

# Orange County's RIAs Continue to Grow

## Popularity Soars As Assets Double

By PETER J. BRENNAN

The 30 biggest registered independent advisers with offices in Orange County doubled their companywide discretionary assets under management (AUM) to \$403.9 billion from the same period three years ago.

"The industry's definitely growing" in Orange County, said **David Bahnsen**, owner of Newport Beach-based **Bahnsen Group**. "There's a lot of succession planning going on. And the main source of growth is people at big wirehouse firms [a full-service broker-dealer] going independent. That's billions of dollars a year."

The RIAs on this week's list are ranked by discretionary assets under management, a category where the adviser makes trades in an investor's account without approval and is sometimes known as outsourced investing.

The Business Journal compares AUM to assets from three years ago, to smooth out one-time anomalies and a three-year period is a typical performance measurement on Wall Street.

The RIAs must be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Thirty firms made the list, which was cut off at \$1 billion in assets. Their average annual growth in the past three years was 28%.

The 30 largest employed 925 in Orange County, including 389 registered advisers, up 6.2% and 4.9% respectively.

Newport Beach is the favorite location with

14 offices, followed by Irvine with 10 and Costa Mesa with three.

### Bahnsen Boost

RIAs often say they give independent advice to avoid conflicts, such as broker-dealers that may be promoting their company's own investment funds or selling insurance products alongside stock picks (see separate article on broker-dealers, page 22). The RIAs say they don't receive hidden fees and typically are paid about 1% of the assets as annual compensation.

The Bahnsen Group reported assets under management more than doubled to \$2.5 billion in the past three years.

Bahnsen attributed part of his firm's growth to reopening his office a year ago for face-to-face meetings while some of his competitors are still working from their homes because of the pandemic. This year may be his best year as he's already added another \$500 million to \$3 billion in assets.

Bahnsen, who is a trustee at the conservative National Review publication, also believes his conservative views have helped.

"We put out more content than anybody—TV and books and podcasts—they are the gifts that keep on giving because people love information," Bahnsen said. "Although some may not always agree, we have tapped into something unique."

### Acquisitions

The 30 largest firms also boosted their non-discretionary assets under management to

\$175.2 billion, up 13.5% from \$119.7 billion in 2017.

Non-discretionary assets under management is a category where a manager cannot make decisions without the approval of the investor. The discretionary model has become more popular in recent years as a way for money managers to react more quickly to changing market dynamics.

Some investment firms don't fit neatly into our list.

For example, Newport Beach's **Canterbury Consulting Inc.**, which is prominent for advising nonprofits, has \$1.66 billion in discretionary assets and another \$3.48 billion in non-discretionary funds. They also have \$22 billion in another category called assets under advisement where the firm makes recommendations but doesn't have the authority to execute or facilitate trades for clients.

The RIA industry growth is not only a reflection of appreciation of the investments and clients adding additional funds but also acquisitions.

One such firm is Newport Beach's **Beacon Pointe Advisors**, which has tripled to \$9.6 billion from three years ago. Its non-discretionary assets also climbed 5.2% to \$2.8 billion. In 2020, it made four acquisitions alone. It should get even bigger as it acquired two Texas RIAs in the past three months, Wealthstreet Investment Advisors with \$1.2 billion, and D.R. Saur Financial with \$230 million.

### Notables

■ **WCM Investment Management** of La-

guna Beach is now the biggest RIA in Orange County, managing \$71.8 billion, up from \$14 billion three years ago.

The low-key firm, which declined requests for comment, has 11 funds that focus on small cap to growth to international to China.

Its biggest fund, Focused International Growth Fund, or WCMIX, has \$22.9 billion, up fourfold from \$5.9 billion in 2017. It's had an 11% annual return since its inception in 2011.

While founded in 1976, it later changed hands to current principal owners and co-chief executives **Kurt Winrich**, who joined in 1984, and **Paul Black**, who came on in 1989. The company works only with wealthy individual and institutional investors, as its minimum account size is \$10 million.

