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WHY A WILL ISN'T ENOUGH: THE CASE FOR FAMILY MEETINGS

Michael Preto, CFP®, CIM®

Most people think their estate plan is “done” once the ink dries on the will and trust documents.

But here's the truth: documents don't create understanding — conversations do.

At Hillside Wealth, we've seen time and again that the best estate plans go beyond paperwork. They're built on **communication, clarity, and connection**. And that's why we encourage clients to hold family meetings.

The Missing Ingredient in Most Estate Plans

A will spells out *what* will happen.

A trust can add structure to *how* it happens.

But neither ensures your family knows *why*.

Without that understanding, families are often left to fill in the blanks — and that's where confusion, resentment, and conflict can creep in.

We believe transparency is one of the most powerful forms of protection. When family members know what to expect and why decisions were made, there's far less room for surprise, suspicion, or misunderstanding later.

What Family Meetings Can Do

A good family meeting isn't about numbers or tax strategies — it's about relationships. It's a chance to:

1. **Share your intentions behind the plan** — the “why” that matters most.
 - **Prepare your beneficiaries** so they're not blindsided when the time comes.
 - **Introduce key advisors** — including us — so your heirs know who to turn to and what the next steps would look like.
 - **Strengthen family unity** by reducing the probability of conflict when emotions are running high.



When done well, these meetings create understanding before wealth transitions. That's how you preserve both assets and relationships.

The Hillside Approach

When we help facilitate a family meeting, our goal is simple:

to make sure your estate plan doesn't just transfer wealth — it transfers wisdom.

We start by clarifying your values and intentions. Then, together, we decide what information should be shared, with whom, and when. We help guide the conversation so it feels natural and constructive, not heavy or intimidating.

Sometimes that means explaining how the plan works. Sometimes it means introducing the next generation to us and showing them what it would look like to become clients — how Hillside supports families across generations.

A Legacy of Communication

A strong estate plan protects what you've built.

A family meeting protects who you've built it for.

If your estate plan is sitting quietly in a drawer somewhere, consider that it may not be finished — at least not in the way that truly matters.

Because the real success of any plan isn't measured in tax savings or legal efficiency.

It's measured in **understanding, trust, and peace of mind** — for everyone involved.

If you'd like to go over it together, book a time with us with [this link](#).

HILLSIDE WEALTH MANAGEMENT | FREEDOM | FAMILY | PERFORMANCE



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PASSING THE TORCH AT CONSTELLATION SOFTWARE

Jason Del Vicario, CFA®

It was recently announced that Mark Leonard, CEO and founder of Constellation Software (CSI) would step down from his active role due to health reasons. The torch has been passed onto Mark Miller who has been involved in the business for over 30 years.

Frankly, this is a shock as it was only two days prior that Mark hosted a [shareholder call](#) to discuss AI's impact on software businesses. First, we must always remember that behind the stock names and symbols on our portfolio statements there are people. I think it's important to acknowledge that Mark and the people close to him are even more shocked and saddened by this news. On behalf of myself, the Hillside team/family we wish him a speedy recover and send well wishes and our thoughts to the entire CSI team/family.

A Founder's Track Record for the Ages

Mark Leonard has engineered one of the strongest track records of shareholder wealth gains since the company went public in 2006. During this time, the stock rose from \$20 to a high of \$5000 and most recently \$3600. They did this without issuing a single share. They didn't even use the proceeds from the IPO for the business but rather this was a liquidation event for one of the private equity investors (oops!). During this time, they have acquired 1000+ vertical market software companies across the globe adhering to a [strict process](#) and hurdle rate; this discipline and consistency is extremely rare. Furthermore, they have only ever sold 1 of these businesses (a mistake per Mark) giving these companies, employees and customers a trusted 'forever' home; again, rare. All the while, Mark and his team eschewed the excesses of Wall Street:

- they didn't issue stock options or engage in share based compensation,
- they forced their managers to invest a portion of their [after-tax bonuses](#) into acquiring shares on the open markets,
- Mark made a point of [flying coach](#) (even as a billionaire and 6'6") and when he decided to finally fly business class, he paid out of pocket himself...
- and lastly, he famously [stopped taking a salary](#) in 2015. Yes, he's been working for us for FREE for the past 10 years!

