

# Trusted Advisors

**An Interview with Bill White,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Constellations Group**



Bill White (right) with The Honorable George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States, on the USS Intrepid

**EDITORS' NOTE** Bill White has served as President of the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, and the Intrepid Relief Fund. He serves as a Trustee of the Fisher House Foundation, as well as on the boards of the News Corporation Global Diversity Council Advisory Board, the Catholic Medical Mission Board, the Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research at Rockefeller University, and Intrepid Relief Fund. In May 2009, White was offered the opportunity to serve in the Obama Administration by Defense Secretary Robert Gates as the Pentagon's Deputy Chief Management Officer. In 1991, he established Operation Support, a volunteer charitable organization that raised over \$400,000 for the families of military personnel killed in the Persian Gulf War. He co-authored the book, *Intrepid: The Epic Story of America's Most Legendary Warship*. White co-founded Constellations Group in 2010. He is twice the recipient of the Meritorious Public Service Award for extraordinary service from the U.S. Coast Guard and for outstanding support from the U.S. Navy. White holds a B.A. from Fordham University and a Culinary Arts Degree from the French Culinary Institute.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Constellations Group ([www.constellationsgroup.com](http://www.constellationsgroup.com)) and its dedicated professionals serve and advise treasured relationships to include individuals, corporations, and charitable foundations on matters related to strategic communications, relationship connectivity, fundraising, and board and strategic business development. Be it established entities or new organizations building from the ground up, Constellations Group has proven methods for all types of institutional and individual growth.

## What was the initial vision behind the formation of Constellations Group?

During my 20 years at the Intrepid Museum and with the Fisher Brothers family in New York, we pulled the place out of bankruptcy, brought it to one million visitors, and raised almost \$700 million for important efforts to take care of our troops.

Through that amazing network, I'm now in the business space, and Constellations Group works to connect the stars in a way that provides growth, funding, and strategic partnerships and relationships. The bottom line results increase for the companies we're working with.

When I left the Intrepid, I helped to arrange the sale of Blackwater to the new owners at Academi, which was a complex deal to put together due to the issues Blackwater was dealing with at the time. We were able to help Jason DeYonker at Forte find the money and important relationships he needed to make this important purchase. Academi is now flourishing with a new outlook on life and providing important services to police departments and security agencies around the world.

## Is there a common link among clients? Do these services work for a range of businesses?

We try to cover a broad spectrum. We have a focus on national defense and military/veterans affairs, operations and companies that service those businesses, and foundations that help those people who serve to protect our country.

We also do some interesting and complex real estate fundraising and financing, as well as specialize in growing companies with strategic relationships.

If you're looking for a strategic leader, a board member or an important out of reach relationship or partnership, we will also go out and find what will, hopefully, be the perfect connection.

## Are you a full service partner for clients? How broad are the services you offer?

In terms of long-range planning, we're focused on a certain number of services we will provide to that C-Suite level operation, and we're a bit under the radar because we are a niche operation – it was only a specific entity that would consider buying Blackwater, for instance. With our global reach, we can quietly go on a search without it being a public process, which is our strength.

Also, people used to look at me as the guy who ran the Intrepid well, something I always try to carry through to these new experiences. Now they're seeing that we are well connected in business and have the depth and reach, so that has allowed us to become trusted advisors, which we take very seriously and value greatly.

When you have earned the trust of prominent and successful businesspeople, they will take meetings and listen, but you still have to do your homework and be prepared. Their time is too valuable to waste.

## Will you need to bring in more talent? How tough is it to transfer the strength of the relationships you and your partner Joe Pecoraro have built?

The business model is difficult for that reason, but we are bringing in some interesting people who are partnering with us – we put a pretty interesting team together when it's needed. We also have an opportunity to joint venture with other firms that complement our operations.

## More CEOs today talk about supporting veterans but is enough being done?

We can never do enough. With their 100,000 Jobs Mission, JP Morgan Chase has hired 22,000 veterans, so there has been some movement. But we had one million unemployed veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Thanks to Jamie and his partners and team, this number has been reduced.

As a country, we have to care more about this – there is a mental health crisis that veterans are suffering from: we have a suicide a day and we have 600,000 with some form of post-traumatic stress. At Constellations Group, we're working with our clients – for instance, with the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund and the Wounded Warrior Project – to focus on this mental health crisis. We have to do more for these service members when they come home from the wars we send them to. They have volunteered to fight for our country. Let's never forget that point. Our goal is to raise money and awareness so that these invisible wounds become more visible to the American people and we do more to help them. Our campaign is [MakeltVisible.org](http://MakeltVisible.org).

With the Fallen Heroes Fund, we're raising \$100 million to build treatment centers; the Wounded Warrior Project will have raised \$100 million this year and their goal is to help the wounded warriors suffering from these invisible wounds reintegrate into society.

We found the best-in-class veterans service organizations to align with to help lower the suicide rate, help the families understand these mental issues, and treat our veterans when they come home from war.

## Are your philanthropy and business aligned?

In part, yes, because we have it in our heart that as those who haven't served our country in the military, this is a way to say thank you to those that have served.

Even as Constellations Group expands and focuses more on our for-business profit opportunities, we will always in our foundation efforts be supporting organizations like the ones I mentioned – these heroes are there for us so we have to be there for them when they come home. And this is important as it keeps the global economy fairly stable – freedom that is well defended. ●