

MSP SUCCESS

MAGAZINE



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Special Edition: Spring 2021

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Konrad Martin, CEO Of Tech Advisors, Inc

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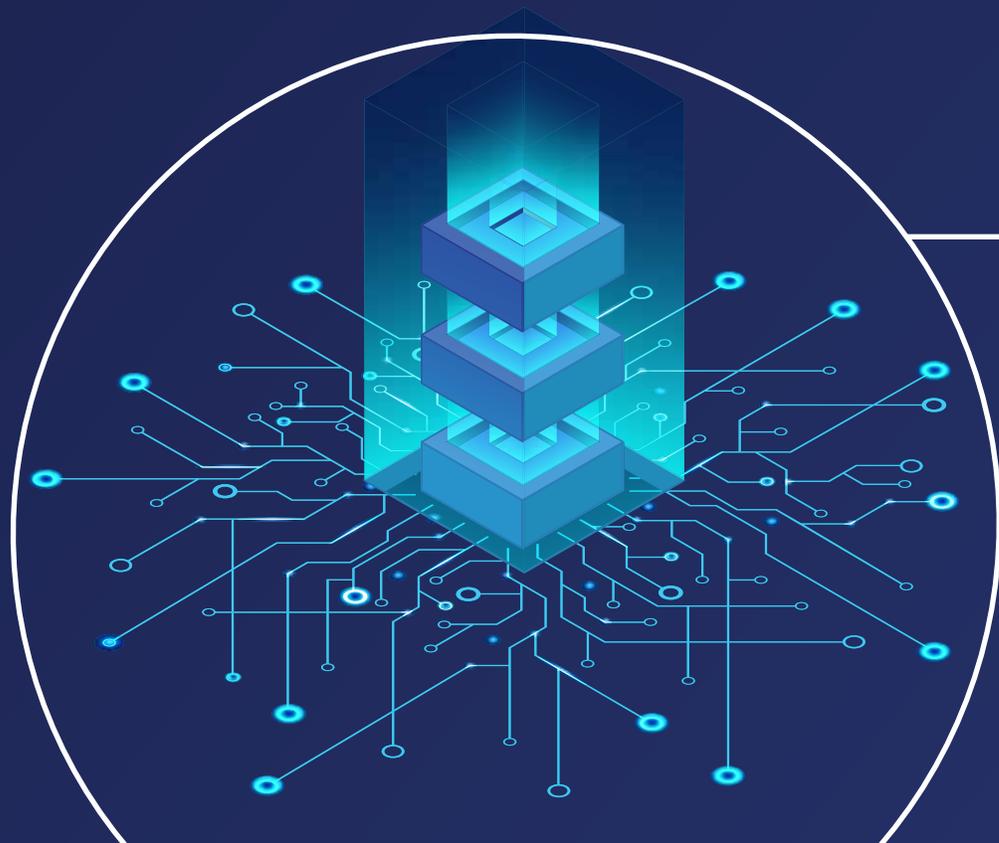
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Business Feature**
Konrad Martin

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How Three CPA Brothers Became the Premier IT Solution for CPA Firms in New England and Beyond



oping an interactive compact disc, Konrad presented the idea to Steven Case, founder of AOL, who at the time was looking to add a travel section to AOL. “I managed to get a phone call with Steven Case and told him what we were doing and that it was all about travel,” Konrad said. Case liked the idea and offered to give a free webpage to everyone who signed on to the project. Konrad leveraged Case’s offer, selling sponsorships to approximately 500 hotels, restaurants, museums, and other businesses related to the travel industry to participate in the project. “They all got a page on the travel section of AOL and we sold tens of thousands of the CD-ROMs,” Konrad said. The brothers later sold the project to Friends of Acadia, a non-profit conservation organization.

A Solid Foundation In Finance

After selling the project, Konrad and Kevin walked away from computers. Both went to college on scholarships, Konrad for being a nationally ranked swimmer and Kevin as a national champion in diving. Six credits short of completing his degree in management, Konrad’s brother J.D., painted a dismal picture of Konrad’s future: “You’re going to end up at McDonald’s wearing one of the yellow hats instead of the blue hat.” (Managers wore blue hats.)

On J.D.’s strong encouragement, both twins changed their major to accounting before going to work with J.D. at his CPA firm in Blue Hill, Maine. Both Konrad and Kevin passed the CPA exam, and all three brothers were now making good livings as CPAs.

How CPA Brothers Ended Up In IT

While Kevin stayed on at J.D.’s firm, in 1999 Konrad went to work for the 70-member CPA firm Abrams, Little-Gill, and Loberfeld in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. In his first year, during the height of tax season, while working late Konrad heard one partner struggling with a computer problem. When Konrad quickly and correctly identified the cause, he revealed he knew about computers. “The partner was surprised and impressed,” Konrad said. “And that birthed the idea for Tech Advisors.” Within days a partner approached Konrad about starting an IT company within the firm. “I didn’t want to abandon my job, so I talked them into hiring my brother instead,” Konrad said. “We started feeding Kevin clients like any other CPA with the idea that as IT problems came up, Kevin would handle them.”

