Michael J. Steppe, CFA – 29 years of portfolio management experience

Michael Steppe was a founding partner of Brookfield Investment Partners, LLC in 2001. Mike manages the day-to-day investment activity of the firm.

In addition to his responsibilities within Brookfield Investment Partners, Mike is the Chief Investment Officer of Nicolet National Bank. The dual role allows Mike to leverage his investment expertise across the Nicolet Trust business as well as the Brookfield Investment Partners, LLC client base.

Mike enjoys working with community banks and other institutional investors to develop high performing investment portfolios. As a long time student of community banking, Mike brings a unique investment perspective to the critical issues facing the industry.

Prior to founding Brookfield Investment Partners, LLC, Mike was Senior Vice President and Chief Investment Officer for the U.S. operation of Clarica Life Insurance. During his tenure with Clarica, the U.S. operation on a consolidated basis was one of the fifty largest U.S. life insurance companies based on new life premiums. The company consistently earned "superior" ratings for financial strength from A.M. Best (A+ rating) and Standard & Poors (AA rating). Mike was responsible for overall investment strategy and management of the $2.5 billion investment portfolio. Under Mike's leadership, Clarica's U.S. operation developed an excellent reputation in fixed income management, equity investing in financial services and real estate investing.

Mike's background is heavily focused in the financial services area. He was recruited to Clarica (US) in October 1992 to establish a marketable securities operation. He leveraged his knowledge and a small staff of analysts to select financial services companies that would make good fixed income and equity investments. He hired additional staff to broaden the fixed income holdings following a consistent approach based on fundamental research. As Mike's responsibilities expanded, he continued to hone his knowledge of financial services. As a senior member of the management team at Clarica for over eight years, he was actively involved in the strategic choice to refocus the U.S. business from Health insurance to specialty opportunities in the life insurance business. He played a key role in the growth of the US life retrocession business (Clarica was second in market share on a global basis), and development of the bank owned life insurance market.

Mike learned his investment skills at Firstar Bank (now U.S. Bank, N.A.). Under the guidance of William Bergner, CFA, Mike managed the bank's investment portfolio for over seven years. He was involved in the establishment of investment subsidiaries in Las Vegas, Nevada. He was a key contributor to the bank's asset/liability modeling and hedging programs. He developed a national reputation for innovative use of 15 year GNMA mortgages to improve the returns on the bank's investment portfolios. Prior to his portfolio management assignment, Mike worked in the investment sales area with correspondent banks, thrifts and insurance companies in structuring investment portfolios. He started at Firstar as a management trainee. During the Firstar and Clarica stages of his career, Mike also taught undergraduate courses in Investments and Portfolio Management at Marquette University.

Mike is a CFA charter holder. He is a past President of the CFA Society of Milwaukee. He received his BBA and MBA from Marquette University. During graduate school he was selected to attend an advanced program in international financial services at Oxford University, England. Mike graduated from Marquette University High School and continues to be active with its endowment funds.

Mike lives in New Berlin, Wisconsin with his wife Deb and their sons, Brian and John. Mike was born in 1959.