

EXECUTIVE SUITE

By Bruce E. Mowday

While studying nursing and playing lacrosse at Georgetown University, Patricia Brennan discovered her professional passion; the subject had little in common with sports, science, and medicine.

"I came into my work in an unconventional way. I was in my senior year when I finally figured out what I wanted to do. My first financial job came with a company that didn't want anyone with professional financial experience."

Patti parlayed her unusual beginning break in the financial world to become a certified financial planner and president of Key Financial Inc. of West Chester for the past 18 years. She is a nationally recognized financial planning expert and has been called upon to give expert advice on television financial news shows including CNBC's *Squawk Box* and *Business Center* and Comcast programs.

Earlier this year, *Worth* magazine named her "One of the Nations Top Wealth Advisors." Her other print accolades have come from *Barron's* "Top 100 Women Financial Advisors in the Nation" three times and "The Top 1,000 Financial Advisors in America", *Fortune* magazine's "One of America's Top 100 Independent Advisors", *Wealth Manager* magazine's "One of the 50 Most Influential Women in Wealth Management", *Philadelphia Business Journal's* second ranking as "The Top Wealth Advisors" in greater Philadelphia, and *Philadelphia* magazine's "2009 Five Star Wealth Manager."



Patricia C. Brennan, CFP, president of Key Financial Inc.

Nursing Risk

Patricia Brennan: Goal-Driven at Key Financial

Also, she has been quoted in a number of regional and national newspapers.

Patti grew up in the Radnor area of Delaware County and did work at a hospital in an

intensive care unit for 3 years before finding her unusual break with RTD Financial Advisors, a Philadelphia financial firm. "This was a great opportunity and wonderful experience. The

founder wanted someone out of the mainstream that they could mold in a certain way. They taught me real financial planning. I learned how to focus on the goals and objectives of clients instead of what they had and their investments. I focused on where they wanted to be in 5 or 10 years and also the pressures and worries that kept them up at night."

When Patti and her husband, Ed, began to start their own family of four children, she thought about her own goals. When her boss Roy Diliberto asked her about her future plans, Patti decided the time had come for a change. "The daily travel to Philadelphia was more difficult with a family, and RTD was going in a different direction. I wanted to work with individuals and closely-held companies, and RTD was moving towards those with ultra-high worth. I like how I can help a family get to its goals."

Diliberto suggested that Patti start her own company, and he offered to supply back office support. "I was thinking of leaving anyway. I agreed, and we split revenues. I started with a part-time employee and began establishing my reputation in Chester County."

Patti traces her interest in financial planning to a single course offered at Georgetown. "In college, so much of my time was focused on the sciences. Georgetown was one of the first universities offering a course on financial planning. It was very popular, and I couldn't get in until my senior year. Family influences had led me to nursing. My mom thought it

would be a good profession for me, and some of my neighbors saw an empathetic personality.

"Actually, many of the nursing profession's skills apply to what I do today. You have to think quickly and understand complicated issues. You also need to understand where the client is coming from. I do use my nursing skills today."

Patti is disciplined in her approach to working with her clients, and she looks for the little details that make up the bigger picture. There are estate and legacy planning issues and, at times, transferring a business to the next generation. "Clients need to have a comfort level and preserve what they have without taking on unnecessary risks while continuing to grow. When businesses are transferred, we look not only at taxes and stock issues, but also responsibility for running the business. Understanding the family dynamics is important."

Keeping clients informed of their financial status is also critical to Patti, and technology advancements have made her job easier. "We are way ahead of the curb in technology. Every client has a personal website, and everything is included from assets to liabilities. The internet has made true wealth management easier. We have the data, and clients can see the effect of daily developments on their investments at the close of a business day."

The information helped clients understand the financial crisis that began in 2008. "When clients called, they were really asking if they would be okay in the long run. Before the technology, I would have to do all of the financial, cash flow, and analysis on my own to answer the questions of can I pay my bills and can I put the kids through college. Technology is transforming how I do my job. When the markets were

dropping, I had a few clients calling each day concerning investments. I was surprised I didn't get more. I make phone calls, send emails, and contact clients all of the time. I need to explain what is taking place. I see a future that is bumpy. We can't go up 70 percent in stocks in a short period of time and expect it to continue to ascend. Every bull market since World War II has had four or five pullbacks of at least 10 percent and sometimes 15 percent. We forget. These things do occur. I'm optimistic about the future of America. Companies are holding billions of dollars in cash and are waiting for the next good investing opportunity."

She does believe that Americans will see an increase in taxes. "It won't be the end of the world, and the economy will grow. Nobody will like the increase, but it will make for a more sustainable America."

Patti isn't sure how her television exposure as a financial expert began. "I did CNBC several times and then was a regular on a Comcast show that was on at 11:00 PM. I also do talks to groups on an ongoing basis. My philosophy is that I do for people what I want done for myself. The word spreads."

When Patti is not safeguarding the financial futures of her clients, she is spending time with her husband, Ed, owner of Brennan's Office Interiors Inc. of Exton, and their four children. Michael attends Penn State University, Kelly attends Bishop Shannon and is about to enter St. Joseph's University, Karrie attends Villa Marie, and Jack attends St. Agnes.

"We've been in the West Goshen area since 1988. We are shore people, and we spend time at Avalon. We all love it there, and Ed likes to fish. We run around and follow the children as they play sports and other activities. Jack is a lacrosse player. They all love the sport.

Michael and Kelly are not into it as much, and Kelly is more of a swimmer. Our two younger children are on travel teams."

Leading by example is what Patti strives for with her family and her clients. "With my children, I set an example of being a mom. Being a mom is my most important job. I work more than full-time and still find the time to coach girls in lacrosse. I work at night. I send clients emails at 11:30, and they appreciate that. They know my kids are in bed and I'm back at my desk. I work on weekends. People need to know I'm their go-to person. To me, that is what I would want.

"Clients are really friends. They know I have their backs, and if something is not right, I will tell them the truth even if it is not what they want to hear."

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1560 McDaniel Drive,
 West Chester, PA 19380 E-mail:
 pbrennan@keyfinancialinc.com,
 Phone: 610-429-9050

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Worth Magazine's Nations Top Wealth Advisors are selected based on experience, education, certifications, fiduciary status, compliance record, wealth management services, methods of compensation and scope of current business. For more information visit: www.worth.com/index.php/about-worth

Barron's "Top 100 Women Financial Advisors" and "Top 1,000 Financial Advisors" awards consist of individuals who are screened factors that include overall

size and success of practices, the quality of service provided to clients, adherence to high standards of industry regulatory compliance, and leadership in "best practices" of wealth management. Portfolio performance is not a factor. Please see <http://online.barrons.com/report/top-financial-advisors> for more information.

Fortune's "Top 100 Independent Advisors" is based upon assets under management.

Philadelphia Business Journal's "Top Wealth Advisor" and The Wealth Manager Magazine award winners were based on survey responses. These respondents were then further evaluated based on various criteria, including service to industry organizations and mentoring to others. The winners did not pay a fee to be included nor was the listing based on client input.

Five Star Wealth Manager is presented to 7% of wealth managers with at least five years experience in the financial services industry. The final list identifies the wealth managers, of those evaluated, in the local market that score highest in client satisfaction. Each wealth manager was reviewed for regulatory actions, civil judicial actions and customer complaints. Wealth Managers do not pay a fee to be included in the research. Details of the award can be viewed at <http://www.fivestarprofessional.com>.

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