■ Newport Beach's **Research Affiliates LLC**, which was started by **Rob Arnott**, creator of the Smart Beta investment style, has seen its AUM triple to \$29.5 billion from three years ago. Research Affiliates is closely tied to giant money manager and neighbor **Pimco**.

■ Some of the RIAs said that while they are registered, they actually don't solicit business for the public and instead work for family firms.

Such is the case with **MIG Capital LLC**, which manages the wealth of the **Merage** family, whose patriarch Paul Merage made his fortune through the sale of the iconic Hot Pockets and Lean Pockets brand and for whom the business school at the **University of California, Irvine** is named. Its discretionary assets have risen to \$1.16 billion from \$806 million three years ago. ■



## THE LIST RIAs



**SHANNON EUSEY**  
CEO  
Beacon Pointe Advisors



**ANDREW H. FULLER**  
Managing Director  
Creative Planning Inc.



**PHILIP HO**  
Wealth Advisor  
Buckingham Strategic Wealth



**RANDY LONG**  
Founder and Managing Principal  
SageView Advisory Group LLC



**JOHN NAHAS**  
President  
Golden State



**CYNTHIA TUSÁN**  
Chairperson of the Board, CEO and Senior Portfolio Manager  
Strategic Global Advisors LLC

# THE LIST REGISTERED INVESTMENT ADVISERS (RIAS)

▶ NEXT WEEK'S LISTS *Commercial Developers, Construction Companies*

LISTED ALPHABETICALLY

Rank	Company •Address	Company logo	-Discretionary AUM as of December 2020 -Discretionary AUM as of December 2017 3-year average annual return	-Non-discretionary AUM as of December 2020 -Non-discretionary AUM as of December 2017 3-year average annual return	OC registered advisers •yearly % change	OC employees •yearly % change	-OC offices -Company- wide offices	Parent company •Headquarters	Top local official(s) •Title •Phone/fax	
1	<b>WCM Investment Management</b> 281 Brooks St. Laguna Beach 92651-2974 Website: wcminvest.com		\$71.7 billion \$14 billion <sup>(1)</sup> NA	\$0 \$0 NA	29 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	62 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	1 3	WCM Investment Management Laguna Beach	Paul Black/Kurt Winrich portfolio manager, co-CEO/portfolio manager, co-CEO (949) 380-0200/(949) 380-0819	
2	<b>Creative Planning Inc.</b> 2030 Main St. Irvine 92614-7219 Website: creativeplanning.com Email: cpi@creativeplanning.com		\$67.1 billion \$27.9 billion 34%	\$2.4 billion \$1.3 billion 21%	5 -38%	5 -38%	1 37	Creative Planning Inc. Overland Park, Kan.	Andrew H. Fuller managing director (949) 344-9751	
3	<b>Pathway Capital Management LP</b> 18575 Jamboree Road, seventh floor Irvine 92612-2534 Website: pathwaycapital.com		\$49.2 billion \$32.1 billion 15%	\$23.3 billion \$12.6 billion 23%	43 NA	193 27%	1 4	Pathway Capital Management LP Irvine	Karen J. Jakobi/Douglas K. Le Bon/James H. Reinhardt senior managing director, CIO/senior managing director/senior managing director (949) 622-1000	
4	<b>Research Affiliates</b> 620 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 900 Newport Beach 92660-8038 Website: researchaffiliates.com Email: info@researchaffiliates.com		\$29.5 billion \$9.2 billion <sup>(1)</sup> NA	\$1.8 billion \$1.8 billion <sup>(1)</sup> NA	35 NA	69 6%	1 1	Research Affiliates Newport Beach	Rob Arnott chairman/partner (949) 325-8700/(949) 325-8901	
