

Welcome to the Atlanta Business Chronicle's "Meet the C-Suite," where each week we will feature one of the city's most high profile c-level executives.

This week meet Joseph Sroka, chief investment officer and one of the founding partners of NovaPoint Capital LLC, a leading independent investment management firm.

- **Name:** Joseph Sroka
- **Company:** NovaPoint Capital
- **Title:** Founding Partner / Chief Investment Officer
- **Headquarters:** Atlanta
- **Background:** I grew up in New Jersey and left home at eighteen to attend West Point. My first trip to Georgia was for Airborne training at Fort Benning. I served as an Infantry Officer in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Berlin, Germany during the fall of the Berlin Wall and Germany's reunification. Following the Army, I went to business school at the University of Chicago and began working as an investment analyst at ABN Amro in Chicago. I moved to New York to work in the research department at Merrill Lynch and eventually to Atlanta to be a portfolio manager at a hedge fund. My business partner and I founded NovaPoint Capital to bring our years of institutional investment experience to individuals, family offices, small businesses, endowments and foundations in the Southeast.
- **First job:** Army Officer
- **Education:** MBA from the University of Chicago and Bachelor of Science from the U.S. Military Academy – West Point.
- **Residence:** Atlanta



Business Strategy

How's Business: Business is great. We work with incredibly smart and interesting clients such as business owners and executives, physicians, attorneys, board members of foundations and others. They need to devote their time and energy to what makes them successful. They hire us to manage their money so they can concentrate on their own professional endeavors.

Biggest Challenge for your Business: Like any entrepreneurial business, there never seems to be enough time in the day for all that we want to accomplish.

What's going to change at your company in the next year: We are always on the lookout for talented people and I anticipate that our firm will grow headcount during 2016.

Company goal yet to be achieved: Many independent firms in the investment industry either close or sell-out when the founders decide to retire and the clients are often left in the lurch. The firms I admire groom a successor generation to take over for the founders and provide clients a long-term plan for continuity. My goal is to eventually pass along the firm to that next generation to give our clients confidence they can work with us for the long term.

Management philosophy

Guiding principles for good management: The core values of our firm are Experience, Discipline and Integrity. When we present a client with a strategy for their investment portfolio we need to diligently execute the strategy and be completely transparent in what we are doing. The same standards of discipline and accountability that I lived by in the Army are required when being a fiduciary for investment assets.

Best way to keep competitive edge: Listening. Taking the time to hear what people are saying, understanding it and then taking action is the key to success in this business. This is true whether I am trying to understand our clients' objectives and concerns or what the CEO of a company we are invested in is saying about that company's prospects.

Why people like working with you: I am straight forward and transparent in my business approach. At NovaPoint Capital, we get to know everyone that we work with so that we can be sure their investment plan suits their investment goals and risk tolerance.

Most inspiring entrepreneur: I meet many younger military Veterans that want to start their own businesses. The most frequent reason they give for starting businesses is that they want to provide jobs for other Veterans. That is the most selfless and inspiring entrepreneurial aspiration I have ever seen.

Judgment calls

Best business decision: Starting my own business. I wish I had done it 20 years earlier, but I wouldn't be where I am today without the knowledge I have gained from all the great people I had worked for and been mentored by over the years. Every previous job was a learning experience.

Hardest lesson learned and how you learned it: Mistakes don't age well. The quicker you realize you've made a mistake and fixed it, the quicker you can get back on track. Every stock you buy isn't going to go up. When you have a stock that isn't performing well you need to determine its potential from that point in time, not anchored in the past when you first made the investment.

Toughest business decision: Leaving a big company like Merrill Lynch to work for smaller, entrepreneurial companies.

Biggest missed opportunity: I am not sure what my biggest missed opportunity is. I miss lots of smaller opportunities every day on stocks that I don't invest in that go up in value. By sticking to a disciplined investment process I try to produce the greatest return for the lowest level of risk. It's never perfect day-to-day but designed to produce high quality results over the long term.

True confessions

Like best about job: There is something new to learn every day. The financial markets are a dynamic mirror of the economy. Daily changes in companies, industries, government policy and world events are all reflected in stock prices and that is what presents investment risks and opportunities to consider.

Like least about job: All of those economic changes and world events can cause an overload of data and news. It takes a lot of discipline and time to filter through the noise to make good investment decisions.

Pet peeve: This is Atlanta, so I would have to be honest and say traffic and bad drivers.

First choice for a new career: Food Network or Travel Channel show host. I am envious of the people that get paid to travel the world and eat great food.

Predilections

Most influential book: Against the Gods by Peter Bernstein. I think it is the best book for understanding investment risk.

Favorite cause: Helping fellow Veterans. I help military Veterans transitioning to the workplace in areas such as resume writing, networking and starting businesses. At NovaPoint Capital, we also donate one day's worth of revenue to Veterans' charities every six months. Two foundations we support are the Army Ranger Lead the Way Fund and Children of Fallen Patriots.

Favorite restaurant: Fogo de Chao. All you can eat grilled meat? Count me in.

Favorite way to spend free time: I have two daughters that play sports. I love watching their soccer, swimming and lacrosse games.

Favorite Music: It runs the gamut from Rock to Country to Pop to Classical. I don't have the talent to play any instruments or sing, but I enjoy listening to others that do.

Atlanta Business Chronicle will continue to feature some of the city's most well-known c-level executives. And we welcome new submissions. Please send your nominations to phudson@bizjournals.com.



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