

**Metro Business Section – Money Finance & Investment
ACCOUNTANT COACHES PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES
PIASCIK'S CLIENTS LEARN FINER POINTS OF
SAVING MONEY**

by Sylvina Poole
Special Correspondent

When you're on the road for your job, it's hard to keep track of all your expenses. When you're on the road for 81 games a year for your job, it's nearly impossible.

Steve Piascik, president of the accounting firm Piascik & Associates, P.C., caters to professional athletes. His tax advice for them is similar to his advice for other taxpayers: Save your receipts.

Piascik said there are expenses everyone has that go unreported, especially with athletes.

"I tell athletes to claim everything they encounter on road trips - meals, trip expenses, agency fees," he said. "If they make sure they've got the paperwork and are keeping their receipts, we can and do save them tens of thousands of dollars."

Piascik even devised a system for his 30 national football league and major league baseball athlete-clients to easily track their expenses.

He calls it the "Pro Organizer." It's essentially a book for documenting and recording expenses, with pouches for receipts that's easy to bring on the road.

"We've had a great response from it," Piascik said. "We got most of them back from the athletes this year. It would blow your mind the money these guys saved."

P&A provides tax strategy and wealth management services to these athletes and has recently become certified as a Player Financial Adviser by the NFL.

Piascik walked away from a stable position as a senior tax manager at KPMG's Richmond office in 2001 to start his own company. Piascik had the complete support of the management at his former accounting firm.

Piascik made it clear at the outset that he would not go after any of KPMG's clients, however his strong relationship with the firm resulted in referrals of certain clients and access to resources to the benefit of his clients.

P&A often works through professional agents such as Richmond-based Proformance Inc., owned by Bean Stringfellow, a former pitcher in the Atlanta Braves' organization.

"Steve and his team have a very hands-on approach," said Jennifer Richman, the account manager for Proformance Inc.

"Their attention to detail helps our clients who often have complex financial matters. They are quick with ideas, but patient with suggestions. Steve is very involved and is always prompt getting back to you."

P&A has grown to 250 clients in 18 months. Piascik says he takes it all in stride and focuses his new firm on principles such as delivering more than the client expects and following through with what is promised to the client.

Marketing to specific clientele was all in his plan, and he hopes to triple his athlete clients in 2003.

Athletes, international clients, large middle-market clients and high-wealth individuals are his niche, he said. This is a strategy that has served his company well.

"We make sure that we are a nice fit with our clients," said Piascik. And sometimes that means turning away business. In those instances he said, the company helps customers find what they are looking for.

Although Piascik has accomplished much in such little time he states firmly that he "hasn't done anything yet."

<cm So far his clients disagree. Dick Strauss, former owner of Dick Strauss Ford, says, "The services provided by Steve Piascik in the areas of finance and tax preparation over the years have been invaluable.">

Dalal Salomon, a financial consultant with the Salomon and Ludwin Group at Wachovia Securities, said she had interviewed many local firms.

"In a profession that is often reactive, we found Piascik & Associates to be proactive and client focused," according to Salomon.

Piascik also has numerous clients in Europe, and provides accounting, U.S. tax compliance services, financial management services to them.

This includes foreign entities such as SeCuControl, a German power test equipment company with offices in Alexandria. Most of Piascik's experience in this area comes from working with Fortune 500 companies' international divisions.

Piascik earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration from Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania and a master's in taxation from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Times-Dispatch staff writer Lauren Nardella contributed to this report.



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