5	<b>CIBC Private Wealth Management</b> 520 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 700 Newport Beach 92660-7086 Website: wealth.us.cibc.com Email: kimberly.bernatz@cibc.com		\$26 billion \$8.2 billion 47%	\$1.1 billion \$838.1 million 10%	wnd	12 0%	1 22	CIBC Chicago	Kimberly D. Bernatz office head/managing director (949) 660-0080	
6	<b>flexPATH Strategies</b> 120 Vantis Drive, Ste. 400 Aliso Viejo 92656-2689 Website: flexpathstrategies.com Email: info@flexpathstrategies.com		\$23.2 billion \$3.3 billion 92%	\$0 \$0 NA	4 -20%	12 0%	1 1	flexPATH Strategies Aliso Viejo	Jeffrey Elvander chief investment officer (949) 460-9898/(949) 460-9893	
7	<b>Edelman Financial Engines</b> 600 Anton Blvd., Ste. 1750 Costa Mesa 92626-7144 Website: edelmanfinancialengines.com		\$21.7 billion \$17.8 billion 7%	\$0 \$0 NA	wnd	wnd	2 42	Financial Engines Advisors LLC Santa Clara	Brendan McGillick executive director, financial planning (888) 752-6742	
8	<b>Mercer Advisors</b> 620 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 1030 Newport Beach 92660-6411 Website: merceradvisors.com Email: advice@merceradvisors.com		\$19.1 billion \$9.6 billion 26%	\$767.9 million \$484 million 17%	21 5%	29 7%	2 52	Mercer Advisors Denver	Kevin Jack managing director (800) 394-3894	
9	<b>Buckingham Strategic Wealth</b> 3 Park Plaza, Ste. 420 Irvine 92614-8535 Website: buckinghamadvisor.com Email: info@buckinghamgroup.com		\$17.7 billion \$12.3 billion 13%	\$1.3 billion \$158.2 million <sup>(1)</sup> NA	2 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	3 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	1 42	Focus Financial Partners St. Louis	Philip Ho wealth adviser (877) 695-1442	
10	<b>Aspiriant LLC</b> 114 Pacifica, Ste. 340 Irvine 92618-3329 Website: aspiriant.com Email: cdoder@aspiriant.com		\$11.5 billion \$10.7 billion 3%	\$2.4 billion \$1.6 billion 15%	4 -20%	5 -17%	1 11	Aspiriant LLC Los Angeles	Clay Stevens director in strategic planning/partner (949) 627-4566	
11	<b>Beacon Pointe Advisors</b> 24 Corporate Plaza Drive, Ste. 150 Newport Beach 92660-7965 Website: beaconpointe.com Email: info@beaconpointe.com		\$9.6 billion \$3.1 billion 45%	\$2.8 billion \$2.4 billion 5%	38 23%	75 17%	2 21	Beacon Pointe Advisors Newport Beach	Shannon Eusey CEO (949) 718-1600/(949) 718-0601	
12	<b>SageView Advisory Group LLC</b> 4000 MacArthur Blvd., Ste. 1050 Newport Beach 92660-2538 Website: sageviewadvisory.com Email: sageviewinfo@sageviewadvisory.com		\$7.8 billion \$3.3 billion 33%	\$124.6 billion \$88.5 billion 12%	6 0%	37 -5%	1 25	SageView Advisory Group LLC Irvine	Randy Long founder/managing principal (800) 814-8742/(949) 955-1991	
13	<b>Strategic Global Advisors LLC</b> 100 Bayview Circle, Ste. 650 Newport Beach 92660-3043 Website: sgadvisors.com Email: clientservice@sgadvisors.com		\$5 billion \$4.1 billion 7%	\$0 \$0 NA	wnd	28 0%	1 1	Strategic Global Advisors LLC Newport Beach	Cynthia Tusan CEO/chairperson of the board/senior portfolio manager (949) 706-2640/(949) 706-2641	
14	<b>First Foundation Advisors</b> 18101 Von Karman Ave., Ste. 700 Irvine 92612-0145 Website: firstfoundationinc.com		\$4.8 billion \$3.5 billion 12%	\$111.5 million \$135 million -6%	33 6%	51 4%	1 10	First Foundation Inc. Irvine	Rick Keller chairman (949) 202-4100	
15	<b>Rimrock Capital Management LLC</b> 100 Innovation Drive, Ste. 200 Irvine 92617-3207 Website: rimrockcapital.com Email: info@rimrockcapital.com		\$4.3 billion \$6.9 billion -15%	\$0 \$0 NA	1 0%	33 -31%	1 1	Rimrock Capital Management LLC Irvine	Paul Westhead CEO/managing director (949) 381-7800/(949) 272-5154	

