



Richardson Wealth sets target for half of its advisers to be female within five years

CLARE O'HARA WEALTH MANAGEMENT REPORTER

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RF Capital Group (RCG-T -4.47% decrease) chief executive officer Kish Kapoor has set a bold recruitment goal: to see women make up half of the financial advisers at his wealth management firm over the next five years.

Currently, 16 per cent of the firm's advisers are women, and Mr. Kapoor's ambitious aspiration to more than triple that number is no easy feat in an industry that continues to be heavily dominated by men.

Richardson Wealth Ltd., a subsidiary of RF Capital, is one of Canada's largest independent investment dealers, with about 160 investment advisers managing \$136-billion in assets.

Both Canadian banks and independent investment dealers have been keeping a close eye on the shift of wealth that is landing in the hands of women. Today, women control 35 per cent of financial wealth, yet represent just over 17 per cent of full-service brokerage advisers – a slight increase from just over 16 per cent five years ago, according to data from Toronto-based Investor Economics, a unit of ISS Market Intelligence.

“With an increasing share of financial wealth held by women, the full-service brokerage channel may be failing to capitalize on the opportunity to engage those female investors who prefer to work with a female adviser,” Investor Economics CEO Goshka Folda said in an e-mail.

“While several firms are focusing on addressing this potential gap, the channel continues to face challenges to attract sufficient numbers of women to the wealth management profession.”

But Mr. Kapoor is confident he can move the needle.

“I don't think increasing the number of female advisers will be as difficult to do as some people think,” he said. “Hartley [Richardson] asked me to build something that will last well beyond my time as CEO, for the next 100 years. My journey here is to actually build

a strong, powerful, diverse team of people – including women and a younger generation.”

After new federal rules came in, how many Canadian companies increased diversity on their boards?

Female business founders want funding, not mentorship

Nearly \$1.3-trillion is projected to pass from one generation to the next in Canada between 2020 and 2030, according to Investor Economics.

To capture that wealth, Mr. Kapoor began by diversifying his board of directors and executive team.

Last January, the board, which now consists of 10 members, added Nathalie Bernier, former chief financial officer for the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, and Jane Mowat, former lead director of Via Rail Canada Inc.

Throughout 2021, Mr. Kapoor also added five women to his executive leadership team: Jan Sampson as director of operations; Julie Burnham as vice-president of strategic communications; Christina Clement as vice-president of growth and execution; Sascha Isaacs as vice-president and portfolio manager of its family office wealth counsel; and Natalie Bisset as senior vice-president and head of corporate development.

In total, nine of the 14 individuals on the company’s executive leadership team are now women, in addition to two independent board of directors roles.

Ms. Bisset said having more women in top roles will help draw more female advisers to the company.

“We have a significant opportunity to increase the number of women working in the wealth management industry – and not just in traditional roles such as human resources,” Ms. Bisset said in an interview. “If you want to be her, you have to see her.”

Since May, 2021, the company has hired eight adviser teams that manage about \$1.6-billion in assets, with four being led by a woman. Together, the teams generate approximately \$16-million in annual revenue. Ms. Bisset said there is another potential \$16-billion of assets in the recruitment pipeline for 2022.

Calgary-based investment adviser Susan O’Brien began researching firms to move her \$275-million book of business in 2018 after working for 23 years at a bank-owned brokerage. She decided on Richardson Wealth in August.

“I chose this firm because I was heard,” Ms. O’Brien said. “I didn’t feel dismissed or talked over. That is a huge difference from where I was before, a place where women were not always heard, or acknowledged while speaking.

“You get better decision-making when all the voices are heard at a company, both male and female. You are going to have a better wealth management experience, a better transition to the next generation of clients, including the group of women who are going to inherit money and need help planning for it.”

Ms. Bisset is also a key component to boosting the number of female advisers. She joined the firm in September to lead recruitment initiatives, strategic partnerships and acquisitions.

As one of the executive team leaders who is under the age of 45 – and a mother to three small children – she is tapping into the next generation of advisers, including women who are looking for the work-life balance needed to raise a family.

With limited female talent to poach from competitors, Ms. Bisset knows the company’s goal can’t rely on recruitment alone. It has to come from within the company as well.

Along with Lynne Brejak, Richardson’s chief people officer, and Mike Ankers, head of adviser experience, Ms. Bisset is creating an associates development program in 2022. The idea is to tap into the firm’s existing assistants and associates who support adviser teams, and help transition those who are interested into managing their own books of business.

Overall, women make up 80 per cent of assistants at Richardson and 76 per cent of associates (those who are licensed to provide advice). In the past, typically women in these roles in the wealth industry haven’t moved up to lead advisers, as many books of business have been passed onto other men. But Mr. Kapoor wants to change that.

“I don’t have to go far to look for top talent,” Mr. Kapoor said. “Look at the number of adviser teams who are getting older and looking at a plan for retirement. What do we want to do? We want to provide the financing for women in the organization to buy their own practices. There are already so many powerful women here who will help lift the next generation of females up.”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-richardson-wealth-sets-target-for-half-of-its-advisers-to-be-female/>

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