



## Project: Women in Investments - Montréal

Informational Interview

May 2015



**KATHY FAZEL, CFA, ICD.D**

### **Vice President and Investment Counsellor, RBC PH&N Investment Counsel<sup>1</sup>**

Having worked as a stock analyst and portfolio manager for almost 15 years, Kathy Fazel joined PH&N Investment Counsel in 2006 to lead their Montreal office. She holds the position of Vice President and Investment Counsellor and provides discretionary investment counselling services to a diversified clientele, including private individuals, foundations, and non-profit organizations. Kathy works closely with her clients to develop a comprehensive understanding of their financial situation and investment objectives.

Kathy also has extensive volunteer experience with a number of professional and community organizations. She is currently a Governor of McGill University, and sits on both the Finance Committee and the Investment Committee. She is a member of Centraide's Allocations Committee in Montreal. Kathy is also Executive Vice President of the International Women's Forum of Canada.

Some of her past experiences include being President of the Board of Directors of the Montreal Society of Financial Analysts; President of the Board of Directors of the Financial and Estate Planning Council of Montreal; and President of the Board of Directors of Fondation Projet Chance, a Montreal-based non-

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<sup>1</sup> RBC PH&N Investment Counsel is a brand name used by RBC Phillips, Hager & North Investment Counsel Inc. and the discretionary private client group of RBC Global Asset Management Inc.

profit organization providing subsidized housing to low-income single mothers pursuing full-time education.

Kathy holds a Bachelor in Commerce with joint honours in Economics and Finance from McGill University, where she graduated as University Scholar and winner of the 1991 Firestone Economics Award. She is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) since 1994 and holds the professional Institute-Certified Director (ICD.D) designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors.

**1. When and how did you get interested in investments?**

Although I didn't have a clear vision for my career when I went into University, I thought the Management faculty at McGill would provide me with a diversity of choices. Given my strong abilities in mathematics, I opted for finance as it seemed interesting to me. Upon graduation, I applied and was accepted for National Bank's training program, which provided a rotation through various branch positions. One day, we were given a tour of the Bank's trading operations, and I immediately knew that I wanted to work there. Within 6 months, I got an entry-level job in investment management.

**2. In your opinion, what are the most necessary skills for a person who wants to succeed in asset management?**

I would say analytical mind-set, ability to process complex information, and the confidence to make decisions in an uncertain environment. You have to be comfortable with the complexity of the markets, and thrive in that culture. In wealth management, it is also very important to like people and to be able to build relations with them, because you are dealing not only with clients' money, but also with their emotions. Affluent investors have different goals, risk appetite, and time horizon. Each person reacts differently to market cycles. You need to have a long-term investment philosophy and a disciplined approach tailored to each client to help them reach their financial objectives.

**3. What do you like most about your job?**

There are two things I love about my job. The first is that I really enjoy the relationships I have with my clients. I have known them and their families for many years. It's very satisfying to be able to help them reach their financial objectives in an increasingly complex environment. The second is that I learn something new every day. There is always something new happening in the financial markets and the world economy, and this is very intellectually stimulating for me.

**4. Can you tell more about your investment philosophy?**

RBC PH&N Investment Counsel is one of the largest wealth management firms in Canada in terms of assets under management. In general, our clients want to preserve and grow their wealth. We use a prudent, long-term approach to investments, structuring well diversified portfolios that will weather the vagaries of the markets. Furthermore, portfolios are tailored to each client's needs.

**5. How valuable is CFA designation in your field?**

The CFA designation has become a prerequisite in the investment business today. At our firm, almost all of the Investment Counsellors have a CFA designation. When we are recruiting for junior

positions, we are often looking for a person who have already passed at least the Level 1 examination.

**6. What was the most challenging job for you during your career?**

Working in financial markets is always a challenge, which is what keeps this job interesting! In my career, one of the more challenging periods was the technology bubble in the late 90s. I was a technology and telecom analyst, and I couldn't justify the valuation of these companies. The important role I played was to help my clients get through that period with solid returns.

**7. Can you tell more about Women Investing for Impact?**

The emerging area of impact investing reached the Canadian mainstream audience in 2010, with the first report of the Canadian Task Force on Social Finance called "Mobilizing Private Capital for Public Good". I was very intrigued by this concept, where investments are intended to create a positive social and/or environmental impact beyond financial returns. Effectively, impact investing brings together my two areas of interest: I have had a successful career in traditional financial markets for over twenty years. And during this time, I have also been an active volunteer for a multitude of causes. Impact investing occupies the spectrum between pure financial returns and philanthropy. So I co-founded Women Investing for Impact (WIFI) with Fiona Macfarlane. Since then, WIFI has grown to over 100 members with very diverse backgrounds, including business, law, accounting, fundraising, donors, volunteers, directors, and social entrepreneurs. For now, WIFI remains a network for promoting and educating ourselves on this emerging and dynamic trend.

**8. What would be your advice on maintaining the work-life balance to women starting their career?**

I think the notion of staying constantly in balance is unrealistic. You're always leaning one way or another. The important point is to know where you're putting your energy and to what purpose. Usually at the beginning of your career, it's important to work hard to learn and to establish yourself. At this stage, the focus is usually on the career. Later on, when you get established and become more experienced, you need to learn how to set your priorities and say NO to some things. And I believe that every person has his or her own point of balance.

**9. Why do you think that percentage of women in investments industry is so low? And what can be done about it?**

That's a very good question, and one that I've struggled with over the years. The same can be said for women in engineering. I think a situation like this that persists over a long period of time has a multitude of causes, and is very complex to address. I think we definitely need to reach women at a younger age, to encourage them to study mathematics and science. We need to provide role models of women with careers in finance, so that young women can get an idea of what a career path looks like. It's terrific to have high profile women like Christine Lagarde and Janet Yellen. Finance offers a variety of interesting career choices, and it is important to increase awareness of these choices with girls and young women.

**10. What advice would you give to women who are considering or starting their career in the investments?**

The Investment business is a great career choice for women. It is interesting and challenging. It also offers a wide spectrum of opportunities, like buy-side, sell-side, and a variety of different roles within organizations. I think the CFA designation has become a prerequisite for this business. So anyone interested should plan to write their exams and obtain the designation.

Career Development Committee