

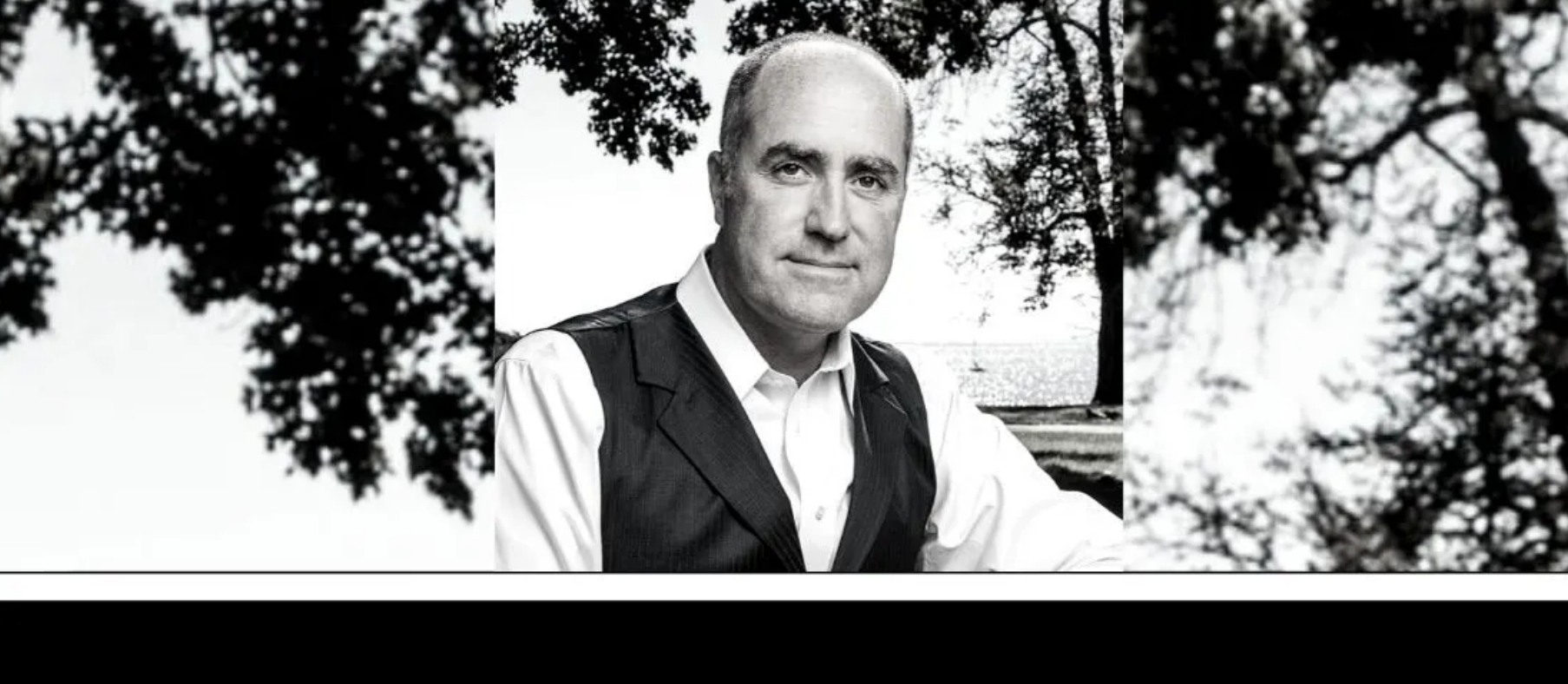
Doug Haynes Offers Effective Business Practice Insight

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Doug Haynes is managing partner of business consultancy firm Council Advisors and president of its executive leader-based practice, The Council.

Haynes helped found [Council Advisors](#) after spending more than two decades at management consulting firm McKinsey & Company. He previously worked at the CIA as a software developer; at GE Plastics as a design engineer and marketing professional; and at U.S.-based hedge fund Point72 Asset Management.

Haynes — who graduated summa cum laude with a mechanical engineering degree from West Virginia University and holds a master's degree from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business — now lives with his wife, Laurice, in Scarborough, New York. The couple owns and operates the Fountain Inn in Ridgefield, Connecticut, a bed-and-breakfast located in a historic home built in 1740

Please tell us a little bit about your business — what services does Council Advisors offer?

We are all about improving business performance through the leadership of the CEO and top team. We provide advice and counsel grounded in experience and subject matter expertise to senior executives. We build executive capability through coaching and career development services. We mobilize initiatives with operational expertise. We help create compelling communications that inform, inspire, and align stakeholders. Everything we do is geared to helping the most senior executives thrive in their demanding roles.

