

IT'S ABOUT *PEOPLE*



TAKE JIMMY SAWYERS, chairman of Sawyers & Jacobs, LLC. Like many young fellows Sawyers loved baseball, so no doubt he dreamed of glory on the field or, in Sawyers' case, he imagined a career as a baseball coach. He Also Loved writing and journalism, and imagined writing about sports. Two dreams: writing and coaching. Funny how things turned out.

No, Sawyers didn't find himself in a career coaching baseball, nor did he pound a keyboard detailing the exploits of some athletic superstar. But coaching? Sure. "Consulting is coaching," Sawyers concedes. As for the writing, Sawyers now has several books to his name.

The journey began as a high-schooler working at a men's store in his West Tennessee hometown. The businessmen of the town seemed to take a liking to the personable young man. The bank was installing an in-house computer system, and they needed some help. Who better than that nice young Sawyers? He soon found himself coming in at 4 p.m. for the overnight shift — sorting, checking, posting, and backing up the computer system. Community Banking 101, at night, at a very young age, and he was learning.

The transition into a full-time job came after a brief interlude at a trucking company, when Sawyer's request for a full-time job at the bank never materialized. It didn't take long for the bank to realize the error of their ways and Sawyers had himself a full-time position with more responsibility. At 21, he was chosen to lead the bank's technology division, becoming one of the youngest officers in the history of the bank. To top matters off, the bank was willing to invest in the young man and offered to pay for his education.

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Fast forward to working while in school and completing his degree at Christian Brothers University in Memphis. Sawyers joined Reynolds, Bone, and Griesbeck, a respected Memphis CPA and consulting firm, where he would work for 14 years with growing responsibility. For the last seven years of his tenure, he was director of consulting. His future had been laid out.

It wasn't the Steve Jobs story of guys in a garage, but it came close. Sawyers and Joshua Jacobs, president of Sawyers & Jacobs LLC, who had extensive knowledge of the technical side of business development and cybersecurity and had worked alongside Sawyers at the CPA firm, founded the company in 2009. "We started the firm at my home on Costco tables and chairs," he says. With two officers and a lot of energy, Sawyers and Jacobs, LLC was up and running. Most importantly, they had 20 clients from their very first day. "We were into positive cash flow four months into business."

Sawyers and Jacobs, LLC, with offices in Collierville and St. Louis, offers consulting services to community banks in 30 states with a majority of them in the South and the Midwest. Similar to their early days, the company continues to focus on those community-based financial institutions with assets under \$10 billion and those institutions that "make people's dreams come true," according to Sawyers. "We need community banks," he adds. "They combine the human with the machine and can do anything the big banks do." After all, he notes, "Banking is a relationship business."

A quick glance at the Sawyers & Jacobs website reflects the extensive catalog of services they provide their clients, and while cybersecurity still forms a core of their business, the four major divisions of the company,

each with a distinctive logo, reach across the spectrum of community banking needs: REDTORCH Consulting; REDTAIL Risk Management; REDWOLF Cybersecurity, and REDCAPE Tech Support. While the extent of their banking know-how and consulting abilities is daunting, Sawyers is quick to point out that they "stick to what we do well." That's developing relationships because Sawyers knows "people do business with people and not the name on the masthead."

When it comes to that dream of coaching, Sawyers finds himself "coaching" young college minds as a faculty member of the Barret Graduate School of Banking at Christian Brothers University, the Southwestern Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University, the Southeastern School of Banking at Belmont University, the Virginia Bankers School of Management at the University of Virginia, and the Mississippi School of Banking at the University of Mississippi. Like Sawyers, Joshua Jacobs, who holds an M.S. in finance and an MBA from Christian Brothers University, and a B.S. in business administration, serves in faculty positions at a host of universities where he frequently specializes in cybersecurity. The Sawyers & Jacobs team reflects one of the primary characteristics of entrepreneurs — they are always learning, and, in their case, always sharing.

As for those writing creds, Sawyers has authored two books on technology and risk management in community banks, is a frequent contributor to industry publications, and is a sought-after speaker within the banking industry. Dreams come true. Ask Jimmy Sawyers. He'll tell you.

