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rest of the professional world caught up with his

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Oct. 29, 2012



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Andrew Poulos has never worked for somebody else. Well, to clarify, since graduating from college, the tax and accounting professional has never been an employee of somebody else's business.

While his name is not as recognizable as tech mavens who went straight from campus to multi-billion dollar dot-coms, he is nevertheless a very self-made entrepreneur, moving from success or failure, to the next opportunity for success. That said, working for himself wasn't necessarily his intention at the outset.

Born in Atlanta as the oldest son of Greek immigrant parents, he lived in New York

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Jake.”

Still in high school, Andrew decided to try an accounting class in his junior year. It came naturally to him and he went on to place in the top 10 percent in a regional student accounting competition. He knew then that he had a knack for it, and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in accounting and real estate at Georgia State University in 1994.

While in college, he was president of the school's chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, the national scholastically-focused accounting and finance fraternity, which achieved national honors under his leadership. He also worked part time in the accounts receivable department for Norfolk Southern Railroad. At 22 years old, he had no idea that would be the last employer he would ever have. Despite his degree, drive and readiness, after graduation he found a tight employment market with many more applicants than positions.

“I had a lot of interviews back then, but I think the human resources interviewers could see something in me that I couldn't even see yet myself,” he said. “I can see now that I wasn't really cut out for corporate life.”

Starting from Scratch

Although getting tired of rejection letters, Andrew did not let it deter him from his goal. He still believed that the accounting profession could provide him with job stability and the potential to earn a good living. He was just going to make that career for himself, and by the next year, he had an established payroll service, with a growing client base. He would go on to earn the Enrolled Agent credential (EA), as well as credentials for Accredited Tax Preparer (ATP) and Accredited Business Accountant (ABA).

In the 18 years since then, [Poulos Accounting & Consulting, Inc.](#)

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his business model. He was a bit of a pioneer back in 1990s, starting a firm that was completely home-office based.

He said he recognized early that understanding a few client industries would help him develop a niche. The firm has many business client types, but has developed specialties with food and beverage clients, construction and service-based businesses.

Andrew has also adopted many technologies, such as remote access, client portals, and social media, which help him more efficiently serve his clients, some of which he has never even met in person. In addition to local Georgia businesses and individuals, the firm has clients in eight states across the country.

The practice scored a 302 on *CPA Practice Advisor's Productivity Survey* (www.CPAPracticeAdvisor.com/productivity), a free online tool that helps professional tax and accounting firms measure how effective their workflow practices and technologies are, and benchmark them to similar practices.

Andrew still prefers working from home, where he has converted his 1,000 square foot basement into an office and he can spend more time with his wife Debbie. The company has also acquired commercial office space nearby that he uses for some client meetings and as training space for his career's new focus.

The Entrepreneurial Drive Continues

Apparently, Andrew's entrepreneurial spirit could not be satisfied with running a full-service payroll, tax, accounting and small business consulting firm. In addition to owning several real estate investment properties and previously owning a mortgage company, the past few years have seen growth in a new area.

Andrew has developed seminar courses, both for small businesses and professionals,

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review by the prestigious Library Journal in New York.

“I’ve been moving more into these training and teaching roles because I really enjoy helping other tax professionals and small businesses. This is part of a longer-term vision I have for myself and the firm.” His next tax seminar will be Nov. 1-2 in Atlanta.

He credits fellow EA and nationally renowned speaker Beanna J. Whitlock with helping him get started on this endeavor. Beanna has enabled him to become an adjunct professor for Auburn University’s continuing professional education department, as well as teaching seminars through the Legacy Series (www.thelegacyseries.org).

As if these several ventures were not enough, the serial entrepreneur also had a live broadcast radio program (“The Savvy Money Show”) about accounting and taxation in Atlanta, which is now available on BlogTalkRadio (www.blogtalkradio.com/search/savvy-money-show) and via iTunes.

Away from the office, he helps his community and profession by serving on the board of directors for the Tucker Civic Association and the Georgia State University School of Accountancy, a mentor for Georgia State University College of Business, and chairman of the business and technology board for Tucker High School.

At 39, Andrew has faced many family and professional challenges. He became bilingual even though he was the son of immigrant parents who only spoke Greek in the household; He lost his father when he was 11; He was the first member of his family to earn a college degree, inspiring one of his brothers, Demetri, to follow with a Masters in Taxation. He has also had varying levels of success, or the alternative, at his many business pursuits.

Yet, as Andrew would quote from the American writer George Edward Woodberry:

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