While Kevin helped fix the IT problems, Konrad started helping identify CPA firms that might need some help

with their IT. In 2002, the “firm within a firm” was incorporated as Tech Knowledge Advisors, with the partners of the CPA firm. They also brought in a third partner, Jeff Bell, within a few years.

But soon everyone was frustrated. “There were too many chefs trying to run this tiny business,” Konrad said. “This was before Managed Service Providers (MSPs) were popular, so the partners didn’t completely understand where we wanted to go with the company. We knew the only way to do it right was to break off and have total control.” In 2005, Konrad and Kevin bought out the company and became Tech Advisors. Soon they landed their first big client, Samet and Company, and they were off and running.

CPA’s Reinvent Themselves As IT Consultants To Serve CPA Firms

Today their business model of CPAs delivering white-glove IT to CPA firms has grown their clientele outside greater Boston to across Massachusetts, New York, Texas, and beyond. “CPAs have extremely specific needs,” Konrad said. “We understand those needs and speak their language. We understand the problems a CPA firm faces because we’ve done it ourselves. As CPAs, we’ve done audits on billion-dollar companies and on 401Ks. We understand terminology such as job costing, which means we can give you the right solution. So, we understand the timing of business and all the software CPAs need and use.”

The three brother CPAs work together now at Tech Advisors. The twins serve as co-owners, with Jeff Bell. Konrad is CEO, Kevin is CTO, and oldest brother J.D. is CFO. The company has grown rapidly, increasing 20% year over year for the last five years. Named among the 50 fastest growing companies in Massachusetts, Tech Advisors subsequently won the Fast Track Award which is the 30 fastest growing companies in Massachusetts. Clients are fiercely loyal. Many of their clients, like Rosen & Associates, Samet & Company, PKF, Coles & Bodoyn, Paresky Flitt & Company, Gorton & Company... to name just a few... have been with Tech Advisors for anywhere from 5 to 15 years.

They’ve also won the Family Business Award. The combined skills, experience, and brainpower of three brother CPAs, along with co-founder Jeff Bell and a team of professionals with deep experience in the technical and practical aspects of IT management, cloud accounting, and cybersecurity have made Tech Advisors the premier, go-to IT solution for CPA firms in New England.

Nationally Recognized In Cybersecurity And Compliance

Konrad is a nationally recognized authority on cybersecurity and other IT issues. The author of two books: Hacked, on the threat of cybercrime, and Empower Your I.T., on using a managed services approach to IT, Konrad has also been featured in the documentary film Cyber Crime 2: The Dark Web Uncovered, which opened in Hollywood and can be seen on Amazon Prime.

Konrad first drew attention to his cybersecurity expertise in 2010. “We were asked by the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants to present on the brand-new security laws going into effect in the state,” Konrad said.

What started as a commitment to do one seminar grew to 32 seminars by the end of that year. “We were speaking to rooms full of 150 CPAs at a time,” Konrad said.

Tech Advisors also wrote the Written Information Security Program (WISP) for the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants. “We require all our clients to have a WISP and help them with compliance and security so they can sleep better at night,” Konrad said. “Ultimately, it’s almost selfish because we sleep better at night, knowing they’re in compliance and that they’re doing the things they need to in order to make sure their systems aren’t going to either crash, not be backed up or get breached.”

Cybersecurity is so important to Konrad that he’s taken on a larger stage, broadcasting “The IT Minute” on entrepreneurial radio out of Needham, Massachusetts. He also speaks frequently and published several dozen articles on the subject in publications such as Boston Business Journal and Banker and Tradesman.

Commitment To A Culture Of Communication And Integrity

Though he acknowledges his company’s role as a Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP), Konrad views the contribution of Tech Advisors as more comprehensive. “We’re really a business consulting firm that concentrates on IT and security,” he said. “We take care of every aspect by looking at their business requirements FIRST before their IT needs.”

The secret to staying on track through growth is the company’s core values which include communication and integrity. “We want our clients to understand in regular English, what’s going on,” Konrad said. “So much in IT can be hidden behind a veil of tech talk and acronyms that can be confusing, especially in situations where an issue could arise. Communication is gigantic. We want to be accessible, honest, and fair. And one way we do that is to use straight talk in their IT support.”

Another way they offer top-quality support is by providing source documents specific to CPA firms such as retention policies and work-from-home policies. “Now that employees are using their mobile devices for multi-factor authentication, firms need to have their employees sign off on these,” Konrad said. “Because if they don’t, employees can come back and ask to be compensated. So, we’ve added our expertise from working with all these different CPA firms to help them with things they may not be thinking of-things that will keep their doors open.”

The “Why” Behind Tech Advisors

Konrad and his brothers are fiercely dedicated to helping small to midsize CPA firms maintain security and compliance. “Many of our clients aren’t large enough to have a complete internal IT team, but they have a definite need for knowledgeable IT capability from someone who understands the CPA world,” Konrad said.

Konrad’s long-term vision is to serve and protect CPA firms nationwide. “Today, if you’re a Massachusetts CPA firm and you need IT help, you will at least have heard of us,” Konrad said. “I want every CPA firm looking for top-quality IT support, no matter where they are located, to know that Tech Advisors is one of the options they should be talking to because we’re not just about IT solutions. We’re about putting the right tools into CPAs’ hands, so they are in the position where they are more secure, efficient, and effective.” ■