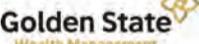
Sources: SEC filings and the RIAs  
Abbreviations: AUM: assets under management; NA: not applicable; wnd: would not disclose  
Note: The Business Journal defines assets under advisement as non-discretionary assets under management. To the best of our knowledge, this information is accurate as of press time. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the list, omissions and typographical errors sometimes occur. Unless otherwise noted, the information on this list was provided by the

companies themselves. List may not be reprinted without permission of the editor. Photos show the first top official listed.  
<sup>(1)</sup> Business Journal estimate

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▶ NEXT WEEK'S LISTS *Commercial Developers, Construction Companies*

LISTED ALPHABETICALLY

Rank	Company •Address	Company logo	-Discretionary AUM as of December 2020 -Discretionary AUM as of December 2017 3-year average annual return	-Non-discretionary AUM as of December 2020 -Non-discretionary AUM as of December 2017 3-year average annual return	OC registered advisers •yearly % change	OC employees •yearly % change	-OC offices -Company- wide offices	Parent company •Headquarters	Top local official(s) •Title •Phone/fax	
16	<b>Index Fund Advisors Inc.</b> 19200 Von Karman Ave., Ste. 150 Irvine 92612-8502 Website: ifa.com Email: info@ifa.com		\$4.1 billion \$3.8 billion 3%	\$0 \$0 NA	10 0%	42 -5%	1 2	Index Fund Advisors Irvine	Mark T. Hebner founder/president (949) 502-0050/(949) 502-0048	
17	<b>Signature Estate &amp; Investment Advisors LLC</b> 610 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 300 Newport Beach 92660-6434 Website: seia.com Email: spinsky@seia.com		\$4 billion \$2.5 billion 17%	\$9.7 billion \$5.4 billion 22%	8 0%	18 29%	1 8	Signature Estate & Investment Advisors LLC Los Angeles	Mark Copeland founding partner (800) 472-1066/(949) 691-3065	
18	<b>Private Management Group Inc.</b> 15635 Alton Parkway, Ste. 400 Irvine 92618-7334 Website: privatemanagementgroup.com Email: pmg@pmgadvisory.com		\$2.9 billion \$2.5 billion 6%	\$0 \$0 NA	16 NA	16 NA	1 1	Private Management Group Inc. Irvine	Dennis Reiland founder/portfolio manager (949) 752-7500/(949) 752-2299	
19	<b>Corient Capital Partners</b> 500 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 700 Newport Beach 92660-7007 Website: corient.com Email: info@corient.com		\$2.7 billion \$1.4 billion 23%	\$971.1 million \$621.5 million 16%	11 10%	22 10%	1 1	Corient Capital Partners Newport Beach	James A. Rooney CEO (949) 945-2750/(949) 945-2760	
20	<b>Halbert Hargrove</b> 3200 Park Center Drive, Ste. 550 Costa Mesa 92626-7108 Website: halberthargrove.com Email: kkiemle@halberthargrove.com		\$2.6 billion \$2.5 billion 1%	\$196.4 million \$196.4 million <sup>(1)</sup> NA	17 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	17 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	1 8	Halbert Hargrove Long Beach	Russ Hill/JC Abusaid/Brian Spinelli chairman, CEO/president, COO/senior wealth adviser, chair of investment committee (949) 386-5640	
21	<b>The Bahnsen Group</b> 520 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 550 Newport Beach 92660-7020 Website: thebahnsengroup.com Email: dbahnsen@thebahnsengroup.com		\$2.5 billion \$1.2 billion 28%	\$0 \$0 NA	8 14%	21 5%	1 2	HighTower Advisors LLC Chicago	David L. Bahnsen managing partner/CIO (949) 877-5010/(949) 258-5065	
