

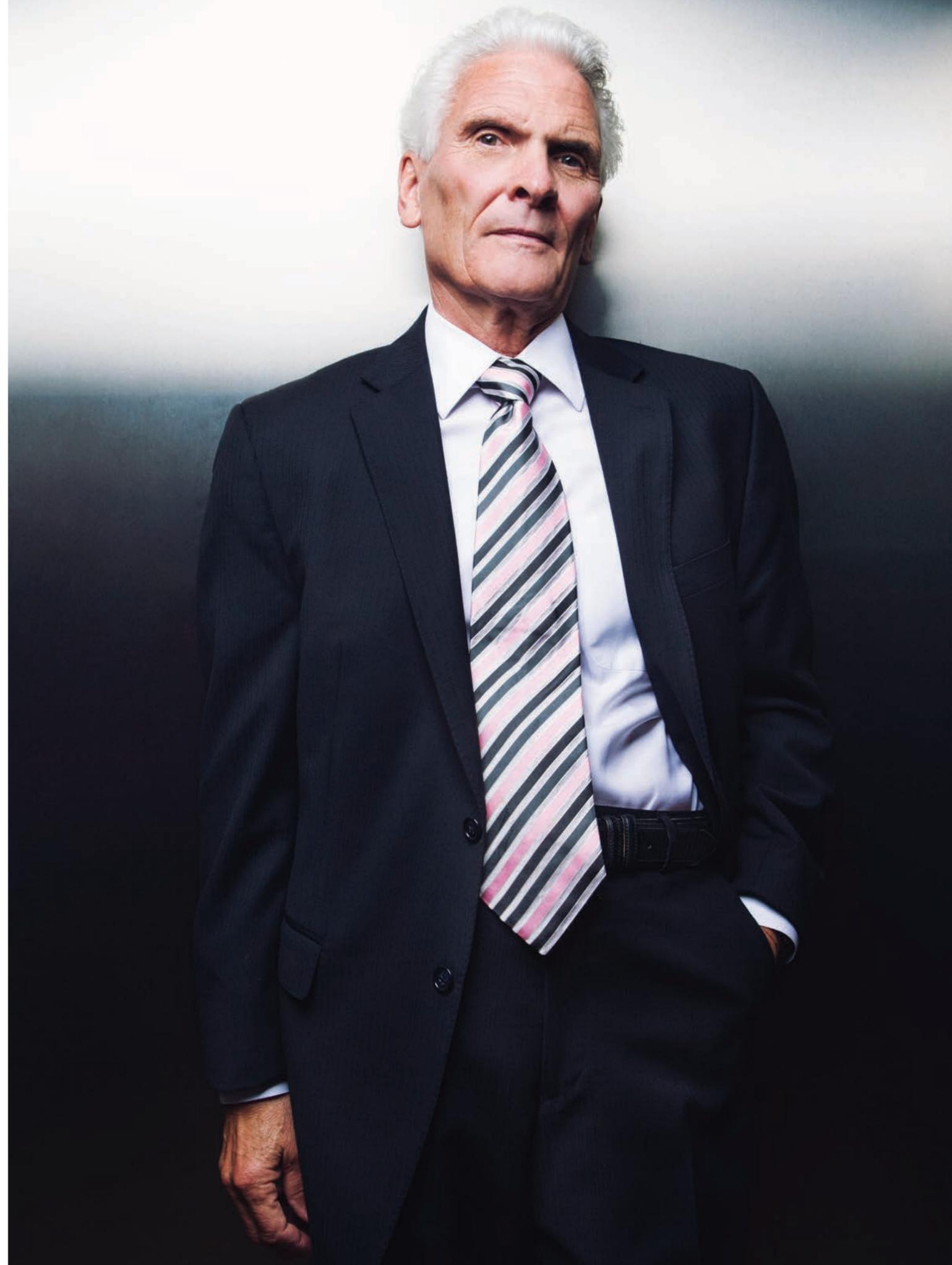
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THERE IS NO
DISTINCTION
BETWEEN
CLIENT AND
PROSPECT FOR
EBA'S ADVISER
OF THE YEAR
WILL GLAROS —
HE'S THERE TO
HELP THEM ALL

By Elizabeth
Galentine

PHOTOGRAPY BY
DAVID JACKSON

ROKER



“IF THERE’S A BROKER OF THE DECADE, I WANT TO NOMI- nate Will for that, and broker of the millennium — because he would be qualified for both,” says Michael Griffin, clerk treasurer for the town of Highland, Ind.

Ten minutes into a conversation filled with effusive praise for *EBA*’s Adviser of the Year Willis “Will” Glaros — “I regard him as the preeminent health care adviser/broker in the field in this region,” “he’s incredibly knowledgeable” — an unexpected revelation.

Griffin is not even Glaros’ client.

