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NM Italian advice: 'Do things right'

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[Mark Menicucci](#) is the owner and CEO of the Menicucci Insurance Agency. From an Italian family with deep roots in New Mexico, he spoke with Business First about serving clients and doing business with integrity.

The name of your company suggests a family orientation.

Yes, my oldest son Brian is the president, he's a CPA by trade and he pretty much runs the agency. My son-in-law [Derek Riewe](#) spearheads the marketing. And my middle son Kevin is one of our top agents and producers. I've been selling insurance for 36 years, and Brian and I have worked for large national brokers like Aon. We decided we just didn't want to do that anymore. And I'm 62 now, so having Brian in place will make it easy to pass the baton.

That sounds like a nice business model.

It is. My mother's family has been here since 1890. Her father was [Antonio Domenici](#). [Sen. Pete Domenici](#)'s father was Choppo, and Antonio and Choppo were brothers. And the Menicuccis have been here since the early 1900s. My father Mario died last year at 92, and he was born in Albuquerque. So our families have been here. We like working with small businesses and middle-size businesses and large businesses. We like those community connections.

How did you get into insurance?

I actually ran from insurance for eight to 10 years. I got my degree in economics from UNM in 1976. For five years I worked for New Mexico Paving as a concrete finisher. I hurt my low back and had to have a fusion. One of my uncles recommended I speak to [Jack Graham](#). Jack used to own Albuquerque Federal Savings and Loan. I talked to him about a job. We actually prayed together. And Jack looked at me and said, "You know Mark, I think your path is to be an insurance agent." When I got home my wife Susie asked me how it went, and I said, "It went terrible. He wants to offer me a job as an insurance agent and I told him no." She told me to go back and accept that job. So I went on to sell life insurance, and from there property and

casualty insurance. It took me about 10 years to realize what a good business it is.

Do you have to educate people about your business?

When we talk to people they may not know who we are, or if they do they often say, "I didn't know you do workers' comp" or "I didn't know you insured drilling contractors." We do everything, but most people have no idea what goes on at an agency like ours. We operate as a national broker. We represent many insurance companies. But at the end of the day we want to take care of our client.

What is the breakdown of your clientele?

A lot of our clients are commercial clients — contractors, retirement and nursing homes, defense contractors, small commercial companies such as law firms, accounting firms, restaurants. Our personal insurance line is growing as well.

How important is a thriving Albuquerque business environment for a business like yours?

My mother was a Republican and my father was a Democrat. I watched them get along for 66 years of marriage. I think there's a failure in our parties in New Mexico right now because they can't put aside their personal beliefs to deal with things like the \$260 million in projects our state needs. We need leadership that's pro business and that accomplishes things and makes sure progress is being made.

What's the best piece of business advice you've received?

The biggest thing is to always deal with people with integrity and be honest. I had a client in Farmington who told me, "Mark, just always tell me the truth, whether it's good or bad news." And that's from my parents too, coming from an Italian immigrant family as we do. They'd say, "Always keep our name clean and do things right."

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