

In Memoriam: Phil Treccagnoli

Written by Nick Sanders

Tuesday, 21 August 2012 00:00

The [death notice](#) for Phil Treccagnoli is short and contained all the salient facts one might expect. It told us that Philip D. Treccagnoli, of Setauket, New York, had passed away on August 14, 2012. It said that Phil was 54 years old, and that he left behind a wife (Kathleen) as well as two children and two step-children. He had three siblings. And that was pretty much that.

But that is very much not that for me, not about Phil. I want to acknowledge that Phil was one of the better people whom I've met in this business, and 54 was far too young for him to be taken from his family and from our small Government Accounting/Compliance community.

Did you know Phil? If not, here's [a link](#) to a summary of his professional qualifications. Note that the summary comes from the "Practicing Law Institute," where Phil was a member of the faculty. The summary shows that Phil had a MBA (Accounting) from Adelphi University, and that he was a member of the American Bar Association's Section on Public Contract Law, the National Contract Management Association, and the National Defense Industrial Association. It says Phil was a Green Belt in Six Sigma. Phil was also a Partner at PwC, a member of the firm's Forensic Services/Government Contract Services practice, and specialized in Government contracting matters. It says of Phil—

Phil's primary responsibilities at PwC include executive and Board of Director level client-facing activities, and delivering solutions to clients on complex business matters covering a variety of areas. These areas include public contract accounting, cost accounting, asset management, program and contract management, regulatory compliance, and litigation support. Phil is also a subject matter expert in government contracts, and serves clients in multiple industries including aerospace and defense, construction, industrial products, healthcare and pharmaceutical, automotive, and energy.

From reading the summary, one can see that Phil had roughly 30 years of experience—16 years in industry and 14 years in the world of "public accounting". While in industry, Phil worked at Fairchild Republic, GEC Marconi, CAE Electronics, and Telephonics. As far as I know, those companies are all located on Long Island, where Phil spent most of his life. During his 16 years in industry, Phil held a variety of Finance and Contracts positions, which gave him a solid experience base to draw from when he joined Ernst & Young.

He worked at both EY and PwC during his tenure in the "Big 4". Although we both worked for both firms, Phil had left EY (for PwC) before I joined their Government Contract Services practice, and so it was when I subsequently joined PwC myself (in 2005) that we first met.

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Let me tell you about Phil. Like many New Yorkers, he was loud and opinionated. But his heart was the biggest thing about him. He had a constant smile and always seemed happy, despite the daily stress of the job. And more importantly, Phil was a “people person.” Now, that’s more rare than you might think, unless you’ve actually spent some time in the dog-eat-dog world of the “professional accounting” firms. Despite the constant pressures, Phil remained in good spirits and was devoted to his people. He was a fanatic about developing people and was a willing mentor to those who sought him out. And for the others, he still cared about them and had a long-term development plan for them in his back pocket, which he was going to use to nudge them in the right direction (whether they knew it or not).

When Phil made Partner at PwC, after years of grinding out client engagements and waiting for the “soundings” to percolate up to leadership, the first thing he did was call me and tell me that the next thing on his agenda was on getting me into the Partnership, so I could join him. That’s the kind of guy that Phil was. He was as generous and big-hearted as I’ve met in this business. (That I ended-up leaving PwC had nothing to do with Phil, and everything to do with my family situation.)

Phil’s other project was to get his “rising star”—Phil Koos—elevated into the Partnership. He was successful in that endeavor. I asked Mr. Koos if he’d like to say anything on this website about Mr. Treccagnoli, and this is what he sent me—

Phil Treccagnoli was a consummate professional whose experience and knowledge with government contracts was extensive. He helped so many clients over the years across various areas of government contracting making it difficult to define just one area to describe Phil's expertise. However, I think most would agree that across all the experience, knowledge and advice that Phil provided to his clients, co-workers and peers, he was considered an industry leader with regard to termination proposals. Phil constantly brought innovative ideas and strategies to his clients with regard to termination proposals which often resulted in significant recovery. Whenever a termination proposal project arose, Phil's effervescent smile always seemed to get a little bigger as he savoured the challenge of these proposals and the ability to strategize and develop methods for enhancing recovery for his clients. Where others saw the black and white of the FAR requirements associated with terminations, Phil always saw the grey and challenged it to bring new and innovative positions. I know some of Phil's greatest professional achievements were positive reactions and decisions by TCOs with regard to the proposals that Phil prepared, led and advised on throughout his career. To that end, one of the greatest moments of many in his career was when an arbitrator, a leader in the government contracting community, stated that the termination proposal Phil prepared for a subcontractor was the best he had seen in his many years of practice.

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For me, Phil's technical capabilities were incredible and he taught me much throughout our time working together. However, the one thing that I believe Phil may have been even greater at than government contracting was people. Phil had a core belief in people and their capabilities. He allowed those who worked with him to expand themselves, to challenge their abilities and to achieve success unconditionally while always being there to support, guide, and advise. Phil's belief in the human spirit allowed those around him to excel and achieve both personally and professionally. Phil also believed the team was always more powerful than the individual and worked each day to build the strength, cohesiveness and collaboration of his team. He allowed each of us to understand that, through the team, we could drive value and quality, augment our strengths, grow through the strengths of others and progress in our careers. Personally, this went a step further to a friendship that I will always cherish. Phil was one of those few people that you cross paths and count as a close and true friend for life. His unwavering support, steadfast commitment, and positive attitude and smile was so infectious that you could not help but smile when he was present, even on your worst day. Although Phil is no longer here, I know that for his entire team and me, his professional and life advice, leadership, knowledge and people skills will forever be present with each of us and continue to shape our lives, both professionally and personally, forever.

Yes, this is the Phil that I worked with—and counted as a friend—as well.

Another PwC Partner, Glenn Brady, also had some words about Phil that he graciously sent to me. If you don't know Glenn, then you should know that he also has a big heart and is the epitome of a professional business advisor. Working with Glenn was one of the pleasures of my PwC tenure. Glenn offered these observations about Phil—

I worked of course with Phil from time to time, but not closely, and not for several years. ... As a partner Phil was always there for me when I needed him. One specific example was when I had a significant client issue on one client that resulted in [an unplanned] continuation of an engagement, which resulted in needing a partner to step in and kick off and essentially run an engagement for another client. Phil did so without batting an eye. He had to do a fair amount of ramp up in a short amount of time and he threw himself into the project with energy and focus and creativity and the like. I believe this was fueled by his passion for client service and for the values of our partnership in how we work together and how we support our staff. I will miss Phil and his regular check ins on how my beloved Cardinals are doing as well. I only wish his beloved Yankees and my Cardinals made it to the fall classic just one time over the past 10 years or so we worked together. I am sure we would have traded tickets and seen some games together.

That two busy Partners—one of whom had not worked with Phil for several years—would take the time to write and send me the foregoing indicates just how special Phil was to many of us who worked with him.

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My heart goes out to Phil's family, who lost a husband and father too soon. And my heart goes out to Phil's Partners, co-workers, and employees, who lost a valuable member of their team. We need more like Phil, and not less.