FAST GROWTH 2007
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Fast Growth 2007 Methodology

For our first annual Fast Growth, we wanted to make sure that the business community at large could participate. Also, we set out to separate ourselves from other revenue-only based lists for fastest-growing companies. So, with the help of CBIZ Mayer Hoffman McCann, here's how the finalists were selected:

Because revenue is an important factor, revenue growth was the main qualifier to narrow down the top 20. From there, revenue percentages earned 50% of the weight, 30% for the revenue growth since 2003 and 20% for the last year of reported revenue growth (2005-2006). Employee growth comprised an additional 25% of the weight, in which we calculated growth percentages from 2005 until the present. The last 25% was set aside for market opportunities, taking into account growth potential, M&A activity, expansion into new markets and major clients serviced.

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CONVERSATION THAT MATTERS

RISING FROM THE CORPORATE MOSH PIT

SCOTT HEISING
CFO | Independent Financial Group

www.ifgsd.com

INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL GROUP By nature, Independent Financial Group (IFG), a full-service, national independent financial service broker-dealer firm, is in the business of making people money by offering services and support to financial advisors. But surprisingly, the Del Mar company doesn't just crunch numbers and worry about the bottom line. Sure, the company was stoked to have a monstrous 1,677.8% growth from 2003 to 2004, but all impressions point to company founders who are just about as satisfied with the 41% growth posted from 2005, when revenue was $16.6 million, to 2006, when it hit $23.4 million.

Scott Heising is one of three partners who are equals and call themselves managing directors, in addition to having specific titles. Heising's role is as chief financial officer. The other partners are David Fischer, chief marketing officer, and Joe Miller, CEO.

And right off the bat, in addition to stressing that he and his partners share the business successes and failures evenly, Heising also states, "Achieving great financial numbers is not the focus of our business."

So what is the focus?

Simply put, it is on the employees and the quality of service. When the focus is on those two things, the financial numbers will most often be in alignment.

Asked about how IFG became a Fast Growth company, Heising answers, "It's the people in the office, who all have tremendous industry experience and provide a very hands-on approach to service. We also have a great reputation, which is important, and that all comes down to the level of service we provide."

> **"We have a very open environment, and it's very family oriented. That's kind of a cliché, but we really care about everybody at the company."**
> —SCOTT HEISING

In three years, IFG has nearly doubled the number of employees (Heising is adamant that employees are never referred to as head count because that is "degrading"). In 2004, the company had 97; now it has more than 190. And while it's more difficult to keep a corporate culture intact when so many people are added in a short timeframe, Heising says, "We have a very open environment, and it's very family oriented. That's kind of a cliché, but we really care about everybody in the company. It sounds like common sense, but it's not always the case with companies."

Currently, 25,000 clients nationwide rely on IFG's advisors, and in a saturated market, gaining an edge up on much of the competition has come in the form of going back to the basics.

Heising says the company's business approach is merely "picking up the phone" and "delivering what you promise." Sounds simple enough.

An "Animated" Response

Asked about what areas of company growth he was most proud of, Scott Heising, managing director of Independent Financial Group (the No. 2 Fast Growth 2007 company) joked, "I'm an accountant, so it's tough for me to talk about growth without talking financial numbers," before revealing, "I'm most pleased with the growth of the culture."