22	<b>Row Asset Management LLC</b> 450 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 420 Newport Beach 92660-7614 Website: rowam.com Email: info@rowam.com		\$1.9 billion \$764 million <sup>(1)</sup> NA	\$0 \$0 NA	4 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	8 <sup>(1)</sup> NA	1 2	Row Asset Management LLC Newport Beach	Ryan O'Grady/Jeffrey Weiser co-founder, CEO/co-founder, president (949) 478-8300/(949) 478-7491	
23	<b>Pence Wealth Management</b> 5000 Birch St., Ste. 8000 Newport Beach 92660-2158 Website: pencewealthmanagement.com Email: thuylinh.pollack@lpl.com		\$1.8 billion \$1.3 billion 11%	\$174.7 million \$0 NA	6 0%	26 8%	1 3	LPL Financial Newport Beach	Laila Pence/Dryden Pence III president/CIO (949) 660-8777/(949) 660-8778	
24	<b>Canterbury Consulting Inc.</b> 610 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 500 Newport Beach 92660-6441 Website: canterburyconsulting.com Email: info@canterburyconsulting.com		\$1.7 billion \$1.7 billion <sup>(1)</sup> NA	\$3.5 billion \$3.5 billion <sup>(1)</sup> NA	20 11%	59 4%	1 2	Canterbury Consulting Inc. Newport Beach	Debashis Chowdhury president (949) 721-9580/(949) 721-9973	
25	<b>Alpha Cubed Investments LLC</b> 18301 Von Karman Ave., Ste. 900 Irvine 92612-0193 Website: alphacubedinvestments.com Email: cconatser@alphacubedinvestments.com		\$1.6 billion \$1.1 billion 14%	\$54.4 million \$55.6 million -1%	25 9%	35 6%	1 7	Alpha Cubed Investments LLC Irvine	Todd R. Walsh CEO (800) 701-2457/(877) 722-4249	
26	<b>Reilly Financial Advisors</b> 4675 MacArthur Court, Ste. 545 Newport Beach 92660-8813 Website: rfadvisors.com Email: info@rfawealth.com		\$1.5 billion \$1.2 billion 10%	\$54.8 million \$69.1 million -7%	3 50%	6 50%	1 3	Reilly Financial Advisors La Mesa	Lisa Goodman VP, wealth management (800) 682-3237/(619) 698-7260	
27	<b>Golden State</b> 201 E. Sandpointe, Ste. 460 Santa Ana 92707-5743 Website: teamgoldenstate.com Email: contact@teamgoldenstate.com		\$1.3 billion \$556.5 million 33%	\$0 \$0 NA	10 67%	10 100%	3 46	Golden State Wealth Management LLC Santa Ana	John Nahas president (949) 428-4280	
28	<b>Cooper Financial Group</b> 9870 Research Drive Irvine 92618-4310 Website: coopermcmamus.com Email: acooper@coopermcmamus.com		\$1.2 billion \$773.5 million 16%	\$0 \$0 NA	23 15%	6 -14%	4 19	Cooper Financial Group Irvine	Arthur Cooper managing director (800) 516-5333/(800) 516-4319	
29	<b>Check Capital Management Inc.</b> 575 Anton Blvd., Ste. 500 Costa Mesa 92626-1925 Website: checkcapital.com Email: info@checkcapital.com		\$1.2 billion \$1.5 billion -7%	\$75.6 million \$72.1 million 2%	7 -13%	11 -8%	1 1	Check Capital Management Inc. Costa Mesa	Steven Check president/CIO (714) 641-3579/(714) 641-8128	
30	<b>MIG Capital LLC</b> 660 Newport Center Drive, Ste. 1300 Newport Beach 92660-6492 Website: migcap.com Email: ir@migcap.com		\$1.2 billion \$806 million 13%	\$0 \$0 NA	0 NA	14 -7%	1 2	MIG Capital LLC Newport Beach	Richard Merage CEO/portfolio manager (949) 474-5800	

Sources: SEC filings and the RIAs  
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<sup>(1)</sup> Business Journal estimate