



Jon Sluis:

Well, thank you for joining us here. My name is Jon Sluis with Intrust CPA. With us today, we've got Brian Ursu with Intentional Wealth Advisors. We're going to dive in a little bit here on a book that he recently wrote, some advice that he has, and just some other things. So, Brian, thank you for joining us.

Brian Ursu:

It's a pleasure to be here. Thanks, Jon, I appreciate it.

Jon Sluis:

Yeah. And maybe if you could just start off just telling us a little bit about yourself, experiences, who you are, maybe a little bit about Intentional Wealth Advisors, just all across the board.

Brian Ursu:

Sure. I grew up in Traverse City, so it's nice to be home. And, I've been a financial advisor for 32 years, and 15 years ago, 16 years ago, started my own practice, which is kind of the culmination of- of the dream of what I would see for financial planning services.

And that's Intentional Wealth Advisors. We're super happy doing that. We love our clients, we love the work that we're doing, and we're moving more towards comprehensive financial planning, versus what we originally thought our job was, investment managers. That's part of it, but now, financial planning has become a bigger part of that.

Jon Sluis:

What do you mean when you say conventional versus comprehensive?

Brian Ursu:

So a comprehensive financial plan is going to look at really all aspects of a person's financial picture, right? And most often, people are looking at, "What does my retirement look like? What would that be? Or can I put my kids through college, or what would that look like? What do I need to do to make this vision a reality?" And so looking at all aspects, so that would be their employer sponsored retirement plan, their benefits at work, life insurance, investments, their estate plan, their legacy plan, all of it combined into one picture.

Jon Sluis:

Very nice. And then you typically work with individuals and large corporations, who do you typically work with? families, or...

Brian Ursu:

We work with, a select group of families primarily, and we find that we work with a lot of people just before retirement, and then after retirement, and then we work with a number of suddenly single women, that either through death or divorce, find themselves in a situation where, "My husband took

care of all of those things, and now I don't know what I should be doing." And, so we can help and counsel them.

Jon Sluis:

Wow, that's very good. Okay. Well, one thing too that I know of Brian here, and I want to ask his thoughts on is, Brian is an absolute avid reader. I love reading as well, nowhere near close to Brian. I mean, my goal is to get like 25 to 26 books a year, and I think I'm doing pretty good at that, Brian, what's your goal for this year?

Brian Ursu:

This year, I backed it down to 52. So a book a week, but, last year was a record year during COVID, during the pandemic, I read a little more-

Jon Sluis:

Mm-hmm...

Brian Ursu:

... so 60 books, for the year. And I was coming in at 59, and I thought, "I can read one more," and got it in under the wire.

Jon Sluis:

And these aren't little books, he's reading either. It's fun watching, he's on Good Reads so I get to see kind of the different books you're reading, and picking and choosing.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah.

Jon Sluis:

... they're not small... short little ones either... so it's fun. But on that, I mean, you obviously love to read, you love to share knowledge, it's one thing that, Brian and I talk a lot about, and enjoy sharing things on. But specifically, one of the reasons I asked him to be involved here today is because you are also an author.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah.

Jon Sluis:

So we have an author amongst us, which is exciting and different. Can you maybe tell us a little bit about that? We've got the book sitting here right now, so the book is [Now What? A Practical Guide to Figuring Out Your Financial Future](#). We'll have links to it below here and a few other things... I'm doing shameless

plug here for Brian. Maybe you could talk a little bit about the book, what is it that brought you there, et cetera.

Brian Ursu:

So, the way that it started is, our daughter went from being a poverty level student in college, eating ramen noodles, to a software engineer in Silicon Valley, making a lot of money, and her job offer was seven pages long. And she needed me to help so she could understand what it was that they were offering and the benefits. And so she asked, "What should I read to get, you know, in preparation for starting my financial life?" And so I gave her the normal books that I would normally recommend to people that asked that question. And she read them, and came back and said, "These are for people that are so much further along in their career. You know, you should write it, you can write." And I thought, "Okay, challenge accepted." I did what any good dad would do, and I wrote the book.

And as I was writing it, the outline came together really easy. But the motivation was, it occurred to me, everything that I have up here that I've shared with my clients, I've never shared with my own kids. If I get hit by a truck, everything that I have would not be passed to them, and so that motivation of, "It's really a love note or a message to my kids." This is... "If you know everything in here, you're gonna be doing just fine. Don't worry about it."

