
WISWELL ADVISORS LLC

Mike Balay is a classically-trained business strategist with more than three decades of experience across a range of industries. Mike has special expertise in long range corporate strategy, corporate portfolio management, commodity trading, financial trading, risk management, and organizational design.

After graduating from Yale University, Mike joined a software and IT services firm as a programmer. From 1983 to 1987, he designed large software systems for financial institutions in Little Rock, Arkansas and New York, New York.

In 1989, he received an M.B.A. from the Colgate Darden Graduate School of Business at the University of Virginia. Mike launched his consulting career at McKinsey & Company in Washington, D.C., where he was a Fellow of the McKinsey Global Institute. He was also a member of the financial institutions, energy, and microeconomics practices at McKinsey. Mike's consulting experience in Washington and Boston covered a wide variety of industries and activities ranging from M&A advisory to scenario planning in industries undergoing rapid change.

Mike joined the Strategy & Business Development department at Cargill in 1996 to direct corporate-level business development, including new and joint ventures. He served as deputy head of corporate strategy and co-led the ten year corporate strategy in 1998. Mike directed the subsequent re-organization of the company into smaller, more agile business units and led development of the company's marketing doctrine.

In 2002, Mike moved to Cargill's international grain and oilseeds trading office in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was head of marketing, with responsibility for managing the service portfolio and strategic customer relationships, especially in the Middle East.

In 2005, Mike returned to corporate Strategy & Business Development as head of strategy and department head. He led the development of Cargill's corporate Strategic Intent, as well as strategies for the grain, energy, shipping, beef, and food ingredients businesses. As head of global strategy, Mike directed the biannual review of the corporate portfolio for the CEO and Board of Directors. Mike supervised recruiting, training, and development for high potential MBA's.

In 2016, Mike retired from Cargill and founded Wiswell Advisors.

Mike is Vice Chair of the Corporate Advisory Board at the Darden Graduate School of Business at the University of Virginia, where he is also a periodic guest lecturer and serves on the Board of Trustees.

Mike was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, and grew up in Arkansas before attending Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. He and his wife Elizabeth live in Edgartown, Massachusetts.