

Columbia Asset Management Presents: Our Employee Newsletter!

Edition 7: Brian's Background



Brian Weisman (CFA, CFP, CPA, CMA) founded Columbia Asset Management in 1997. He was raised in Michigan and attended the University of Michigan, graduating with a degree in economics. He started tracking stocks right out of college, after owning two shares of Western Airlines and one share of Zenith Corporation as a child, and began building his track record as an investor with friends and family. He soon after started “Stockboy,” a quarterly newsletter to record his investment ideas and financial thoughts. Around the same time, he began helping Tom Borders establish a family office after he sold Borders Books. Brian started managing money independently in 1993, and slowly built his team over the last 26 years. In his time outside the office, he enjoys taking his kids, Aria, 12, and Kelsey, 11, to a variety of lessons — piano, tennis, skating — playing piano himself, going for runs, cycling, gardening for the small window of time Michigan allows, and collecting vintage gas station signs (some of which you can see around the office!). He has also been treasurer for a wide variety of local organizations including Arbor Hospice Foundation; King Elementary School PTO; Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, of which he was also president; Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, of which he was also chair; and is a board member for the Cancer Support Community.

Why did you decide to found Columbia?

I have always found investments interesting and always wanted to start my own business. I was originally going to take a job as head of a bank trust department in Birmingham, Mich., but after Farris Womack, the former CFO of the University of Michigan, suggested I start my own investment advisory company, I decided to create Columbia. I also noticed there was a need for an independent investment advisor who wasn't being influenced by bureaucratic thinking and quarterly profit numbers.

Why did you pick the name “Columbia”?

Two reasons: First, Columbia is an underused expression for the United States (think Washington, District of Columbia) and is what Benjamin Franklin wanted to call this country — his preference for the underused name sort of mirrors my like for underappreciated stocks. Second, Warren Buffett went to Columbia University and was taught there by Benjamin Graham, the king of value investing.

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

Helping people reach their goals, working to continue to earn their trust, and spending every day working alongside the “CAM fam.” Doing the work I love with awesome coworkers means I don't have to worry about the Sunday night blues 😊

What would you be doing if you didn't start Columbia?

My kids think I would be a teacher or an actor, though I speculate I'd be a weatherman or run another business on my own.

What's something about you a lot of people don't know?

I'm pretty good at predicting sports injuries before the broadcasters announce what the injury is (perhaps also why I see myself as a weatherman!). I also have a black belt in two different forms of Japanese karate, called Shūdōkan and Shōrin-ryū.