Acquainted with Glaros for the better part of 20 years, Griffin actually works with another broker as part of a group of communities that formed a medical trust, but still seeks advice from Glaros on a regular basis.

“Although we have not been a direct client of his, I feel like we have benefited from his example and the fact that he’s a good

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model for the profession itself,” Griffin says. “Not just because of his professionalism and what he knows about health care and how to provide both wellness and health care plans for a variety of workforces, he’s also an exemplary person. He’s just a decent and good person who’s very giving to the community as well. ... I even consider the time that I can get his advice to run an idea by him as his way of giving back.”

Such praise from a non-client is a testament to Glaros’ accomplishments as an adviser, and evidence that *EBA*’s editors made the right choice in picking Glaros from among dozens of online nominations to be our 2014 Adviser of the Year.

It seems other advisers who work in the vicinity of Dyer, Ind. — where Glaros is managing partner of the Meyers Glaros Group (formerly known as Employer Benefit Solutions) — would agree. Griffin says his current broker recognizes Glaros “as a colleague and exemplary professional,” no doubt in part because of Glaros’ unique approach to would-be competition.

When his son Matt first joined the company several years ago and was looking to acquire new accounts, Glaros let him know that it wasn’t open season on the competition. “My rule has always been that I don’t believe in doing agent of record letters and taking business away from other people if they seem to be doing a good job and they’ve got a relationship with the client,” says Glaros, who, if he does take over an account due to the

incoming client’s wishes, will normally compensate the previous agent with a portion of the commission for up to a year afterward.

“I’m a great believer in that which goes around comes around,” he says, “and if you treat people with disdain and just step on them and move on ... as I tell my son, it’s far easier to look to the future and make gains without having to look over your shoulder waiting for someone to attack you.”

The philosophy is paying off. Despite Affordable Care Act-induced turmoil, Glaros has enjoyed 30% growth in the last four years without losing any clients outside of a merger or business closure. The group’s five employees service around 150 accounts with approximately \$80 million in generated premium from a broad client base of hospital and other health care systems, casinos, auto dealerships and other small businesses. While the majority of clients are in northwest Indiana, the company has also expanded to Illinois, Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana.

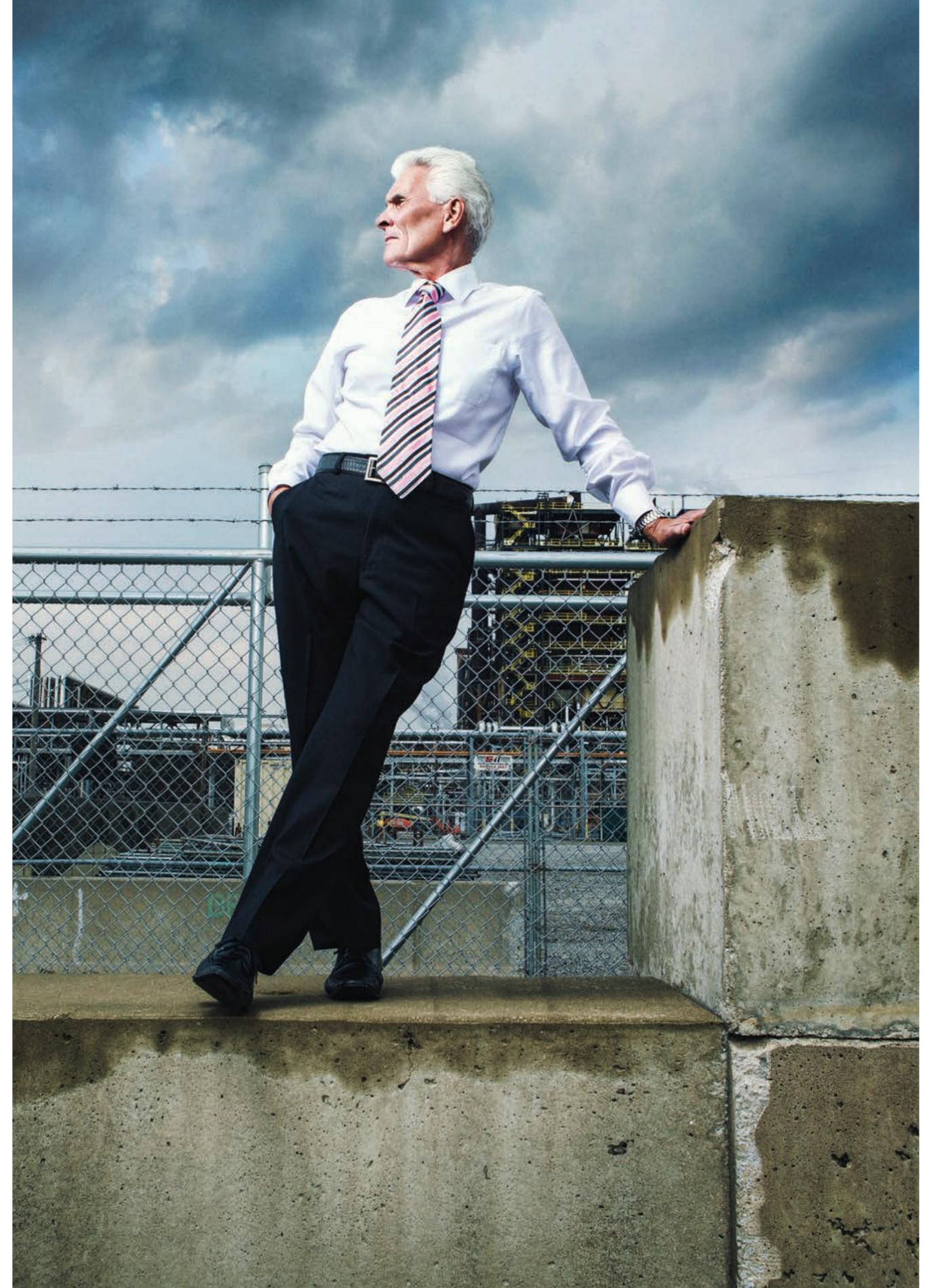
The summer 2014 transition from Employer Benefit Systems to the Meyers Glaros Group reflects Glaros’ recent partnership with a local property and casualty firm. The company now offers a full suite of services, including P&C, group dental, vision, medical, short- and long-term disability, life insurance and voluntary products.

