

Successful Transitions

By refocusing his practice on women in transition, **Evan Miller** is finding success in a challenging market



Evan Miller has built a successful practice by listening carefully to his changing clientele.



Financial advisor Evan Miller began his career with a focus on physicians, but has found that helping women in transition—those who are facing such important life-changing issues as retirement, divorce or the death of a spouse—is both more

gratifying and more substantive.

As a partner at FMB Wealth Management in Westlake Village, California, Miller these days seeks to combine his clients' wealth with their most important values. That approach is especially compelling to his female clients as they seek to gain more control over their various resources and make the best possible financial decisions. "I am passionate about gaining a deep understanding of what my clients hope to achieve in order to help realize all that is important to them," says Miller.

For Miller, wealth management is the best way to make that happen. In fact, he believes it is the only sensible approach to take. Wealth management is rooted in the alignment of wealth and values and is therefore an especially suitable strategy for women in transition. "There may be issues for these women that have to do with relocating or going back to work and the profession to which they are returning, as well as the financial

needs that must be taken into account," Miller explains. "The only approach that truly works within this context is wealth management."

Miller's focus on helping women in transition is a natural one that resulted in large part from his own family background. One of his grandmothers lost her husband at a relatively young age and struggled for a long time trying to gain control of his real estate business—and her financial situation. "I saw her facing the unimaginable challenges that a widow faces and the incredible strength with which she faced them. While many of the life and emotional challenges that a widow faces are out of her control, financial issues can be controlled if the right steps are taken. Because she had no one to trust and no system to fall back on, she was always uncertain as to her financial position. I admired her courage, and feel that she deserved to have someone to help her feel secure in her financial position," says Miller.

Miller adds that his mother, who balanced work and her family, served as an example of a strong, intelligent and organized woman. “My mom has shown me a great example of what women are capable of and I find great satisfaction in working with women who share her traits.”

Initially Miller focused his efforts on physicians, but soon came to the conclusion that those in the medical profession tended to have a high level of certainty about their investment perspectives and their portfolios. As a result, he found himself more in the position of simply implementing their various wishes than helping them develop detailed wealth management strategies and plans.

Essentially, he wanted to do more for investors by addressing their full range of goals and issues. “It was the ability to help clients focus on the totality of their portfolios in a comprehensive way and to help reposition resources to support values that I found most challenging and fulfilling,” he explains. “The women I am working with now are fully capable of building lives full of great satisfaction and meaning. Facing new and difficult transitions, they may be confused or scared at the start—but we work together, and soon enough they can see a way forward, toward empowerment and control.”

It is this approach that helps Miller gather clients even while other firms are struggling in the current environment. “While one cannot generalize about the sexes, you might be able to say that women are

more comfortable with a holistic investment approach,” he says. “They want to see things from all angles, and if you can give them a way of supporting their fundamental values and goals with their resources, they often are willing to move in that direction.”

Miller says that his career as a wealth manager is part of a life plan. He grew up in Westlake Village and attended UCLA, where he majored in business and economics. He studied abroad in Florence, Italy, before returning to the States—at which point his good friend Grant Blindbury (who was profiled in the December 2008 issue of the *Journal of Wealth Management Consulting*) called him with an offer. Blindbury had begun working at FMB and invited him to join the then two-man shop, which was founded by Thomas Fields. “Grant and I had been friends since junior high and had the same background and motivations,” Miller says. “We thought it would work out, and it has.”

Both Miller and Blindbury have expanded their wealth management techniques through programs affiliated with CEG Worldwide, a leading wealth management coaching firm for advisors and financial institutions. “Our experiences with CEG Worldwide have been most positive,” Miller notes. “They emphasize the fundamentals of a management style that allows you to provide a full level of life services for a particular group of individuals. I owe a lot to their programs, and so do my clients.”

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