



*Rush Benton: I was really blown away by the size and scope of the business and the successful private-wealth business hidden within it.*

## Rush 'Rusty' Benton is back in the deal game -- wielding the checkbook and credibility of \$85-billion CAPTRUST

The godfather of RIA roll-ups is heading up CAPTRUST's little-known \$2.5-billion private-wealth division with plans for hoovering advisors into a non-autonomous framework

Thursday 4.11.13 by [Brooke Southall](#)

*Brooke's Note: It was a pleasure to hear the Benton drawl after a hiatus of a few years. I knew him as Rusty, like many folks, a tag he picked up to his displeasure in Tennessee that stuck. He is starting anew with hopes of being known as Rush. Rush declined to give his age but, in the article, I took the liberty of putting 53 candles on his cake based on his published age of 51 in a Jed Horowitz 2011 article in IN. Blame it on Jed.*

CAPTRUST Financial Advisors has hired Rush "Rusty" Benton as its deal czar under the title of senior director of strategic wealth.

The Nashville-based executive will bring his connections and prowess to accelerating the growth of the \$2.5-billion private-wealth unit that is all but hidden within an \$85-billion Raleigh, NC.-based RIA focused on serving the 401(k) needs of institutions. The unit of CAPTRUST Advisors LLC serves high-net-worth investors, including several professional athletes.

Benton's acceleration plan will include the acquisitions strategy with which his name is famously associated. Benton, 53, was co-founder and chairman of WealthTrust LLC, one of the first consolidators of RIAs. Under his leadership, WealthTrust grew from a startup venture to a wealth management platform with \$10 billion in assets under management through the acquisition of 14 investment advisors across the United States. See: [U.S. Trust seeks to add hundreds of wealth managers with West Coast-facing poaching campaign.](#)

CAPTRUST Advisors LLC is no stranger to deals but not so much among RIAs serving high-net-worth clients. See: [CAPTRUST wakes up the 401\(k\) industry by buying \\$1-billion advisor/recordkeeper that adds the 'magic' to its arsenal.](#)

"While CAPTRUST is extremely well-known to retirement plan sponsors, few people know that it also has a significant private-wealth business that fits nicely alongside the retirement business," Benton, 53, said in a

prepared comment. “As an \$85 billion advisor, CAPTRUST has the resources and scale that independent wealth managers need to remain competitive and a proven acquisition model that solves the pressing succession and liquidity needs of first-generation RIAs.”

Dan Inveen, principal of FAInsight of Seattle, who has followed WealthTrust for years in preparing “Real Deals” reports. He notes that at one time WealthTrust was “one of the big names in the space.”

“There’s some more opportunity in the market and certainly Rusty Benton is someone with a good background in what it takes to succeed. That’s the kind of guy you would want involved in this kind of business.”

Steve Levitt, principal of Park Sutton Advisors LLC, agrees. “He is charismatic but with depth and substance. I can’t tell you how important that is in the courtship process.”

Still, Levitt says that Benton will need to “think through a differentiated process” to compete with other strategic buyers like United Capital that have a big head start.

## Hidden wealth

The marriage between CAPTRUST and Benton almost didn’t get off square one, Benton says in an interview.

“I got a call from one of the execs here. I said: ‘I’m not looking for a job, and I haven’t had a resume since 1982.’ I was really blown away by the size and scope of the business and the successful private-wealth business hidden within it.”

J. Fielding Miller, CEO and co-founder of CAPTRUST Advisors, says his firm saw a good candidate in Benton.

“Rush is a highly regarded wealth management executive with the experience and proven track record that will allow him to immediately add significant value to our wealth business,” Miller said in a prepared remark.

Benton believes that CAPTRUST may serve as a better platform than WealthTrust, which he left in 2011 after more than two decades. he will seek advisors roughly in a range of advising \$100 million to \$1 billion in assets.

“CAPTRUST really has a platform to plug into. That’s what I dreamed of building at WealthTrust,” he says. CAPTRUST has 55 advisors, of which about 12 are dedicated to private wealth.

## Given up, given back

CAPTRUST varies from the pure roll-up model in that advisors will be fully integrated into CAPTRUST both from a branding and operations standpoint. See: [Why the term 'roll-up' should stay in the RIA vocabulary](#).

“The roll-up model is fine for some, but what’s missing in the market is giving up autonomy but what is given up is made up for by the advantages.” These shared advantages include IT, research, service model and



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marketing. See: [A roll-up exec talks about owning a roll-up and calls out his fellow entrepreneurs to focus on genuine distinctions.](#)

Whatever model of inorganic growth is pursued will present challenges, according See: [Enter the deal makers: RIA M&A firms are hiring furiously — even without a deal boom](#) Inveen.

“There are a few more players than the market can support and I’m curious to see how this goes.”

h2 Deal-making pause

WealthTrust is stilling doing business — under a new CEO, Holly Deem — but it has suspended deal making. The company is primarily owned by Falcon Investment Partners LLC of Boston, which bought it in 2006.

A graduate of Vanderbilt University, Benton is a chartered financial analyst and an avid fly-fisherman, golfer and pilot. In his new job, he’ll split his time between Nashville and Raleigh, N.C., where CAPTRUST Financial is located.

Fly fishing aside, doing deals is a real passion.

“I’m back in the game,” he says.