The decision to merge with a P&C firm, Glaros says, “was basically giving my son the opportunity to set the branding for the future. I set him loose with the task to develop that future direction so that he could take ownership of the new brand for the future and it wouldn’t always be Will Glaros’ business. I don’t think that’s fair to always have to live under the shadow of somebody else’s history.”



Early success

Nonetheless, an impressive history it is. With a grandfather who was a leading life insurance agent throughout the 1920s, ’30s and ’40s, Glaros has the insurance gene. However, it wasn’t until he graduated from Indiana University and his father got him an interview with a local Prudential office that he experienced insurance sales firsthand. Although he earned a sales award in two short years with Prudential, he also realized he wanted to go out on his own. In 1975, he opened his first company, focusing on life insurance and some financial planning. Three years later, he shifted his focus to employee benefits. A goal setter, he set out to become the No. 1 group health insurance agent in northwest





Indiana — a goal he feels he's met, and one the more than 30 people who nominated him as *EBA's* Adviser of the Year would agree with.

Glaros has a strong history with the Northwest Indiana Association of Health Underwriters, and the years he served as president, 2005 and 2006, he was named outstanding member and it became the No. 1 chapter in the state of Indiana.

W

Wellness warrior

One factor in Glaros' success is his dedication to wellness plans — a recurring theme in employer clients' nominations of him for the Adviser of the

Year award and a significant factor in their relationships with him.

As the Town Administrator for Dyer and in charge of benefits for the town's 89 full-time employees and their dependents, Rick Eberly has worked with Glaros for nearly a decade. "I'm not certain what we would do if it wasn't for Will and his expertise. Each and every member of every council that I've ever worked with that's also worked with Will holds him in the highest regard and has a tremendous amount of respect for what he does for us and how instrumental he has been in helping us keep our health insurance costs down," says Eberly.

Used to budgeting for a 10% annual increase in premiums, ever since Glaros introduced them to a wellness program the town of Dyer did not have a rate increase until ACA-related fees led to one for 2014. "It's unheard of in this industry," says Eberly, who explains that the program, which measures chronic diseases in the employee population, "has just been critical" to the town council's success. "It's actually allowed us ... to maintain an extremely attractive health insurance program for our employees without having to incur tremendous costs in doing so."

Glaros' history with wellness runs deep. In 1988 he was one of about 20 people who formed the state of Indiana's first WELCOA chapter, and even served as chapter president for two years. It thrived locally through monthly engagements and summits on wellness and other health initia-



tives to bring down the cost of care. Glaros was named wellness champion of the year in the mid-'90s for his efforts. Eventually, the chapter outgrew local resources and moved to Indianapolis in the early 2000s.

If there's one thing decades in the field of wellness has given Glaros, it's a realistic perspective about the concept. "A lot of it is ethereal. It's hard to prove ROI," he says. "That's why, unless the company is capable of managing it and they have the departments of people to do it, we try to keep it relatively simple with the HRA and the biometric screens and then communicate [the results] back to the people."

For larger clients that have the resources to take wellness further, Glaros enjoys setting up an incentive system. For example, his largest client, a hospital system with around 4,500 employees, erected a fitness center and is looking into offering financial incentives such as premium discounts for completing levels of membership in an internal wellness group. Employees also receive tons of education on cost-saving measures such as how and when to use an emergency room and the benefits of generics.

