
BE INVESTED IN EACH CLIENT'S SUCCESS

Donna Rasile — Senior VP and Investment Advisor at FinTrust Capital Advisors

03/23/2023

Welcome back to our Women Advisor Blog Series, an ongoing discussion that spotlights the unique perspectives of successful female advisors in this traditionally male-centric industry. Today we speak with Donna Rasile, Senior VP and Investment Advisor, at FinTrust Capital Advisors.

WisdomTree: How did you decide to pursue this as a profession, and at what age?

Donna: I always knew I wanted to help people. Initially I thought it was going to be education or healthcare. But as I was embarking on my college career, I found myself dealing with another big life event—my parents going through a divorce. What was most impactful to me was realizing that my Mom, who was a highly educated woman, found herself paralyzed by her newly found financial situation.

For the first time in her life, she was responsible for her finances. And as you can imagine, there were unforeseen monetary challenges that created a tremendous amount of uncertainty about her financial future. I wanted to come to her side and help wherever I could. So, I became involved in many of her financial decisions. Before I knew it, I became her financial advisor—at the ripe age of 18. As a result, I became very curious about the impact money has on a person's life and how important it is for women to be financially confident. I was also intrigued to pursue a career that women really had not embarked on in a meaningful way.

WisdomTree: You entered an industry that was overwhelmingly male at that time. How has it changed for women advisors over the past 20 or so years?

Donna: Women have a much greater presence in wealth management and financial planning today, and that is great. I think it starts with having the support to be a great financial professional, and if you desire to have a family, that is possible as well. There was a time when you may have had to choose between the two. That's just not the case anymore. There is greater flexibility in the workplace environment and it's a wonderful thing to see.

Early on in my career, there were so few women in financial professions. A young woman just starting out didn't have the same opportunities she has now to connect with a great female mentor or advocate, which is very important. Now we can be there for each other. We can share from our experiences and learn from each other. At this stage of my career, a passion of mine is to empower and encourage other women who have chosen the financial service industry as their career path.

WisdomTree: What advice would you give to a woman just getting started in this industry?

Donna: First is follow your passion! Focus on your strengths and be true to who you are. Be authentic, genuine and be yourself. When you get discouraged, find a mentor, find an advocate. When you have an accomplishment, find a mentor, find an advocate. Share these experiences and look to that person to help you grow and develop. This is an amazingly rewarding career, so focus on being a client's financial advocate. Be invested in their success. The opportunity to provide financial peace of mind, to be a meaningful part of someone's life and their family is incredible. It's absolutely incredible.

WisdomTree: Is there anything you would urge a young woman advisor to approach differently than you did?

Donna: I'd say as you are trying to develop in your career, don't be afraid to ask questions. It's okay when you don't understand something. When you're curious about something, ask. Look for ways that others can help you and in turn how you can help others. There is no such thing as a silly question. To me, inquiry just leads to knowledge and that creates confidence. In addition, once you gain confidence and knowledge, share that with others, and look for opportunities to shine.

WisdomTree: Investing is all about risk and reward, and every career has a lot of both. What risks have you taken along this journey to get where you are today?

Donna: That's a great question. The thing is, I never viewed them as risks. Quite honestly, I always viewed and still do view them as challenges and opportunities, that is where the growth takes place. I was grateful for every opportunity along the way. Certainly, there were hurdles to overcome but I stayed focus on my goals and wanted to pave the way for others. I just kept a very, very positive attitude and "can do" mindset. That is what makes a career rewarding!

WisdomTree: You've said you see yourself as a client's financial advocate. How has that viewpoint shaped the way you serve your clients?

Donna: Several years ago, I became a registered life planner, and that training just enhanced and sharpened my natural approach. As an advisor, I always felt I needed to understand each client's goals first, what is truly important to them. Otherwise, we're just working to accumulate without the awareness of the purpose of their money. If you start a relationship with a client by focusing only on their financial picture and numbers, you may not help them achieve their life goals to live a richer life. So it's important to know how to shape a conversation with a client. How to ask the right questions and guide a discussion to help them articulate—or even discover, in some cases—what's truly important to them. It might be their family. It might be a passion. When you establish that together, and then tie their financial resources, you empower them to live their best life. It's so rewarding to help a client see how their financial resources can get them there. There's nothing better than those light bulb moments. It's a gift to be able to give that to a client, and knowing how to ask the right questions and then really listen to them is the key.

WisdomTree: Over the years, you have been featured in several publications, written blog posts and interviewed on various podcasts. 18-year old you would probably be blown away by that.

Donna: Yes, she definitely would and you are very kind. But it couldn't happen without the support of my family and experiences I have had along my career journey. In addition, I am fortunate to have great clients and work at a great firm. Working at FinTrust, I am so grateful for the support they give women in our profession. They're my advocate for the work that I do and the clients I serve.

WisdomTree: Women have become a real force in this industry. Why should clients choose a woman as their advisor?

Donna: I think the real question is, what makes any financial advisor great? Different clients have different answers. You often hear it's someone who is easy to talk to or listens well. Someone who helps solve their problems. Someone who's knowledgeable, or empathetic, nurturing or responsive. Someone they can count on. I believe many women possess a lot of those characteristics, but so do many men. It just comes down to each client finding the right fit and advisor for them.

WisdomTree: What is the best part of waking up to do this job every morning?

Donna: The best part is knowing I'll be making a difference in the lives of others. That's who I am, and it's what makes this career truly special.

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