

Career Words of Wisdom from the Women of Fiducient Advisors

March 8, 2023

Celebrate the Empowerment of Women

Today is International Women's Day and all of us at Fiducient Advisors are honored to celebrate this day with you. Born from a labor rally by female factory workers in New York City in 1908, International Women's Day evolved through global efforts to protest working conditions faced by women and eventually encompassed the discrimination they face through government policy, pay inequity and the overall lack of gender parity¹. In 1975, International Women's Day was first recognized by the United Nations, with support of its message continuing to grow annually.¹

While we believe any day is a great day to highlight the accomplishments and empowerment of women, International Women's Day gives us the opportunity to truly focus on this topic – both by celebrating the achievements of our female colleagues and acknowledging there is still work to be done. This year's theme, Embrace Equity, further allows us to consider how we can be part of a solution to recognize and welcome the value of differing perspectives.

We recently sat down with several women in various roles at our firm to discuss their career paths in the world of finance. They offer their advice, guidance and encouragement to those who are interested in pursuing a financial services career:

What drew you into financial services?

Julie Vander Weele, Managing Partner and Chief Operating Officer: *My undergrad degree was in Marketing and my initial foray into financial services was product development for a mutual fund. I was hooked immediately. The concept of marketing trust and confidence was very intriguing to me. What I love about financial services is that the field is always evolving so it provides opportunities for lifelong learning.*

Angelique Pappas, Associate Research Director: *I was inspired by one of my fabulous finance professors – Lauren Lo Re – during my undergraduate studies at Westminster College. I had planned to major in economics but Professor Lo Re was such an inspiring instructor that I shifted my focus to finance, and she became my academic advisor. I learned that financial literacy is an incredible form of agency. Mentorship is a gift!*

¹ [The Radical Reason Why March 8 is International Women's Day](#) - Time Magazine, March 7, 2019

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What have you learned from working with women clients and colleagues?

Meredith Doyle, PHR, Director of Human Resources: *I owe much of my career to the women who have supported and tested me throughout my professional journey. These women radiate resilience and grit. Through their day-to-day actions, whether they knew I was watching or not, I learned how to advocate for myself and others. I learned the importance of speaking up, even if what I have to say is unpopular. I learned that being vulnerable is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. The phrase “if you can see it, you can be it” hits home. Working alongside these women showed me the sky is the limit and whatever I chose to achieve professionally was possible and worth working for.*

What is your “superpower”?

Kate Pizzi, CFA, ASA, MAAA, Partner and Senior Partner: *I know, this question feels BIG. But it shouldn't. Each one of us has many superpowers and we just need to acknowledge them, both the BIG ones and the small ones. A superpower that I have learned to embrace and take advantage of is my ability to take power naps. I know it sounds silly and perhaps a bit fickle, but this ability is truly a superpower. Admittedly I have a hard time slowing down—whether for work or for family, I always seem to be running somewhere. Power napping allows me to pause, reset my brain, release stress and be a better human in just 10 minutes.*

What's the most challenging part about your role/career?

Angelique: *Prioritizing my highest value activities when everything feels important. I could fill my day with back-to-back investment manager meetings or emails or research projects, but busyness does not necessarily translate to progress. It is challenging, but necessary, to prioritize tasks effectively. This means allocating time with intention and in line with long-term goals, and occasionally it means saying “no.”*

Meredith: *Finding comfort in the “now” and achieving a realistic balance between work and home life. With two young children at home, learning how to stay present with my family while growing in my profession has not been easy. My mind is constantly playing ping pong with thoughts bouncing between work and home life: “Am I doing enough to develop as a leader?”, “Did I put diapers on the Target list?”, “Did what I said in that meeting resonate with colleagues?”, “Did anyone remember to feed the dog today?” I fear that taking my foot off the gas in either of my worlds will put me behind in whatever superficial race I have created in my head. I am learning to shift that mindset by focusing on being present wherever I am and content with the “now.”*

How would you encourage more women to enter our field?

