

## AM&AA Announces New Advisory Council Members

New leaders, structure put focus on member benefits, growth

The Alliance of Merger & Acquisition Advisors® (AM&AA), announced its new advisory council members, appointed to advise the organization and guide membership initiatives.

The advisory council includes seven AM&AA members, with leadership roles appointed to Chris Blees, President, BiggsKofford Capital, as Chairman and David Asmus, Managing Director, CKS Advisors, as Vice Chairman for a two- and three- year term, respectively.

### AM&AA Advisory Council Members:

- **Chris Blees**, President, BiggsKofford Capital—Chairman
- **David Asmus**, Managing Director, CKS Advisors, LLC—Vice Chairman
- **Kevin Carlie**, Chief Corporate Development Officer, Simmons Hanly Conroy
- **Chris Dalton**, CPA, Partner & National Practice Leader, Transaction Services, BKD, LLP
- **Bill McCalpin**, CEO, Capitalize Network
- **Brian Wendler**, Principal, National Business Valuation Services

### Six new subcommittees will be established and implemented over the next year:

- Conference Planning Committee
- Education & Certification Committee
- Government Affairs Committee
- Marketing & Communications
- Membership Benefits Committee
- Regional Chapters Committee

# AM&AA MidMarkettalk

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## Dear AM&AA Members, Welcome to the AM&AA 2.0!

The year 2020 will no doubt make an indelible mark in history. The World is fighting the coronavirus, businesses and economic markets are being shattered and we're all learning new phrases like "flatten the curve", "social distancing" and "stay-in-place". Hopefully the history books will also contain stories of unprecedented market rebounds and business successes in the later part of the year! Meanwhile, in almost infinitely less important news... the Alliance of Merger & Acquisition Advisors (AM&AA) is announcing a new Advisory Council and has asked me to serve as the first Chairman.

It has been just over 20 years since the AM&AA was formed with the goal of bringing together M&A professionals to better serve the Private Middle Market. As many of you know, the organization was founded by Mike Nall and has benefited from a group of volunteer advisors led for the first 10-years by Kevin Carlie and then by Mike Adhikari for the next 10. All of those gentlemen have been my friends, mentors and colleagues as I built my own Middle-Market M&A career over this same 20-year period.

Last year, the AM&AA went through a transition of leadership with Five Star Global, a national event, publishing and marketing firm based in Dallas Texas. One of Five Star's goals is to invigorate a new Advisory Council with added structure and membership. Together, with a group of devoted and well connected members, the Advisory Council will help Five Star make the AM&AA even more relevant and beneficial to us, the members.

I've been an active member of the AM&AA for most of its existence and many of you know me from the Certified M&A Advisor (CM&AA) program that I've been teaching for years. Like all of you, I am passionate about helping Middle-Market companies complete capital transactions. We all know these companies are the life-blood of the World's economy and these transactions provide needed capital for growth and ownership transitions and even today - survival. As a result, we all have a role in this global economic recovery. Through our membership and collaboration in the AM&AA we can help each other continue this important work.

Go Capitalism!

—Chris

**Chris Blees**  
AM&AA Advisory Council Chair  
President & CEO  
BiggsKofford Capital



### The Latest ««««

## High Yields: Maximizing Deal ROI

By Bill Wiersema

Record levels of capital have flooded the markets, resulting in high deal multiples. Some buyers even engage in flipping their purchases within a year or two, at unheard-of returns. Whether as an owner or manager preparing for sale, or one holding for the long term, market trends favor divestiture of non-core divisions and sale of assets such as real estate. Not only will these strategies raise cash, but they also are likely to increase the value on what remains afterward.

The idea is that the parts may be worth more than the whole. This is not in the context of Gordon Gekko from the movie Wall Street, destroying BlueStar by liquidating its assets. It's

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## How to Improve Business Negotiations Using Emotional Intelligence

By Frank Williamson

This article originally appeared in Corporate Counsel on March 3, 2020.

In my work as an investment banker, I frequently work with attorneys who specialize in M&A transactions. In general, I group them into two categories. Some fill a primarily technical role, working to execute the client's wishes efficiently. Others act almost as counselors, weighing the available options to help clients make the best choice for their business.

If you happen to be in

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the latter group, it's worth considering how you can contribute to making the negotiation process run more smoothly and harmoniously. I suggest using the practice of emotional intelligence (EQ) in your dealings with the client and the other negotiating team. You can also encourage a client to adopt this method into their standard practices. By doing so, you can make the negotiation process smoother and more harmonious—resulting in a deal where both parties walk away satisfied.

Let's examine emotional intelligence in a bit more detail and explore how it can be used before, during and after a deal.

### Emotional Intelligence Leading up to a Deal

Emotional intelligence involves four specific learned skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills. Self-awareness is an understanding of one's own emotions and how they're

negotiation process, executives will evaluate potential deal partners not just on the basis of how a partnership might look on paper, but how it might affect the team's overall cohesion or resilience.

