

SETTING WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS IN IMPLEMENTATION

Al Chiaradonna, Senior Vice President of the SEI Wealth Platform, North America Private Banking, **SEI**, discusses how the firm reached its high level

What sets you apart from your peers this year and why?

Wealth management is at the core of everything we do. It is an honor to win for Implementation/Partner because our implementation process to bring clients onto the SEI Wealth PlatformSM (SWP) is a proven process. We look at implementations as an opportunity for significant business model transformation - and our approach is to evaluate people, process, and technology considerations as firms revisit their operating model. Given the complexity of an SWP implementation, we are focused on implementing with, not to, our clients.

How have your colleagues contributed towards the success of your organization?

We operate as one unified project team in support of our clients. Colleagues are empowered to be part of the team, no matter their role or level, with the main objective of helping clients be as successful as possible. SEI's mission is to build brave futuresSM through the power of connection. With this mission at the heart of our work, our team collaborates across organizational boundaries, united by the goal of bettering themselves, our company and our clients. We are very fortunate to have a dedicated staff of over 125 employees, with an average of 10 years of industry experience.

What are you going to do to stay on the front foot in a fast-growing but also challenging region such as this?

We're always investigating new tools and capabilities to do things faster and more efficiently for our clients, as a company investing 8-10 per cent of our annual revenue in research and development. Our remote implementation process is a great example, as the team completely reimaged implementations in a remote environment due to the pandemic. While the core of our implementation approach remained the same, we enhanced several aspects to account for remote support through technology, process, and performance measurement. Many of these improvements are now a part of our DNA.

What have been the challenges you have had to overcome to reach such a standard?

Scaling learning for clients, employees, and consultant partners is both a challenge and an opportunity. Constant learning and deliberate processes are crucial for the team to operate at scale and provide consistent quality for our clients across the board. We have built highly customized and scalable learning tools and a robust certification program for our consultant partners - all of which can be run physically and digitally.

We intentionally design our programs to cater to various styles of adult learning. We recognize individual team members have different levels of experience, so SEI established Centers of Excellence, providing oversight and expertise to individual project teams where they need additional support. The learning never stops.

How has your business and business model reacted to the pandemic?

We've had to look at how to replicate the camaraderie, connection, and experience our team was getting in-office and translate that to a virtual world. This included being there for our teammates on a personal level and doing things like calling to check in and virtual go-live celebrations with our clients. We also implemented new technology and processes to help replicate the benefits we previously achieved in person. Our proudest achievement during this time is successfully implementing 12 clients in a remote environment, hitting all planned dates and milestones from the start of the pandemic. This is due entirely to the dedication, creativity, and partnership between our employees and our clients.

Have your differentiators become more important to your business? Are they still relevant?

Technology and a partnership focus are our two greatest differentiators. We treat colleagues and clients like family. These implementations are intensive, challenging, and lengthy. Trust has to be at the center of the project. We all have to trust each other and communicate openly and frequently to keep the project on track - and everyone needs to feel as though they



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can do so. From a technology standpoint, we're always focused on getting ahead and finding new and easier ways to do things for our clients. This has been especially relevant in the past two years, when we have had to innovate overnight to meet clients' needs remotely.

Whom do you look to for inspiration?

Our colleagues are our inspiration. The work they're doing every day to ensure they're providing the best service to their clients and support to their fellow team members, all while having some fun along the way is what makes us excited to be a part of the experience.

What do you hope will be the result of receiving this accolade?

This accolade is truly a reflection of the outstanding work that the SEI team does every single day. This recognition reinforces the strength of our team and will further solidify us as a people first, technology-driven, highly adaptable, and collaborative strategic service partner. ■

