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Named after a navigational star known to guide mariners to their destination, Acamar Consulting steers companies towards FP&A optimization

By Susan Belknapp, Senior Writer, California Business Journal

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In hard to know where you're going if you don't fully understand where you've been, how you got there and what headwinds or tailwinds may be ahead.

Financial planning and analysis (FP&A) is necessary when evaluating each element of your company's financial health, including budgets, projections, analytics and profit and loss. There are software solutions that can help, but there's no substitute for dedicated experts who see beyond the numbers—professionals who can not only assess critical data but break it down and strategically map out the optimal route forward.

FP&A experts Brian Beedle and Andrew Winter founded Los Angeles-based **Acamar Consulting** to enable small- to mid-sized businesses "navigate the complexities of operating a successful business in today's market and reach strategic milestones through unparalleled financial planning and superior data analysis." Winter told California Business Journal.

Acamar is named after a star, known for centuries as a guide for mariners to reach the "end of the river," which Beedle and Winter chose as the inspiration for their consultancy.



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"Brian and I have been in the FP&A space for nearly two decades—we met about 14 years ago," Winter says. "We both worked in financial planning and related disciplines, such as financial reporting and analytics, zero-based budgeting, and strategic cost takeout efforts. But in 2020, we decided to start our own operation, feeling the time was right and knowing we could offer something unique."



Andrew Winter, Managing Partner, Acamar Consulting

It may seem counterintuitive to see the pandemic as the ideal time to start a new business but Beedle and Winter saw it as an opportunity. They foresaw that companies would be revaluating everything—from where they stand at any given moment to where they want to be—and which outside-the-box strategies could be leveraged to achieve their goals.

"Most of our clients aren't Fortune 500 companies. Our focus leans towards small- to mid-sized businesses, though we can scale to any client need," Winter says. "Many of the companies we work with are startups that have never evaluated their processes or they're businesses that don't have the resources to do effective F&P work. The pandemic largely upended traditional business trends, and clients needed a forward-looking perspective. That's where Brian and I felt we could truly help."

"Many of these companies are small-cap and don't have the resources available to create proper F&P processes—resulting in missed opportunities to leverage those insights," Beedle says. "We ingrain ourselves into their businesses and believe deeply in our client commitment, innovative services, and the thoughtful solutions we provide."

The duo explains that smaller companies often lack the resources and capabilities to prioritize FP&A, yet they typically need this key business function most. In fact, strong FP&A can help clients realize their goals more efficiently and effectively.

"An effective planning process is ongoing," Winter says. "If you're a CEO or CFO trying to implement strategic goals, reposition in the market or secure funding to support your company's growth and expansion, you need a forward-looking view of your financials. Without that, it's very difficult to make the right decisions."

Beedle adds that this also applies to companies considering a merger or acquisition. "If they don't have a clear understanding of their current and future financial position, how can they appropriately value themselves?"



Brian Beedle, Managing Partner

"We assist with the analytics preparation for mergers and acquisitions," he says. "These materials are used for valuation, which our client can present to investors. We have numerous financial experts, including CFOs, who can consult or help prepare an analysis so a company doesn't incorrectly value itself."

Using innovative software systems, Acamar Consulting is **Prophix**-certified, which enables the firm to accelerate planning and reporting implementations. However, they are not exclusive and can make recommendations based each client's needs.

"Prophix offers as much as the IBMs or SAPs, but with a much lower price point," Beedle says. "It's cloud-based—so virtually no footprint—and offers clients a user-friendly, secure experience. I can't tell you how many clients still have their financials floating around on Excel spreadsheets on employees' computers. It's imperative that the latest data is accessible to all key players in real-time. We get clients up and running and teach them how to use the solution to its full capacity, but the key is to achieve a culture change—requiring full adoption from all stakeholders. This involves change management, which must come from leadership."

Prophix has built-in labor planning functionality, which often must be built from scratch in other solutions. This feature, amongst others, enables users to enter very detailed inputs to their P&L projections. Additionally, the platform provides businesses the ability to forecast the balance sheet and cash flow statements, manages planning process tasks, and offers users customizable dashboards and reporting widgets.

"It's easy to run a report or do ad-hoc analytics in order to see trends in one holistic view," Winter says. "I can see all the actuals and the forecast for the rest of the year—even the next couple of years. Take inflation, for example. Many companies are struggling because this economic phase can undermine all previous analyses in just a few months. When you properly execute forecasting updates, you can pinpoint actions to help minimize the impact."

The key element Beedle and Winter like to stress is storytelling. All the data and financials are only useful if clients truly understand what they mean and apply those insights when making strategic, goal-focused decisions.

"We give leadership the key metrics they need to objectively view the company's health—a perspective that is only as accurate as the data and details provided," Beedle concludes. "That involves storytelling. Our goal is to help align a business's people, processes and technology to deliberately navigate the market and reach their destination."

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Susan Belknapp is a Writer, Editor and Corporate Communications expert with 15 years of professional writing experience across a wide variety of disciplines, including monthly print and digital magazines, social media, marketing and brand development. A graduate of University of Southern California with a degree in Fine Arts and Films Writing, Susan was Editor of OC Mom Magazine, which became a part of the Orange County Register. Susan is also the Founder of Chonubuu Toffee, an online/direct-sale English toffee company specializing in custom orders, events, and the finest ingredients and dangerously delicious product prepared with the finest ingredients.

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