

As Seen In ... *Forbes*, December 24, 2007

Local Success Story BenchMark Financial Network

Making Success Easier for Financial Advisors & Clients

From the window of BenchMark's new office in One Oxford Centre overlooking downtown, Managing Partner James Grimes observes, "Pittsburgh has a lot to offer... We are really excited because this new initiative will facilitate our continued growth and our commitment to serving a high caliber of financial advisors and their clients from one of the city's premier business addresses."

The new office is "designed to reach out to advisors who want to service high-net-worth clients from an investment management and estate planning standpoint," says C. Michael McCormick, the company's CEO and co-founder. McCormick continues, "We recently hired a Chartered Financial Analyst, Dale Dominick, as the office's managing director." Dominick has an extensive asset management background and oversees some of the firm's customized portfolio strategies using an array of investment vehicles, including mutual funds, stocks, bonds, and exchange traded funds (ETF's).



The new office in downtown Pittsburgh is just one of a number of exciting developments for BenchMark, an independently owned and operated investment firm now entering its tenth year in business. BenchMark (formerly named Blue Vase) has been ranked within the top three securities firms for the past three years by the *Pittsburgh Business Times* and has recently opened branches in Bridgeville, Hanover, Altoona, Erie and the State College area. Preparations are also underway for several more suburban Pittsburgh offices, as well as a number of other locations throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland and the Carolinas.

Other new initiatives for BenchMark include enhanced wealth management, estate planning and advisory capabilities; a series of practice development and management workshops; and a firm-wide campaign to train advisors on the latest in cutting-edge technology – ING SmartWorks. ING SmartWorks is a one-stop, Web-based workstation that integrates dynamic practice tools, continuously updated client data, and in-depth investment research together on a single sign-on platform.

The firm's business model focuses on "making financial success easier" and is aligned to serve financial advisors and their clients through the support of BenchMark's Broker/Dealer, Financial Network Investment Corporation, an ING company. McCormick sees the unique structure as "the best of both worlds for advisors and clients" as it provides an extensive network of global resources, without sacrificing personal attention or independence.

For clients, this means that BenchMark's highly skilled financial professionals have the freedom to choose the combination of products and services that best fit their specific needs and objectives. Likewise, advisors benefit by having the technology, training and tools that allow them to spend more time building relationships with clients.

"Our firm has spent the past decade building a solid foundation by earning clients' trust and serving them with integrity and passion," says Grimes. "We're committed to living up to our [new] name by setting high standards within the investment and insurance industry. We believe if we continue to do that, we will experience even more expansion and success in the future."

For more information, call James D. Grimes, AAMS at 800.830.0445 or visit www.benchmarkfn.com.

Securities and Advisory Services offered through Financial Network Investment Corporation, Member SIPC, an ING company. BenchMark is not a subsidiary of, nor controlled by, Financial Network Investment Corporation or ING.

Company Snapshot

Founded: 1998

Total Number of Representatives (October '07): 157

Total Assets: Over \$1.2 billion

Broker/Dealer: Financial Network, an ING company

Partners:
C. Michael McCormick
William Laughlin
Susan Holmes
James D. Grimes
James Eisnor

One Oxford Centre in downtown Pittsburgh, location of BenchMark's new flagship office.

BenchMark Financial Network, 301 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219