Jon Sluis:

Okay.

Brian Ursu:

And so that was the motivation to continue and plod on, and then fortunately, got a publisher that agreed with the whole message, yeah,

Jon Sluis:

I've read it and loved it. I mean, I can't tell you the number of times I was going through and highlighting different sections and thinking, "Okay, hey, this applies here, or this applies there." And it is very practical. Even the next week after reading I was, I was sitting in a meeting said, "Well, yeah, there was this idea or that idea." How practical this is.

Brian Ursu:

Well, thank you. And it was designed to be very conversational, not academic, so very approachable, and that, you know, nobody wants to read a book about finance. I mean, nobody. So it has to be somehow, somewhat engaging. (laughing).

Jon Sluis:

But for the rest of everyone listening here, yes. I mean, the target audience on this is for... Oh, who is the target audience?

Brian Ursu:

So it would be millennials and Gen Z, primarily, but anybody that's becoming financially aware for the first time. And so we find that secondary market with suddenly single women, "So I should know all this stuff, and I don't", and then the boomer parents of these millennial and Gen Z kids, who have no shortage of guilt, for how financially unprepared their grown children are for everything that they're going to encounter. And so this is a lifeline for them to, to toss out to their, grown kids.

Jon Sluis:

Yeah, and I think a lot of individuals that are watching this right now, are probably going to fit into that category there, where, it's... This may not necessarily be for you, but you could use it for your kids, or your grandkids or otherwise. And I say not necessarily, because my wife, Lisa, read this, and she said, after reading it, she finally understand some of what I was actually talking about.

And so we as baby boomers, or as others can also relate to it and say, "We're buying it for the grandkids," but really read into it a little bit and kind of understand a little bit. So when you do leave some of these meetings-

Brian Ursu:

Yeah.

Jon Sluis:

... and where you aren't smiling and pretending to understand... It does very clearly lay out a lot of different things within the financial world. So, it is a great read; I highly recommend it.

Brian Ursu:

Well, thanks. I appreciate the shameless plug.

Jon Sluis:

So, did you have any surprises as you were writing this? You know, if I were to get down into it a little bit of the actual practical side of writing this?

Brian Ursu:

None. I mean, I'm pretty disciplined, so I would set my alarm, get up at 4:45 and write until, close to 6:00 every morning, so it wasn't-

Jon Sluis:

That's A.M. by the way.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah. I wasn't stealing time from the business, or from my clients, it was, you know, just early, early rising. I love that discipline, and I loved the process, cup of coffee, warm fire, and, you know, the tablet,

and then just go. What I did find surprising is, it took as long to bring the manuscript to a finished product, took longer, than it did to write it.

Jon Sluis:

Okay.

Brian Ursu:

So, I'd never done this before, and I thought, "Well, a publisher's going to pick it up and then, then they just run with it. No, there's a lot of decisions that need to be made, the cover, the design, the graphics, the font, the margins, the paper, everything. So it's a long process, and that's what I was not prepared for.

Jon Sluis:

Interesting. Any secrets that you had inside of that, that you could look back and say, "I had no idea..."?

Brian Ursu:

The biggest surprise in that whole thing is submitting the manuscript to publishers and agents. I thought you just send it in an envelope, or digitally. No, you have to really make the case for the book, and do their work for them, in terms of who are the comps, who's the target market, what's the price point? I'm thinking, "Really? This is, this is my job?"

Jon Sluis:

Yeah, that's what you usually do.

Brian Ursu:

So that was really a surprise.

Jon Sluis:

Interesting. And have you had any stories of people now having read through it, and coming back to you and saying, you know, "Brian, thanks so much for giving me this. This lead into something else..."?

Brian Ursu:

I got a really super nice email from a gentleman who's raising two teenage daughters. And he said that he loved the book, he bought a copy for each of his daughters, and they're working on it together. That warms my heart like nothing.

Jon Sluis:

Yeah, yeah.

Brian Ursu:

And then I had a financial advisor that is also a professor in, I think in Nebraska somewhere, that said that their required course book was \$400 for his course - that's what the college said - and he said he prefers Ursu, and so they use Ursu with his class.