Julie: *Greater awareness is the key for more women to better understand the many different career paths that are available in financial services. I believe the industry still has the taint of the alpha male dominating all the desirable positions. We need to encourage our young women to imagine the possibilities of a career in financial services. And we need to start that message much sooner. It seems by the time young women are college, many have already opted out. My suspicion is that many women don't know about the many different challenging and satisfying roles that the industry provides. We should celebrate the success of women at all levels of financial services organizations.*

Kate: *A quick story. When I was taking CFA exams, they were held at the local convention center. Hundreds of investment professionals sat in one huge room for hours. After the formal lunch break and just before the exam restarted for the afternoon session, nearly every test-taker headed to the restroom. Much to my delight, I found myself walking past a wildly long line of men waiting in line for the restroom as I entered the ladies' room with no wait at all. While in the moment I was thrilled, the reality of situation hit me hard—there are not enough women getting into this field! This is an industry that rewards calmness under pressure and the ability to multitask, efficiently analyze and quickly connect the dots - areas where we as women excel. As a mom of two girls, encouraging more women to enter and succeed in this field is something that is near and dear to my heart. I truly believe it starts at home. Encourage your daughters, your nieces and your friends' daughters to explore investing as young adults. Perhaps for their next birthday, set up a youth investment account with a small amount of seed money. When my nieces each turned 13, I did exactly this. I'm not sure it will spark a career in finance, but I am sure their eyes have been opened to it.*

What advice do you have for other women in the financial services industry?

Julie: *Most importantly, we need to make sure to support each other. It doesn't matter if you are a seasoned long-tenured professional like me or a woman in an entry level position, we all need to serve as mentors for the next generation. In a male-dominated field, I also think women need to find their voice and speak with courage and authenticity. I don't think women should focus on the fact that they may be the only female in the room, but rather on how they can add value for their organization. Additionally, it's valuable to build and maintain female networks. I look forward to having lunch or a drink with one of my professional friends. There is not substitution for that kind of support.*

Angelique: *Find a partner that is supportive of your professional life and find an employer that is supportive of your personal life. I just gave birth to my first child, so for me that means equal distribution of chores at home, knowing my son (and cats) are well-cared for when I'm on the road, thoughtful parental leave policies, colleagues that help out when I have to miss a meeting because my child inevitably has a*

cold, etc. Kellogg School of Management describes this time of life as the “Mid-Career Marathon”, and it certainly feels like I’m always running. But communication, understanding, and flexibility at work and home make life much more manageable and enjoyable.

Meredith: *It sounds cliché, but it’s simple and true: support and respect one another. Support one another by giving praise and recognition. So often we see incredible qualities in other women that they don’t see in themselves. Bring those qualities to their attention – the impact it has is significant. Respect one another by remembering that we often have no idea of what another woman is going through (or has been through), personally or professionally. Treat one another with that in mind and don’t jump to conclusions. I will never forget a former colleague who called me in her office the day I returned from parental leave with my first son. I was a mess. She gave me the pep talk I needed to keep going and I will always remember the kindness and support she showed me. Pass it on.*

Kate: *Don’t let your inner voice tell you that you are not good enough. Remember, you are more than good enough; you are incredible. Seek out those people who can help remind you of this. And moreover, be that person for another woman. Also, it’s no secret that this field is demanding--sometimes my family gets more of me, sometimes works gets more of me. Focus on balancing the imbalance.*

Make it a Point to #EmbraceEquity, Today and Every Day

This year’s International Women’s Day campaign theme, Embrace Equity, is a purposeful message highlighting that gender equity means forging an inclusive world where our differing backgrounds are not only acknowledged, but celebrated. There are so many ways we can work as allies to support and promote this message –mentor a female colleague; read a book or listen to a podcast that inspires you (**Angelique** suggests “Kellogg Women – Creating Lives of Impact and Meaning on the Road to the C-Suite” or check out our own Devon Frances on the firm’s [Nonprofit Stewards Podcast](#)). Clearly, the advice provided by our firm colleagues above highlights the need for support above all else. The organizers of International Women’s Day summarize it eloquently: “Being included, and a sense of belonging, feels right. When we embrace equity, we embrace diversity, and we embrace inclusion. We embrace equity to forge harmony and unity, and to help drive success for all.”² We at Fiducient Advisors wholeheartedly agree!

