

November 15, 2013



Ladenburg Institute of Women & Finance Kicks Off LIFT Mentoring Program at Miami Event

Ladenburg sister companies host second annual symposium for women advisors

MIAMI--The Ladenburg Institute of Women & Finance kicked off its second annual women advisor symposium Nov. 7-8 with the introduction of its LIFT Mentoring Program that pairs experienced advisors from each Ladenburg broker-dealer with an up-and-coming woman advisor. The institute is a collaborative effort of Ladenburg Thalmann Financial Services and its subsidiaries: Ladenburg Thalmann Asset Management, Securities America, Triad Advisors, Investacorp and Premier Trust.

“At our inaugural advisor symposium last year, almost every attendee mentioned how valuable a mentor would have been as she built her business in this male-dominated industry,” said Jaime Desmond, chief operating officer of Ladenburg Thalmann Asset Management, who chairs the event planning committee and leads LIFT along with Nicole Cummings, Securities America director of human resources and training. “With a strategy based on growth of the independent broker-dealer and advisory channel, Ladenburg has a strong interest in encouraging women to become financial advisors, whether as a first, second or even third career. Mentoring can make a difference for the level of success women achieve in this industry.”

The LIFT steering committee of executives from Ladenburg’s subsidiaries selected two successful women advisors from each broker-dealer to serve as mentors. Each broker-dealer invited up-and-coming women advisors to submit applications, then narrowed the field to two from each broker-dealer.

“I think one of the best ways to learn and excel in business is to learn from successful people in that business,” said Pat Gautam Sharma, an Investcorp advisor located in Colts Neck, N.J. “Being a woman in a still traditionally male-dominated field, having another woman advisor as a mentor is a wonderful opportunity.”

Mentors and mentees received training specific to their roles at the LIWF conference, then met as pairs to get acquainted and set general goals for the relationship over the coming year.

“When I look back on my 33-year career, I think of all the times it would have been so reassuring to have a woman to talk to about the emotions and issues that come up in this business that don’t necessarily come up for men,” said Paula Dorion-Gray, a Securities America advisor located in Crystal Lake, Ill. “I really welcomed the opportunity to be that

mentor and support for another woman advisor building her business.”

Richard Lampen, president and chief executive officer of Ladenburg Thalmann, opened the conference in Miami by emphasizing the rapid growth of independent advisors, noting that assets under management by independent broker-dealers are projected to grow 10 percent a year in the coming years, exceeding assets managed by wirehouses by 2014.

“We are all very proud of the role women play at all of our firms, from service on our public company board to the senior management ranks of each of our broker-dealers,” Lampen said. “We are also immensely proud of the success of our women advisors, like all of you in the audience today, and for the tens of thousands of women clients we serve. Always there is more we can, should and will be doing to encourage and promote the role of women in our business.”

Business psychologist and productivity coach Barbara Kay told attendees at the opening luncheon that advisors can better reach women investors by building on the women clients they already have; breaking marketing traditions to overcome women investors’ perception of financial services as overwhelming, complicated, foreign and boring; and inspiring advocates.

“Advisors working with women should use more stories and fewer lists, connect investment concepts to the woman’s whole life and facilitate decisions through discussion,” said Kay, whose presentation was sponsored by Lincoln Financial. “Women want to talk together with advisors, ask questions, be heard and understand how the advisor’s recommendations apply to their life.”

The conference concluded with a presentation by Chris Johnson, CEO and founder of On Target Living, providing advice on how to increase their energy and improve their health. Johnson, whose session was sponsored by Nationwide, got attendees moving with simple exercises and thinking about small improvements they can make to their diet.

“In your industry, you don’t get enough rest,” Johnson told advisors. “You can’t work 80 hours a week and think you can sustain it. We have to understand that white space is necessary to be able to perform at a high level. It could be a little bit during the day, it could be a vacation, but you need this down time.”

The mission of the Ladenburg Institute of Women & Finance is to educate and empower women advisors and women investors to control their financial future. In addition to the annual conference, the institute hosts quarterly webinars for its participants. Topics covered in 2013 included:

- Demystifying Social Media and the Digital Reality with Marie Swift, Impact Communications
- Event Planning from Your Advisor Peers
- Engaging Female Clients, with Brian Nelson, National Financial

“My favorite part of the Ladenburg Institute of Women and Finance is the time we are able to spend together interacting with other female advisors from around the country,” said Rebecca True of Orlando, Fla., who is with Triad Advisors. “I find it incredibly valuable to be able to hear about their practices and different client scenarios and see how I can engage

my clients in a little bit different way than I may have been doing previously.”

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