Jon Sluis:

Oh, nice.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah. So those are two stories that I thought were really kind of nice.

Jon Sluis:

If you work with me, you know I get absolutely passionate and excited when we start talking about having kids save early, the college kids, and I'll bring up the save now versus later screenshot I have already forwarded to many of you. So sharing this knowledge earlier than later is so important, and so, so key, if you will, and so I was excited about reading this, too. I appreciate you putting this out too, so thank you again. You know, we've been talking a lot about the book here, but you're not just doing the book. I mean, I know one other thing that I've seen is what you're calling coffee talks with Brian Ursu. What's that, and explain that a little bit.

Brian Ursu:

So it is an idea that I had as a way to communicate with our clients, or anybody really, that is interested in getting a market update. We do them every other week, on Wednesday, the next one is coming up, but, every other week, it's designed to be 10 to 15 minutes, a short synopsis of everything that's going on, and what they need to know about that. And so, early on, we covered the election, we covered the pandemic, we covered, you know, all kinds of the economic outlook, and the stock market gyrations.

And so it's just a way for us to give our spin on things, to let people know what it is that we're seeing, and what we're worried about, where we see the opportunities, and do it in a brief, concise, informal manner. But doing it on Zoom is totally foreign, video is foreign to me. I can talk in front of hundreds of people, in a live group, that's comfortable, but staring at the little blue on the top of my monitor, that's really unnerving to me. And it's, and it's hard. So I'm getting better at doing it, and I'll keep trying.

Jon Sluis:

We are all in different spots than we used to... We were even a year and a half ago. This video here we, we wouldn't have imagined doing this as an accountant here sitting here doing these, and I think similar is trying to share information for you the audience with what we're seeing, what we're doing, and what we're dealing with.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah.

Jon Sluis:

Like, a good example, even the last one you had was, you were talking a little bit about GameStop.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah.

Jon Sluis:

And, you know something that you're not necessarily going to call up your advisor to say, "Hey, what do you think about the GameStop?" But at the same time, you then can watch and hear and see, "Well, what is my... What is he thinking about it?" And you don't feel bad about asking for it, but you're getting to hear the answer.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah, and able to break it down in... The financial news channels are going to speak really over everybody and so yeah, I heard about it, I knew that something was going on, but we're able to break it down at a very fundamental level so that everybody has a working knowledge of what the situation was, and how it relates, if any, to their situation. But that was more of a, I don't know, curiosity, like-

Jon Sluis:

Mm-hmm.

Brian Ursu:

... "What happened?"

Jon Sluis:

Yeah, exactly, it was...

Brian Ursu:

It was good guys, bad guys. A lot of people made money, some lost money.

Jon Sluis:

That was interesting. Yeah, and so, you know, a lot of you watching too are business owners as well, and so you've all had to adapt and think through what you did and how you pivoted. We've had other videos where we had other business owners that pivoted inside of COVID, and as a result of that, and it's amazing hearing some of the stories that are out there, of what we've done, as business owners, and as individuals here in Northern Michigan that are just responding. And it's... Those are the heartwarming things that you say "Yeah, we are all individuals here at the end of the day, and we're doing our best to try to figure out how we move forward." So-

Brian Ursu:

Yeah. And, and I do sense that there is some Zoom fatigue, and virtual meeting fatigue, and that's why we intentionally keep them, you know, pretty brief.

Jon Sluis:

Mm-hmm. Yeah, they're 10 minutes, 10, 15 minutes. I know I've missed a few of them, because by the time I remember that they're on, I'm like, "Oh, man, I missed that one!" And they are good. And so I would also recommend those as well. So it has been fun to see. And, and what have you learned most out of doing that?

Brian Ursu:

I've learned it challenges me to understand exactly what's going on, and be able to consolidate all that information in a short message. And so writing the book and editing the book was kind of the same idea. I have, you know, a vast store of knowledge, but, you know, nobody wants to listen to 60 minutes of what happened last week. So you have to concisely bring it down, and I usually do that at 8:00 in the morning-

Jon Sluis:

Mm-hmm.

Brian Ursu:

... and I force myself, and I use a yellow legal pad, and it's usually seven or eight pages of handwritten notes, and then just kind of go off of that. So forcing everything, and then putting it in a logical flow, I don't know. It's been fun and it's challenging.