Attorneys working with an emotionally intelligent seller can guide the company toward a potential partner who seems more likely to continue fostering the workplace's productive, cohesive atmosphere. The seller will also be aware of how this creates value for the company and will pitch that as a selling point. Attorneys working with prospective buyers, meanwhile, should help their client probe into the motivators and communication styles of any potential partner organizations. Before an offer takes place, it's essential to learn about an organization's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the level of cooperation and conflict among individual team members. By helping your client consider how an influx of new people might affect the team's current dynamics, you can begin to strategize for the

**without conflict.** In a business negotiation, the two parties are sometimes going to be working toward mutually exclusive goals, which can lead to tension. An attorney can help to clear the air by adopting a learning mentality—asking questions of both sides to get them to explain their perspectives—and fine-tuning their approach to accommodate the parties' individual personalities. Prioritize the gathering of information over making sure your side gets heard. If the conversation takes a turn into tricky territory, keep asking questions, and focus on being a respectful listener, even if—especially if—the responses offend or frustrate you.

**2. Keeping both parties at the table.** It's much better to work through a difficult conversation than to try to bring one party back to the negotiating table after they've left. To do that, keep in mind that both parties, ultimately, simply want to feel that their ideas are being heard and considered.

I recently read a masterful example of this in a lawyer's letter to a client. The letter started by acknowledging the problem that this party was trying to solve, then gave a detailed explanation of how the party's proposed solution would play out—using facts and estimated costs. The close of the letter was open-ended, encouraging further conversation between both parties to resolve the issue. By using emotional intelligence in a thoughtful way, it left the door open for a respectful, productive discussion.

**3. Addressing some issues one on one.** Business negotiations could be described as a team sport. Each side has several key players who mostly interact with their counterparts—frequently in groups of two or three. Lawyers speak to lawyers, executives to executives, investment bankers to investment bankers, and so on.

But sometimes, these group interactions aren't the best way to handle certain sensitive aspects of a deal. A one-on-one conversation incorporating emotional intelligence can be helpful in working through small but critical issues that don't need to be brought to the full group. The entire team can then reconvene to pick up the discussion where they left off.

**4. Leaving flexibility within a schedule.** Each deal presents unique challenges, and reaching a successful outcome does require a degree of flexibility on

both sides. One party might need to complete a deal within the current fiscal year, for example, or may have to pause until the start of the next one. My maxim for the ideal pace of deals is "as fast as possible, but no faster." That can mean putting a deal together over weeks, months or longer. Just make sure that both parties stay in frequent, open communication about whatever obstacles they might be facing that could delay finalization of the deal.

### Emotional Intelligence After a Deal

Once the ink on a contract is dry, the hard work begins. Post-merger integration involves integrating teams, putting new leaders in place, and creating new workflows. It's a significant challenge even under the best of conditions. However, using emotional intelligence can make the process easier.

It's important to view team members not as pieces to be moved around, but as individuals with unique qualities and needs. Attorneys can encourage their clients to design teams that consider the skill set, communication style and preferred work setting of each employee. By being intentional about building a functional team with harmonious internal relationships, executives can help untangle the snags that often result from combining two companies.

A properly executed merger or acquisition can set a company on the path to greater success, but working out the finer points of a deal can be a challenge. Try to counsel your client on the importance of nourishing an emotionally intelligent work atmosphere instead of solely focusing on quantitative goals. Having a stable, supported team can pay huge dividends throughout the entire transition process.



**Frank Williamson** is the Founder of Oaklyn Consulting, a consulting firm that helps

investor groups and private businesses, from startup to middle market, with mergers, acquisitions, capital-raising, investor relations, succession, and other strategic corporate finance decisions. Oaklyn Consulting does not work as a broker but as an extension of clients' boards and management teams, charging time-based fees for investment banking advice.

When these principles are used in the workplace, it can increase a team's level of cooperation and collaboration, as well as make employees happier and more devoted to the organization as a whole.

expressed to others. This ties into self-management, which is the ability to take responsibility for one's behavior and regulate one's emotions when necessary. Social awareness is the ability to consider and empathize with the perspectives of others, and then to use social skills to cultivate positive interactions with them.

When these principles are used in the workplace, it can increase a team's level of cooperation and collaboration, as well as make employees happier and more devoted to the organization as a whole. And once emotional intelligence is integrated into an organization's internal dynamics, it can affect the way executives approach relationships outside the company as well. During the

work that would potentially need to be done during post-deal integration.

### Emotional Intelligence During Negotiations

The business negotiation process can be enormously stressful, especially if the company being sold is in financial distress. But by cultivating an attitude of emotional intelligence, an attorney managing the negotiation process can reduce moments of conflict, foster a cooperative spirit, and give a fair hearing to the concerns of each party. Here are a few situations where EQ can be incorporated:

**1. Getting through difficult conversations**