

**E**very Sunday morning, Emil Abedian raced to his father's Mediterranean restaurant in the gorgeous Swedish city of Uppsala -- mainly to embrace his father, who worked 14-hour days and seldom saw his family during the week.

Another reason young Emil raced to the restaurant was to count the money in the cash register.

"I was fascinated with it," he says. "I would count it over and over and just loved keeping track of it. My family and other people at the restaurant thought I was crazy for counting the money continuously. I'd just stand on a chair in front of the cash register and wouldn't move for hours. I was like a guard, making sure every penny was accounted for. Most of all, I loved seeing the cash reconcile to the cash register. I really enjoyed it. It excited me."

It should be no surprise then that Abedian wound up in finance – a CPA to be exact. Today, he is the



Article by Rick Weinberg

Emil Abedian

## *Not Just a Numbers Guy*

*Emil Abedian's firm is far from the traditional accounting practice. His specialty is helping businesses grow as he handles all tax and accounting elements with creativity, intelligence, personality and innovative technology.*

principal of a fast-growing firm in Southern California, Abedian & Totlian, which is far from a traditional accounting practice. His specialty is helping his business clients grow as he handles and oversees every aspect of their business back office support through payables and bookkeeping to taxes and accounting.

"I started off my career at a local firm in Sweden and then moved to Ernst & Young, where I was primarily a numbers guy focusing only on the fi-

nancial statements," he says. "But once I got into it and began to understand all the elements of the industry and running my own practice, the perception I had of a CPA was totally different. I thought it was just crunching numbers and making sure it all reconciled. But it's a lot more than that. It's a people's profession and a people's industry. I learned that part is more important than numbers. I came to learn that the most important part of this business is understanding people, listening to



them, asking questions, understanding their problems, learning their business inside and out, understanding their expectations, educating them, helping them grow their business and determining which ways to do that.”

He excels in this process from A to Z.

“Emil has changed my life, professionally and personally,” says Mark Scott, CEO of Mountain Valley Water Corporation in Los Angeles. “I was sold on him the second I met him, when it was just him and his desk,” he adds with a laugh. “Right off the bat, I was stunned by his attention to detail, commitment and knowledge. It was night and day from my previous CPA. Emil talked about what areas to be aware of and about upcoming regulation law and tax codes. My previous CPA never gave me that knowledge. I assume now he just didn’t know – or didn’t care.

“Tax codes are always changing and Emil knows about it before the public. He’s always on top of it,” Scott says. “He thoroughly explains the new laws and upcoming changes, saying, ‘This is how it is going to affect you and this is what we need to do to combat it.’ His attention to detail is flawless. He’s always two steps ahead.”

**W**ith Abedian in his corner, Scott’s business has grown dramatically – monetarily and in size -- from a dozen employees to 35. “We wouldn’t have been able to do it without Emil,” Scott says. “I’d probably still be

where I was five years ago. Emil stayed in step with the growth, encouraged it and helped guide it from a tax and accounting perspective.”

Abedian & Totlian, which specializes in law firms, entertainment and medical practices, offers business packages through back office support and mobile solutions tailored to their clients’ needs. The firm assumes the role of the clients’ accounting department, enabling them to seamlessly run their business from anywhere.

“What I love about Emil is that he gives you his undivided attention,” Scott says. “He never wavers from that commitment. If I call him, he always – *I mean always* – takes the call. If he happens to be with another client or on the phone with another client, he gets back to me the moment he’s through with that client. I love that. My prior CPA, I’d have to wait a day or two to hear back – and many times I had to call twice, which is infuriating. With Emil, it’s night and day. He’s made my life a lot simpler than it used to be.”

Ditto for Sona Tatiyants, an estate planning attorney and founder of Lynk Law, which has offices in Glendale and Sherman Oaks, Calif.

“Emil is amazing,” she says. “He’s great at understanding what you need and understanding what is unique about each person’s business. To me, he is consistently great in every respect, particularly follow up, staying in touch and industry knowledge. He’s unique to me in that he’s such a people’s person with incredible integrity and trust. We love his style. And he cares so much and genuinely shows it. Our previous CPA did not care nearly as much as Emil. They did the bare minimum. Emil goes well beyond the normal.”

**W**hen Abedian’s original firm merged to become Abedian & Totlian, he made a concerted effort to significantly reduce the firm’s client list so it could concentrate on selected customers who wanted to grow their busi-

ness. The majority of the initial cuts were clients who didn't understand the value of a CPA and what they can provide to a business.

"If an individual or business is just looking for someone to prepare their tax returns, we're not the right firm," he says. "If that's what they want, H&R Block could be a good fit. There's also tens of thousands of CPAs who can do that. We want clients who understand the overall and extensive value a CPA can provide to help them maximize their business."

Abedian is particularly adept at identifying how to restructure businesses for growth. "Some companies have their business in the wrong entity," he



month for their bank statements and other records. No more. With today's new applications, Abedian can now download his clients' statements and check stubs without having access to their bank accounts. He can also seamlessly process invoices. "For security reasons, we don't want to have ac-

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says. "For instance, should it be a LLC or S Corporation? There are a lot of things small business owners do that they really don't have to do because they don't know better. We come in, restructure it and take the load off the business owner so they can focus on what truly matters, which is applying their creativity and entrepreneur vision to the growth of the business. We want them to be more efficient in what they do so they can sleep well at night. We give them peace of mind."

Abedian employs innovative technology like Quickbooks online, HubDoc and Bill.com to take the back office burden off of his clients.

"Today's technology for CPAs is ridiculously great and it keeps getting better," he says. "It enables us to simplify for the client and not bother them unnecessarily."

Previously, Abedian had to contact clients every

cess to clients' bank accounts," he says. "At the same time, the technology fulfills our need to get the statements on time without having to call them and bother them about that. Today's technology enables us to simplify our clients back office needs and take that headache away from them so they can concentrate on what they do best – run and grow their business."

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