

Bloomberg Businessweek

A Navy Seal, a Yacht Captain, and the Other People Billionaires Trust to Manage Their Money

By Margaret Collins

April 16, 2015



A crew member holds a magnum of Tattinger champagne during the Monaco Yacht Show.
Photographer: Simon Dawson/Bloomberg

Managing the life of Sergey Brin is big business.

Through Bayshore Global Management, the Google Inc. co-founder has hired former bankers and philanthropy experts to help manage his \$30.1 billion fortune. He's employed a former Navy SEAL and SWAT team veteran for security, and a yacht captain to handle his aquatic endeavors. A fitness coordinator, a photographer and archivist help run his life.

Bayshore, based in Los Altos, California, provides a glimpse into the services family offices bestow upon the wealthy beyond investing and accounting. As the number of billionaires has surged worldwide in recent years, demand for people who can provide niche skills -- and discretion -- has jumped.

"Family offices are expanding and people are setting new ones up," said Natasha Pearl, chief executive officer of Aston Pearl, which serves single-family offices that have at least \$400 million. "It's increasing demand for employees who can be trusted to keep the families' private lives confidential."

There are now more than 14,600 families with at least \$100 million in assets globally, up 42 percent since 2008, according to the Boston Consulting Group. Many of these have set up their own offices to help manage investments and day-to-day lives. The firms employ about 20,000 people, according to London-based researcher Campden Wealth, which started collecting the data last year.

Vulcan, Microsoft

Family offices serving the world's billionaires usually employ at least 50 people, with staff across multiple teams including executive, administrative and investment groups, according to Campden Wealth data.

Vulcan Inc., the Seattle-based company created by Microsoft Corp. co-founder Paul Allen and his sister Jody Allen, has more than 500 people. The family office features an in-house media company, a 17-member team managing a multi-billion dollar investment portfolio and a division that's working on space travel. Vulcan is also currently hiring a chief investment officer and wildlife conservation expert among other positions, according to its website.

Allen, who has a net worth of \$17 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, named Vulcan after the Roman god of fire. He's also a Star Trek fan. Alexa Rudin, a spokeswoman for Vulcan, declined to comment.

Bayshore gets its name from the location of Google's headquarters, an area in California known as North Bayshore. It's existed since at least 2006, two years after Google, the world's largest search engine, had its initial public offering.

Goldman, Deutsche

The company's employees have been recruited from Google, Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Deutsche Bank AG and other family offices, according to LinkedIn profiles that list Bayshore as their employer. It has employed at least 47 people according to Department of Labor filings. These include a chief of staff and manager of the family's New York City home, who oversaw construction, recruited domestic staff and provided personal shopping.

Brin also owns Passerelle Investment Co., a real estate firm. It's bought properties in Los Altos to help revitalize the town for businesses and families, according to Passerelle's website.

Representatives for Bayshore declined to comment.

Brin, 41, emigrated to the U.S. from the Soviet Union as a child with his family. He also runs the Brin Wojcicki Foundation with his wife, Anne, that disburses charitable donations and supports human rights.

No Registration

Brin is the 21st richest person in the world, according to the Bloomberg ranking. Controlling a fortune of that size requires professional security. Bayshore's brought in the former Navy SEAL to provide protection, according to a LinkedIn profile. A former U.S. Secret Service agent directed security programs, and a former SWAT team operator oversees the family's properties and emergency procedures.

Some of the largest family offices have operation centers to monitor people and property, said Christopher Falkenberg, a former U.S. Secret Service agent and founder of New York-based Insite Security that provides protection services to clients such as family offices.

There are layers of personnel including former military and law enforcement experts who are responsible for locks on doors and gates, background checks on staff, and managing travel and aircraft security, Falkenberg said.

They don't come cheap. A security director who's a former FBI agent can command at least \$200,000 a year, he said. That can be double a typical salary working for the government.

Private Chefs

Salaries at family offices vary widely, said Pearl, whose New York-based firm has helped families hire cybersecurity experts, find college advisers and create procedures for staff at multiple residences.

Private chefs can command salaries from \$40,000 to as much as \$200,000 a year with full benefits depending on whether they have top restaurant experience and have worked with other wealthy families, Pearl said. College-adviser fees, a growing area, can range from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

"It's not like the 'blue book' where you look up chief risk officers or chefs and there are standard comp rates," she said. "It's a very fragmented market."

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