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George Pyne Leaving IMG To Create His Own Sports & Entertainment Business



Pyne said he has no plans to compete with IMG for business

IMG Sports & Entertainment President **GEORGE PYNE** is leaving the company to start his own sports and entertainment business.

Pyne has hired Allen & Co. to assist in raising \$500M to fund a limited liability company that will acquire sports, entertainment, media and lifestyle businesses. The investment bank is in the early phases of fundraising, and it is unclear when Pyne's new venture will launch.

Pyne will remain a senior advisor to the company and a shareholder in WME-IMG. "I have no plans to compete with IMG," Pyne said. "I love the company, and I really like Ari and Patrick. I look forward to working with them for years to come." In a statement, WME-IMG co-CEOs **ARI EMANUEL** and **PATRICK WHITESSELL** said, "George has been a true partner to us these past few months and we're grateful for all he has contributed to the company and our industry as a whole. We look forward to working with him in this next chapter." Pyne signed an agreement in May to stay with IMG through the end of the year, but he began discussions this summer with Emanuel and Whitesell about leaving earlier than he planned. He moved forward with efforts to raise money this month to start his own company.

Pyne has been interested in becoming a CEO for several years. He hoped to become IMG CEO in '11 after the company's late Chair & CEO **TED FORSTMANN** was diagnosed with brain cancer. The CEO position instead went to **MIKE DOLAN**. After the company was sold to WME, Pyne remained interested in a CEO role with IMG, but Emanuel and Whitesell took responsibility for leading the combined companies and did not create a CEO position at IMG. The fund Pyne is raising will allow him to build and lead his own business. "After working in the business for 20-plus years, this is the next logical step," Pyne said. "I had a great run at NASCAR. I had a great run at IMG. I want to acquire, own and operate businesses, recruit and lead talented people and develop a culture and business that reflects my values and what I've done over time. This is a great opportunity for me."

LATEST IMG FIGURE TO LEAVE COMPANY: Pyne's departure comes six months after WME closed its \$2.4B acquisition of IMG. The company, which funded the acquisition with \$2B of debt, outlined an aggressive cost-cutting plan for IMG that called for eliminating \$151M in costs in the first 18 months of ownership. In addition to Pyne, WME-IMG CFO **PETER KLEIN** and IMG Senior VP/Consulting **DAVID ABRUTYN** have left the company. The company has offset those departures by hiring former Microsoft and GM CFO **CHRIS LIDDELL** and former Turner sales exec **GREG D'ALBA** as head of global sales. But it does not plan to fill Pyne's position. Pyne has been with IMG since '06 when Forstmann recruited him to lead the company's sports and entertainment businesses. Those business units -- consulting, IMG Academy, licensing and client representation -- earned \$119M last year. In addition to overseeing sports and entertainment, Forstmann and Pyne built IMG's college business by acquiring Host Communications, CLC and ISP. The acquisitions helped consolidate the college business and created a new division at IMG that earned \$66M last year. Pyne served as NASCAR COO prior to joining IMG. He joined NASCAR in '96 as the head of its licensing business and was named COO in '03.

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