Tell us a little bit about your background and how you started your company.

The early years of my career were spent in technology: engineering and programming. I became a consultant and started a lifelong passion for understanding enterprise leadership. After a few years of leading an asset management firm — practicing what I had been preaching as a consultant — I decided to return to the field to create a different kind of consulting firm. I wanted to focus on leadership and deliver counsel through a mix of contextual facts and practical expertise. I found several like-minded colleagues with a wealth of experience and began serving clients in 2020. We merged with the former G100 Companies in 2021 when we found they were pursuing the same objective with a broad and deep set of complementary skills.

How have the pandemic and lockdown affected you or your new business?

Technology has led to the ability to work remotely, which can be helpful, but I prefer meeting face-to-face with people, which I feel can build and strengthen personal relationships with colleagues and clients. Some of the informal interactions you have throughout the workday can really contribute to that.

What's a productivity tip you swear by?

I like to start working early in the day and tackle individual tasks before the traditional business day hours start. I allot time for writing — at least one hour a day, often on a book I'm working on — and the rest of the day is typically filled with video conferences and other appointments.

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In general, being productive is more challenging than ever in today's digital world. You have to fight the tendency to let devices control your time. Constant technology-related interruptions can really impact your concentration — and potentially reduce both the amount and quality of the work you complete.

What would you say are the top three skills needed to be a successful entrepreneur, and why?

I have found that having the right mindset has been as important — or even more important — than having the right skills. Being intelligently adaptive is critical. When you have an idea for a new product or solution, you really don't know how clients will react. Staying true to your core idea while listening without prejudice to the market is harder than it sounds. If you repurpose yourself to the first few clients you encounter, you can lose sight of your original vision. If you don't adjust, you can miss the whole opportunity.

What were your biggest challenges and how did you overcome them?

Like every entrepreneur, finding enough hours in the day is a challenge. There are so many things that need to be done and everything comes after serving clients and building the firm... so lots of long days and late nights. Accurately interpreting what the market is telling you is also a challenge. Responding to the specific needs and requests of each client is not hard; however, finding the patterns to distinguish between one-off needs and the pattern of needs that should affect your core offering is much trickier. It is way, way too easy to “chase every squirrel” and find yourself and your firm fragmented.

How do you separate yourself from your competitors?

Our engagement model combines experienced operating executives with senior consulting professionals through client interactions that range from personal coaching through objective advising and collaborative problem-solving. We intend to bring together rigorous, fact-based problem-solving with subject matter expertise and pragmatic, execution-oriented thinking. This is not easy to do — such diverse perspectives and approaches offer clients great value, but require very experienced client leaders to integrate. We believe we bring these views together in a unique way for CEOs and top teams.

What helps you stay driven and motivated?

I am blessed to be involved with several charitable organizations including the Robin Hood Foundation, Camp Southern Ground, and Cohen Veterans Network. I'm grateful to have been able to utilize some aspects of what I do professionally to give back through those organizations. I am inspired by their work, the people involved, and the potential for positive social impact.

I am also motivated by learning. If you can look back at the end of the year and feel that you have been challenged, learned something new, and sharpened your understanding of what you thought you knew — then, it has been a good year!

What is your definition of success?

Working with people who believe in consistently doing the right thing — period. I have had the privilege of working in the intelligence community, the corporate world, the asset management industry, and the consulting profession. The common thread has been working with talented, motivated, and ethical people. I believe there is no such thing as a “bad job” — any time you put your effort into delivering value for others, you are raising the human condition. Doing it with people you can respect and learn from is what defines success.

Can you recommend one book for entrepreneurs?

The principles in *Meditations*, written by Marcus Aurelius, still resonate today, as the world continues to become intricately interconnected — even though the philosophy of Stoicism that's described in the book dates back to the Roman Empire. It is timeless and fresh today, hundreds of years later.

What valuable advice would you give new entrepreneurs?

What makes someone an entrepreneur? In my definition, it is the will to take informed risks to do something new that has the potential to create new value for others. You can have entrepreneurs in the not-for-profit world, the corporate world, the private company world, and the startup world. My advice has three parts:

What are your plans for the future? How do you intend to grow the company?

One client at a time. At the moment, we have more requests from clients than we are able to meet, so we are weighing each opportunity carefully to be certain that we can deliver at the level that we expect and they deserve. Growth is an outcome, not a purpose. Our purpose is to be the best partner for CEOs and their teams. If we keep doing that to the highest standard, growth will follow.