

INVEST(in)HER

The Smart Financial Advisor's Guide to Winning Female Clients in 6 Easy Steps

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Women Expect the Industry to Change

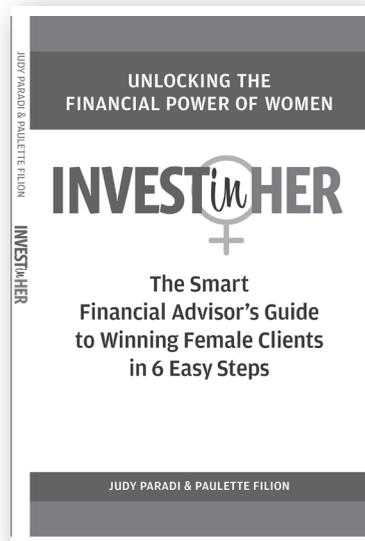
Of course, the financial community is not entirely oblivious to the opportunity that women represent and their economic power. Unfortunately, they have approached it backwards. Rather than trying to understand what women want, the financial community has tried to scare or shame women into changing their behavior to suit how they do business.

We took the messaging below from a random sampling of real communications pieces aimed at women. It's not hard to see where they went wrong.

Messaging That Doesn't Work

- **"Aim higher"** – This headline implies that women don't aim high enough (like men), that they are somehow lacking in ambition or are lazy.
- **"Studies show that many women are more reluctant than men to take on the level of risk required to produce investment returns sufficient to meet their needs."** –The message here is that women are likely to fail financially unless they 'think' like men.
- **"In a recent study, nearly 30% of women were more interested in preserving wealth than higher returns."** – This makes women's preference for wealth preservation sound like a poor strategy – it is not.

This approach does not work as women do not want to be bullied or scared into changing. They have been consumers of products and services for years and are



responsible for 85% of all purchases made – they know what they want and they can easily identify self-serving sales tactics such as these.

Women Want to Deal with Real People

Clearly, trying to scare women into changing their behavior does not work. Neither will proclaiming "we are female-friendly" in advertising campaigns, or creating "pink" brochures, or putting flowers in offices.

For individual advisors, it means becoming the advisor women want to work with. They must be prepared to set their ego aside and let their personality shine through and understand that "making the sale" does not depend on their superior money management skills, or their process for investing, or the history of the greatest ever financial institution they represent. Rather, it will require advisors to show women how well they can connect with them on a personal/human level.

Women Want to be Valued

A good place to start for advisors is rethinking how they present themselves to women and to put more work into developing a connection with them. That means advisors must be genuine in showing women how valued they are as people, not just for their assets.

Even advisors who think they are doing everything right already tend to over-estimate their efforts. Based on thousands of conversations and years of research, we can say unequivocally that women don't feel like advisors are connecting as well as they think – certainly not in the way women want.

This is not because advisors are not trying, nor is it arrogance or overconfidence; it is simply subconscious biases. These are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional and deeply engrained. The challenge is to recognize and consciously alter those biases.

We found it most interesting that even advisors who really thought they were connecting with women many said that they were losing female clients and having trouble attracting new ones, and didn't understand why. That reinforces that, despite their best intentions, these

advisors just aren't connecting in as meaningful a way with their female clients as they think.

We suggest to them that they put aside what they've been taught and what they've been doing for years and start at the beginning to learn how to really pay attention to what money means to women.

The surprise for the many advisors we've worked with is that they have found that in the process of listening, learning and understanding women, they became better at building strong relationships with men and women alike. ■