep: While we speak to clients regularly, an ongoing advice meeting is the perfect opportunity to check over the big picture stuff. We pull out our original (or most recent) advice: Has everything been implemented? What's still outstanding? What targets/milestones have we set with the client? How are they tracking? We remind the client of their stated objectives and gauge if these are still relevant: What's changed? Engaging the client before the actual meeting allows better use of our time when we actually get together.

1.30

Catch up with a colleague from the Boutique Financial Planners (BFP). We go and get a coffee and chew the fat over the normal issues: keeping staff motivated, finding the silver bullet for technology (even though we know it doesn't exist), and we swap yarns on crazy things some clients do.

2.00

Back in the office, check on Golf Victoria website as now I'm 55 I've promised myself I'll play in a seniors event every month or two – so I'll be





POST CARD



(SA2)	
People	29,322
Male	14,986
Female	14,336
Median age	27
Families	3645
Total households	9168
Average people per household	1.8
Average monthly income	\$4009.33
Average monthly rent	\$1903
Average monthly mortgage repayments	\$2082

The most common occupations in Melbourne (Statistical Area Level 2) include professionals – 32.7 per cent; clerical and administrative workers – 15.7 per cent; managers – 11.7 per cent; community and personal service workers – 9.4 per cent; and technicians and trade workers – 7.9 per cent.
SOURCE: ABS

2.30

off to Tocumwal for a two-day tournament in late June with two friends. I'll also need to book a lesson with my coach to sort out my alignment.

Chase down some info for our professional indemnity (PI) insurance application. Pleasingly, our compliance review again says low-risk and, again, we'll get an 18-month policy as it's less painful than renewing every 12 months. Note to self: make sure I get Tax Agents Services Act (TASA) endorsement – thanks for that tip to the BFP email group, as there are about 15 of us all renewing at present.

3.00

Now there are two files on the desk to review for meetings tomorrow. Sonia, our admin resource, works from home and prepares all the agendas, bookings, reports and checklists for what we call our "ongoing advice meetings". Sonia was my office manager and personal assistant some 10 years ago and now has young kids, and we decided it was a great use of her time to take some of the admin off Tracey and Juliet's plate to free them up to talk with clients. It's been successful to date, but it's still a work in progress.

3.45

Have a quick look at the markets for the day, just to see if the Consume Price Index (CPI) announcements have done anything – but heck, even if they have, I have no control over them.

4.00

Call a fund manager contact – we are basically trying to get their product at a cheaper – if we can save the client base \$100,000 on investment management fees, it will be worth the effort.

4.30

Sit down with Tracey and Juliet to go through the past month's activities:

- Who's done what?
- What are the top 10 priorities for the next month?
- How are we tracking vs the budget?

Generally this is the time for us all to sit back from the day to day and brainstorm about what we'd replace in the business or what takes up unnecessary time.

As we run two advisers with all clients, the client base does not need to rely on me and both Tracey and Juliet are highly talented financial planners in their own right and have earned the trust they deserve. Tracey today works a nine-day fortnight and one day a week from home – her kids are two and seven. Juliet does a five-day week and manages two teenagers aged 17 and 14 – enough said. It's funny – there are some days where we hardly speak and everyone just gets on with their responsibilities, but I know it's always done thoroughly and in the best interests of the client.

5.30

The girls have left. I usually do the business stuff at this time of the night: review the bills, check on the bank accounts, and fiddle about in MYOB as everything is now pretty well automated. But I know I need to think about the budget for 2016-17 soon and ponder the big question: do we bring on another Certified Financial Planner (CFP) into the business?

6.00

I share some business ideas with a small focus group of other planners (five businesses). We generally get together twice a year, with a formal agenda, and learn from each other. The gems I've picked up from these other businesses are invaluable, from planning ideas, marketing, web design, coaching – even something as simple as visuals to use with clients. ■