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Former Tidwell DeWitt partners create Covenant

Birmingham Business Journal - by [Crystal Jarvis](#) Staff

Two partners at **Tidwell DeWitt LLC**, which recently announced plans to be acquired by a Washington, D.C.-area firm, are splitting off to form their own accounting firm in Birmingham.

Mike McCraw and Bryan Finison started **Covenant Consulting Group**, which will offer traditional accounting services with a focus on business consulting and management.

"We can offer a fresh perspective for business owners that they can't typically get from their CPA," McCraw said. "We've got experience on knowing how to start and run businesses."

At Tidwell DeWitt, McCraw managed the Project Outsourcing Division in Birmingham while also acting as a CFO for several of the company's clients.

Finison, who worked out of the Tuscaloosa office, ran the company's **Financial Advisory Services Group**, which provided management consulting to many clients, including Fortune 100 companies and small businesses.

Just as small community banks are taking advantage of nabbing new customers amid large bank mergers on the local scene, the Covenant group plans to tap into some of those same opportunities as accounting firms merge, including Tidwell DeWitt's merger with Bethesda-Md.-based **Reznick Group PC**.

"Many times, with a national company coming into our community, there is an instant hesitance simply because of the perceived lack of personal service," McCraw said. "We are going to be home to not only our clients that want to stay with a local firm but the employees also."



Ty West | Staff

Bryan Finison and Mike McCraw have formed Covenant Consulting Group.

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Tom Grainger, president of the Birmingham chapter of the **Alabama Society of Certified Public Accountants** and partner of **Horton, Lee & Burnett**, agreed that local service is important to many companies and businesses.

"What type of service you get locally is what people are most concerned about," he said. "They want to talk to you, they want to know that you're right here and available for them."

Covenant has clients in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa and Atlanta, said McCraw, who will head the Birmingham office. Finison plans to commute from Tuscaloosa to serve clients in both markets.

Some of the company's clients patronized Tidwell DeWitt before the merger announcement, Finison said.

"These are businesses we have served in the past and will continue to serve," he said.

A few Tidwell DeWitt employees will also join the firm.

Since the company is in its paperwork stage, McCraw said he doesn't have an exact number of how many former Tidwell employees will work for Covenant, but the company plans to have a staff of at least 20 within a year.

In early September, Reznick announced plans to acquire Tidwell DeWitt by the end of October. Tidwell's offices in Tuscaloosa and Atlanta will shut down. Employees will be consolidated into one office in Birmingham and Atlanta.

Another partner, Raiford "Ray" Dyer out of the Tuscaloosa office will not join Reznick, according to Suzanne Bouhia, national director of marketing for Reznick.

Tidwell's remaining Alabama partners will become principals of Reznick, including Sandy Thomas, Ken DeWitt, David Barker and Barry Tidwell, who will serve as managing principal.

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