Built to Run Without the Founder

One of the tenets of CSI's genesis and success has been an almost religious adherence to a decentralized business model. What does this mean? It means that when CSI acquires a software firm, they don't take over and dictate how things should go. They trust the team in place to continue to execute. Furthermore, they have been successful downloading the important task of capital allocation (acquisitions) from head office to the heads of the larger business units and even down to the individual small company ranks; we understand this has been the 'secret sauce' allowing them to continue to scale and deploy capital at high rates of return. CSI is a \$80B company and famously has a head office staff count of only 14! Many talk about the importance of delegation in business, but few master it. I mention this because on the news of Mark stepping away, the stock sold off 17% however if there is one company that is intentionally set up to be run not by one but by many, CSI is it.



AI and the Road Ahead

As for my opinion (I'm quite sure I'm not qualified to lend one) on AI's impact on software businesses, I'll simply say that I don't know. Mark raised the example during the recent call of an AI expert who said that we should stop training radiologists as AI would render them obsolete. This was 9 years ago when the number of radiologists in the US was 26,000. Today there are 30,500 radiologists; this is a 17% increase which has outpaced general population growth (further details at the 2nd minute mark of this [call replay](#)). If an expert can be this wrong, then I'm quite sure whatever I say on the subject will also off the mark. What I will say is that CSI's strong culture and decentralized model should enable it to adapt to whatever changes are thrown their way, AI included. Furthermore, CSI's bread and butter are small software companies with smaller and less tech savvy customers. The software is often mission critical to the functioning of their business and we may find some comfort that this profile of customer is less likely to develop their own solutions, much less upgrade, de-bug and monitor in house. Lastly, we can also find some comfort in the fact that CSI has a high hurdle rate meaning that the purchase price for their acquisitions is done with the view to earning a high rate of return (i.e., low purchase price) which implies a stronger margin of safety. In short, CSI is better protected against outside threats because all things being equal, they don't overpay for assets.

A Long-Term Hillside Partner

We first bought shares of CSI at ~\$250 in 2014 and since then it has generally been our largest position (META has recently surpassed) playing an important role in helping our clients realize their Big, Meaningful Dreams.

JOIN US!
Hillside Wealth's 2025 State of the Union
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025
Online Presentation: Link to be Provided, 6:30 - 7:30 pm PT

Join us for Hillside's annual ***State of the Union*** presentation on November 13th! This year's focus will be on empowering your financial future, with insights into retirement planning, model portfolios, and our latest investment strategies. We'll also be sharing what's new and next at Hillside—and there's plenty to look forward to!

Our virtual format means you can join from wherever you are.

 Date: November 13, 2025

 Time: 6:30–7:30 PM PT (Links to be provided upon RSVP)

[RSVP HERE](#)



SEPTEMBER 2025 PERFORMANCE RESULTS

An overview of our three portfolios to date.

Performance to September 30, 2025	YTD	6 Mo	1 Yr	3 Yr**	5 Yr**	10 Yr**	Inception**
Hillside Balanced Growth*	8.05%	5.89%	11.46%	17.64%	10.60%	9.54%	10.27%
HBG Benchmark ¹	12.81%	12.65%	16.29%	16.68%	10.14%	8.61%	7.60%
Hillside Focused Growth*	9.58%	8.04%	14.63%	24.49%	15.09%	11.03%	11.51%
HFG Benchmark ²	16.95%	17.44%	22.61%	22.34%	14.90%	11.73%	10.08%

Past performance is not an indication of future returns.

* Performance is presented gross of fees.

**Inception: Sept 2, 2014. Results beyond 1 year are annualized.

¹ Hillside Balanced Growth Benchmark: 75% Vanguard Balanced ETF & 25% Vanguard All-Equity ETF

² Hillside Focused Growth Benchmark: 100% Vanguard All-Equity ETF

Source: SIACHarts.com

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Hillside Wealth Management is a personal trade name of Michael Preto and Jason Del Vicario.

Performance is calculated using month-end market values of the model portfolio. Since we use a model portfolio to calculate performance there are no client-initiated cash flows (deposits/withdrawals) to account for.

Performance is calculated by dividing the change in the model portfolio's market value by the model portfolio's market value at the beginning of the performance period. Also, all income generated by the portfolio's holdings are held within the model portfolio in cash and is accounted for in the portfolio's month-end market value - this results in a total return measure of the model's performance.

Returns for periods less than 1 year are shown as periodic returns while returns for periods greater than 1 year are annualized. Returns do not include fees and actual returns experienced by an investor may differ from those shown. Past performance is not a guarantee of future results.