² [IWD: International Women's Day 2023 campaign theme: #EmbraceEquity](#) – January 2023

About the Contributors

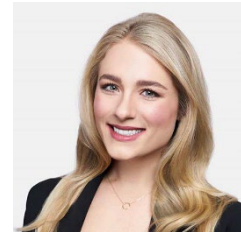
Julie E. Vander Weele, *Partner, Chief Operating Officer*

Julie helps establish, implement and lead strategic operations plans. She works to enhance operational proficiencies and drive effective business initiatives to improve revenue and earnings growth. Prior to joining the firm in 2020, Julie was Partner and Managing Director of Wealth Management at RMB Capital Management, LLC. Previous to that, she was a Senior Managing Director and served on the Management Committee and Board of Directors at Mesirow Financial Holdings. Julie received her Bachelor of Science in Marketing from Northern Illinois University and earned her MBA from Northwestern University Kellogg Graduate School of Management. Julie serves on the La Rabida Board of Trustees and is a member of The Chicago Network. In her free time, you can find Julie spending time with family, trying new restaurants and traveling.



Angelique Pappas, CFA, *Associate Research Director*

As an Associate Research Director, Angelique is responsible for sourcing and performing due diligence on investment opportunities across private equity, private credit and private real assets. Angelique is a member of the firm's Global Private Markets Group, the Mission Aligned Investment Committee, DEI Research Committee, DEIB Committee and is Fiducient' Advisors' Representative on the IIDC (Institutional Investing Diversity Cooperative). Prior to joining the firm in 2018, Angelique was a Senior Investment Analyst at Granite Associates and an Investment Research Associate at Utah Retirement Systems. Angelique received an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and graduated summa cum laude with a BA in Finance from Westminster College in Salt Lake City. She is a CFA® charterholder and a member of the CFA Institute, WAVE (Women's Association of Venture Equity) and 100 Women in Finance. Angelique enjoys world-travel, cooking, reading and being active in her free time with her husband and son.



Meredith Doyle, PHR, *Director of Human Resources*

As Director of Human Resources, Meredith's responsibilities include talent acquisition and development, compensation planning, employee relations, culture and engagement, risk mitigation and acting as a resource for all firm managers and associates. Prior to joining the firm in 2021, she was a lead HR business partner at Harris Associates, L.P. Meredith graduated with an MS in Human Resources Management and Training from National Louis University and a BA from the University of Iowa. She has earned the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) designation. In her free time, Meredith enjoys spending time with her family and friends, chasing after her two young sons, reading and running.



Kathryn Pizzi, CFA, ASA, MAAA, *Partner, Senior Consultant*

Kate services institutional clients by providing advice and counsel on all areas of fund oversight including investment policy development, asset allocation, manager research, portfolio structure, rebalancing and performance monitoring. She has significant experience developing and overseeing liability-driven investment strategies, strategic asset allocation, spending policies and plan design considerations. Kate co-leads the firm's Defined Benefit Business Councils for both corporate and municipal plans and is a member of the firm's Investment Committee. She joined Fiduciary Investment Advisors, LLC in 2018, which combined with Fiducient Advisors in 2020. Prior to joining the firm, she was a Managing Director in Hooker & Holcombe's investment advisory group and also served as a Senior Investment Strategist and fixed income portfolio manager for Prime Advisors, Inc. Kate received her BA from Boston University and is a CFA® charterholder. She is also a credentialed actuary experienced in pension valuations. Kate is a member of the CFA Institute, an Associate of the Society of Actuaries, a member of the American Academy of Actuaries, a board member of the CFA Society Hartford and volunteers for Junior Achievement. She enjoys bedtime chats with her daughters, taking advantage of the outdoors (skiing, kayaking, hiking, biking), and playing the piano.



Deborah Ranicar, *Senior RFP Specialist, Team Lead*

Deb is responsible for responding to Request for Proposals as well as overall marketing support. Prior to joining the firm in 2020, Deb pursued various marketing and compliance opportunities, including as a legal analyst with Allmerica Financial and event planner for Gold, Orluk & Partners LLC. She graduated from Middlebury College with a dual BA in English and Spanish. In her free time, Deb enjoys watching English Premier League soccer (especially Manchester United) and spending time with her three sons.

