



Hearts & Wallets Announces New Organizational Structure in Response to Growth and Needs of Distinct Client Bases

(Rye, NY) – Hearts & Wallets, the preeminent research platform for consumer savings and investing insights, announces a new organizational structure in response to growth and the needs of distinct client bases.

Hearts & Wallets serves as the consumer and competitive data platform for the retail investing industry. The firm's Investor Quantitative™ Database, market sizing, qualitative and competitive insights are used by leading broker-dealers, banks and retirement companies to improve their understanding of needs for distinct customer segments and the competitive landscape. Through the long-standing collaboration between Laura Varas and Chris Brown, Hearts & Wallets also provides best practices in the defined contribution investment-only (DCIO) distribution, with particular focus on intermediary-sold retirement plans. Both have been growth areas within the firm. To meet this growth and the distinct nature of the businesses and client bases, two specialized companies will now provide an intensified focus to service each client group.

Specialized Focus to Benefit Clients

Hearts & Wallets, led by Laura Varas, will continue its focus on the consumer and competitive data platform for the retail investing industry. Chris J. Brown will resume his singular focus on best practices in intermediary distribution through Sway Research, the research and consulting firm he founded in 2007, which quickly became the primary source of distribution benchmarks and insights for DCIO sales and marketing executives.

"This new structure is a natural progression that will allow us to deliver even more specialized service for our distinct client bases," Varas said. "Together, over the past 10 years, first at Financial Research Corporation, and now at Hearts & Wallets, we have pioneered research that has given clients a competitive edge with fresh new insights. We have always encouraged our clients to focus on specific segments because that focus clarifies their needs, so we are taking our own advice."

The new organizational structure will be effective Jan. 1, 2016, and has been planned to ensure a seamless transition for clients.

"I am so proud of everything Laura and I have accomplished at Hearts & Wallets," Brown said. "I'm honored to work with such an outstanding group of clients. Laura and I believe this new structure is the best way to meet the needs of all our clients."

2016 Preview

In the coming year, Sway Research will expand its coverage of trends in product development and distribution within the DCIO market, and intermediary distribution in general, while also working closely with product manufacturers on distribution strategy.

-more-

Hearts & Wallets

Hearts & Wallets Announces New Organizational Structure/2

"In the many meetings I've had with asset management executives since the release of *The State of DCIO Distribution: 2016* this past fall, it's become increasingly clear the challenges facing DCIO sales units are driving a growing need for more intensive solutions and custom engagements, which is the genesis of our change in organizational approach," Brown said.

In 2016, Hearts & Wallets will continue its annual research program of sizing, quantitative, competitive and qualitative research. Top priorities for the year include the expansion of Hearts & Wallets' customized, syndicated platform to offer access to more firms beyond its current base of top tier clients, including the introduction of a client portal to the Investor Quantitative™ Database, and the addition of more staff resources to support client growth.

"2016 will be a busy and exciting year filled with opportunities to help our clients advance their business," Varas said. "One of the most popular firm capabilities is creating design personas, or profiles of attitudes, behaviors, pain points and shopping patterns of specific consumer groups that help clients hone their messaging and offerings. The team and I are excited to be a catalyst for private sector innovation, which is the best way to solve consumer needs."

"The ability to earn profits in the DCIO space continues to become more challenging," Brown said. "I will work with firms to address those issues. Both Hearts & Wallets and Sway Research look forward to serving our clients in our distinct areas of expertise in 2016."

About Hearts & Wallets®

Hearts & Wallets is the consumer and competitive data platform for the investment industry that combines consumer marketing and strategy consulting frameworks with a practical understanding of how the investment, retirement and banking industries function. Leading financial institutions use Hearts & Wallets data and research insights to make decisions, stay informed about trends, and inspire innovations that will ultimately improve customer outcomes. For more information, visit www.heartsandwallets.com.

Media Contact:
Lynn Walters
lynn@heartsandwallets.com
(603) 498-1044

Hearts & Wallets LLC:
Laura Varas
laura@heartsandwallets.com
(781) 741-5200

Sway Research LLC:
Chris Brown
chris@swayresearch.com
(603) 382-5300

###