



# Wall Street Journal's A Private Word with Nick Leopard

By Laura Kreutzer  
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Nick Leopard, a former investment banker at Bear Stearns & Co., formed Accordion Partners seven years ago to provide operational advisory services exclusively to the private-equity firms and their portfolio companies.

Q: What personal quality has helped you the most in your career?

A: While not exactly a personal quality, taking a “go-giver” mentality has transformed my career. By taking an others-first approach in my personal and professional life—whether it’s making an introduction for someone, spending time to help a colleague navigate career choices or focusing on others’ goals—I’ve found that the benefits have outweighed any downsides tenfold. It sounds oxymoronic, but doing a favor for someone without expecting one in return has gotten me to where I am today.

Q: If there’s one thing you could change about this industry, what would it be?

A: I’m grateful to work with some of the most talented people across the industry, and these professionals (deal professionals, consultants, operating partners) take a highly collaborative approach to their management teams and outside partners. There are some parts of our industry, however, that sometimes take themselves too seriously. At the end of the day, we’re in the business of helping build great companies. Management teams aren’t looking for their owner to be the smartest person in the room; rather, they want someone they can relate to and feel inspired by to lift their business to new heights.

Q: What is one thing that people might be surprised to know about you?

A: At 18, a guy named Cosmo gave me a lacrosse tattoo when I first got to college and began playing there. I later heard he went on to serve time for running a Ponzi scheme.

Q: What’s your idea of a perfect day?

A: I actually had it a few weeks ago. My three boys and I woke up and went on a trail hike while letting mom sleep in, picked up breakfast for all of us at home, and then went down to the harbor to go paddle-boarding. While everyone was relaxing after lunch, I did some client work that needed Accordion support and then played golf for a couple hours. Afterward, we hung out in the back yard, and then my wife and I went down to the beach for dinner with friends. It was exhausting, but perfect!

Q: What is one of the most influential books that you’ve read, and why?

A: I enjoy reading military-related books, but not for lessons around specific missions or military strategy. My dad was a Navy SEAL before I was born, and I’ve been infatuated with this part of his life. I’m most drawn to the character traits—pure sheer will and sacrifices these patriots display daily to succeed in their roles. Never once do they have the luxury of taking a day off.