Now, the hospital is thinking about further financial incentives if 75% of the employee population will participate in an online HRA (around 30%-40% do so now) and disease management programs in an effort to obtain a positive cash flow versus the projected claims for the year, Glaros explains.

He has another client, a lab testing company with about 1,100 employees, which is particularly active with wellness communications through a monthly newsletter and is also looking to start more online education programs.

E

Expert status

Glaros knows the benefits of proper education. His biggest advice to other advisers is "constant and total communication on an ongoing basis with your client, letting them know what's happening."

For Glaros, that means plenty of speaking engagements at local SHRM and other civic organization events. It also means emails. A lot of them. "We actually have clients who will send us emails jokingly and say, 'Will you take me off your email list? I can't read all this stuff you send us.' But I tell them, 'If I don't send it to you and you claim I didn't tell you about it, then you're going to be madder than heck. We're going to still tell you about it.'"

The more the client understands, the better questions they can ask and the more they, together with Glaros, can accom-

plish. "I am an absolute complete believer in education of our clients," he says, adding that he's never needed to make a cold call on group insurance sales because he's been able to build relationships by educating the community through luncheons and seminars. "Ultimately," he says, "what happens is someone has a counselor who is not giving them that information, and they'll end up contacting us and asking us, can we advise them?"

Glaros will then provide advice — pro bono — for a year or two or longer, before that employer ultimately realizes they're not getting the necessary answers from their current agent.

A client of Glaros' for six years, Bernie Henry, VP of human resources at Alverno Clinical Laboratories in Hammond, Ind., appreciates Glaros' ability "to articulate the ins and outs of benefit planning in the context of the changing health care marketplace. He is very up to date on all the government interventions

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in health care."

Henry appreciates the fact that Glaros will visit the company, which employs just over 1,600, about every three weeks. "He brings high energy and enthusiasm to his work, connecting it to the values that we as a company display in demonstrating to our employees that we care about their human life, integrating their personal lives with work and that we want them to be healthy and encourage their good health," says Henry.

It's not just about keeping clients happy and well informed from a business perspective, either. Glaros considers each of his clients to be like family.

One benefit manager's nomination for Glaros noted, sadly, that not only did he help the company navigate the complexities that arose when two employees had premature babies one year, but he also personally attended the funerals of those children when they both passed away.

"I built my business primarily with the idea of always wanting to be hand in hand with my clients," says Glaros.

"We were told many, many times by carriers, 'You know, you could be three times, five times the size you are if you'd hire people and manage those people.' And I said, 'That's not really what I do.' First of all, I don't like managing people. Secondly, I like my clients and the majority of my business is actually dealing with the people that I work for. I've become absolutely dedicated to that and I'd do anything for them," he adds. "For that reason, I probably didn't get as large as I could have been."

With a goal of treating everyone fairly, Glaros has always believed in the law of increasing returns that says those who do more than an honest day's work will be compensated more. "... You stand out because you do things above and beyond the call of duty that others don't do. ... Ultimately, your revenue will grow because of that. I can tell you that has been the case," he says. "Our revenue has always been on an upward track and I think it's just the benefit of always doing the right thing for clients."

F

Future plans

With solid footing in group benefits, compliance education and wellness plans, Glaros is turning his eye toward the voluntary benefits arena. He plans to focus specifically on permanent life insurance products, "for the sole purpose that we're running into a lot of people who, as they hit those retirement years, can't afford to convert their policies and go off into retirement with no life insurance at all, or if they have it, they're going to be paying an ever-increasing by age bracket change in cost to the point that they have to drop it," says Glaros.

Educated and licensed to sell on state exchanges, Glaros is

presenting all options to clients, but mindful to provide analysis on factors such as subsidy qualifications and associated taxes if employers and employees do consider going that route. "It may actually be more expensive than it would be to keep on the group health care plan," he says. "So we are doing those types of analyses with our clients."

To remain successful, Glaros plans to stay on top of all the changes in the employee benefit field — not just ACA-related but also other trends, including self-funding for small groups — and continue to provide them with stellar communication in a timely manner.

"I'll tell you what. It is an incredible business," Glaros says. "I view it as a missionary opportunity to be able to help people and to be able to put them into a position of financial security, whether or not it's the medical plan or it's the life and disability plans. It is a great, great, great business."

With no plans to retire completely, Glaros, 64, will be slowing down some as son Matt strengthens his influence on the firm. In his 41st year of marriage, he is enjoying family time with his wife, Marcia, and five grandchildren, including two sets of twins among Matt and daughter Megan's children.

Meanwhile, Glaros is finishing up a certification course with Purdue University that will allow him to teach a class on the science of success — something he knows plenty about. **EBA**

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