

The Beginning

The Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) was conceived in 1977 and founded in 1978. It has since grown into the most authoritative research organization in the nation on issues of employee benefits and economic security. It has, as intended, made a major contribution to the development of soundly conceived and administered employee benefit plans. Studies have covered Social Security and Medicare, as well as public and private employment-based voluntary programs.

1977
Three representatives of consulting firms met to discuss newly created ERISA responsibilities and their effects on consulting firms. These men were:

Peter E. Friedes, Chief Executive Officer, Hewitt Associates
Robert D. Paul, Vice Chairman, Martin E. Segal Company
Quentin I. Smith, Jr., Chairman & CEO, Towers, Perrin,
Forster & Crosby, Inc.

1978
April: As the scope of issues grew, the most important was the inability of any one firm to educate legislators or impact the changes proposed from Washington. The new members of the group were:

William N. Bret, A.S. Hansen, Inc.
John A. Connors, Kwasha Lipton
James A. Curtis, Milliman & Robertson, Inc.
Clifford R. Simms, The Wyatt Company
Douglas D. Stegner, Meidinger, Inc.
George B. Swick, Buck Consultants, Inc.

1978
May: This group of nine met to begin planning how to form an organization that could serve as an educational entity. Later that month, invitations were extended to four other firms to join in this planning. The individuals and their firms were:

William A. Ferguson, Tillinghast, Nelson & Warren, Inc.
Kenneth K. Keene, Johnson & Higgins
A.J.C. Smith, William M. Mercer, Inc.
Joseph J. Stahl, II, Alexander & Alexander

1978
June: A meeting was held in Washington, DC, on June 21, 1978, to discuss alternatives and to establish various committees. A number of equally important committees were formed, including a Planning Committee. The Planning Committee:

- Recommended EBRI's name;
- Signed the Articles of Incorporation; and
- Recommended the first slate of officers for EBRI.

1978
August: A pre-incorporation meeting was held at which Arnold & Porter was retained as Counsel.

1978
September: The Institute was incorporated, had its first Board meeting, and elected its first slate of officers:

Quentin I. Smith, Jr.,
President and Chairman (1978–1981)
John A. Connors, Vice Chairman
Clifford R. Simms, Secretary
William A. Ferguson, Treasurer

EBRI has had 12 additional chairmen since that time:

Joseph J. Stahl II (Joe), 1982–1983,
Executive Vice President, Alexander & Alexander
Robert D. Paul (Bob), 1984–1985,
Vice-Chairman, Martin E. Segal Company
John K. Kittredge (Jack), 1986–1987,
Executive Vice President, The Prudential
A.J.C. Smith (Ian), 1988–1989,
President, Marsh & McLennan
Donald P. Harrington (Don), 1990–1991
Vice President, AT&T
David Skovron (Dave), 1992–1993
Chief Executive Partner, Kwasha Lipton
William Link (Bill), 1994–1995
Executive Vice President, Prudential Insurance Co.

John H. Seiter, 1996–1997
Executive Vice President, Capital Guardian
Francis Bonsignore (Fran), 1998–1999
Senior Vice President, Marsh & McLennan
John McCormack, 2000
Senior Vice President, TIAA-CREF
Howard Fluhr, 2001–2002
President & CEO, The Segal Company
Dale Gifford, 2003
Chairman & CEO, Hewitt Associates

An Organization Is Born

1978
October: An Executive Director Recruitment Subcommittee was formed which hired Dallas Salisbury, effective December 4, 1978.

1978
November: The original Planning Committee, plus the officers of EBRI, met in Atlanta. This group decided that EBRI needed to expand its horizons and its membership in order to:

- Assure money to finance EBRI's goals;
- Establish broad geographic and industry support so that EBRI could inform national policy; and
- Clearly demonstrate EBRI's openness and nonexclusivity.

A second Board meeting was held and Dallas Salisbury was introduced to the Board. On December 4, 1978, Salisbury began work as the executive director and took charge of turning the principles and purposes into action. The Institute's first full year of operations moved it beyond the first year expectations of the founders—helped in no small part by press attention generated by the President's Commission on Pension Policy.