Jon Sluis:

It's very hard to do that. I mean, that's one thing that we really try to do as well, which is trying to get information very concise and clean. I mean, I know that's one thing that we hear a lot from our, the packages, and everything that we do is - it was so easy and clean to follow. We do make a very good point, a clear point to do that. Because we understand how easily something blows up.

Brian Ursu:

Right.

Jon Sluis:

We joke, it's very easy for us to put out a six page, asterisk-filled explanation of why you should save for a 401K. I joke, I tried to at the beginning of this year, put out a year end planner on what they should do. And I wanted to do, "Save For Retirement." That's all I wanted, but then we had to ask Eric, "Well retirement is 401K? Oh, but don't forget about the 401K, put the 403B in. And what about the 407 and the 406s?". And it quickly rolls out to all those things where the detailed analytical accountants and financial advisors in the world want to have absolutely everything there, balanced with getting the information out to individuals. So less is more so often that...

Brian Ursu:

So one of inspirations for that was, Peter Lynch wrote a couple of books, and I read both of them, and he was the manager of Fidelity Magellan at the most successful period of time. He, in the book said, "If you can't explain your concept, using a piece of paper and a crayon to a fifth grader, then you're making it more complicated than it needs to be." And so that's kind of like, that's the model-

Jon Sluis:

Okay.

Brian Ursu:

... not to dumb it down but you really... It takes hard work to get it to decipher bold, you know-

Jon Sluis:

Clear and concise. There's a big difference between that, so-

Brian Ursu:

Yep.

Jon Sluis:

Absolutely. And that's a little bit I've seen how the, the role you've taken with your clients to, you know, kind of shifting into the financial advisor, Brian, if you will, of who you are, and Intentional Wealth. I mean, the name in and of itself, Intentional Wealth Advisors. I mean, you are very intentional about it, you're trying to make that very forefront with who you are. I mean, maybe can you talk a little bit about your investing theory, and a little bit about intentional Wealth Advisors...

Brian Ursu:

Yeah, and so, so there's two meanings to the Intentional Wealth moniker. One of them is, we have a very intentional process of how we manage that. And it's based on everything that's going on right now in the world, and we want to tactically be in position and navigate as smoothly as possible. So that fable of the tortoise and the hare, we're going to be the tortoise. We're never going to be the hare. So the first 10 years of my career I tried to be the hare, didn't work, and it's easier, and you're getting better outcomes being the tortoise. So that's our focus.

But the other is, we want to help encourage our clients to live lives with intention. So unfortunately, most people, their primary objective is to arrive at death as safely as possible. And I think that that's really short-sighted, there's so many, even during this period of time where, you know, we're hunkered down, in meeting here, there's so many blessings out there, and to help people see those blessings, and choose a path intentionally, not let things happen to them, but choose differently. That's, that's the secondary meaning of Intentional Wealth.



Jon Sluis:

I love it. I love that. And in, I mean, we get asked a lot from our clients and from you of, "Well, what advisors should we use? Who should we use? Who not?" And I've told all of you, I said, "Well, it depends. There are many good out there," and I say this with Brian right next to me.

Brian Ursu:

Yeah.

Jon Sluis:

And I think he would probably say the same thing about CPAs and others. It's that there's not one particular one that's the best. You have to find the right fit for who you are, and what you're looking for. Why we have Brian here, why we're going to have other ones on this, is we're going to try to bring it in. I do see absolutely, Brian, that you bring that intentional side of things and that.

Brian Ursu:

I appreciate that. And we, we promise that anybody that comes to us, if it's not a right fit, and we've been very good about declaring who it is that we are, and how we can help people. If they're not going to be a good fit, we find them a good fit because we have good relationships with other advisors in town, and we want them to be happy.

Jon Sluis:

Yeah, I'd say the same thing, you know. It's like, "I'll give you names of CPAs, who to go to, and who not to go." Because at the end of the day, it's the relationship that is so important, and you have to be able to have that there.

Brian Ursu:

And feel comfortable with that.

Jon Sluis:

Well, we appreciate you paying attention here. We thank you for making it all the way through this video. Please give either ourselves a call, or give Brian a call over at Intentional Wealth Advisors. We value your relationship and look forward to coming and talking to you and again in the future. Thank you, Brian.

Brian Ursu:

All right. Thanks, John, I appreciate it.