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# aspire

A MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN ADVISORS

## THE BIONIC WOMAN

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
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# In this issue

Ahead of the 30th anniversary Women’s Symposium, there was much anticipation and excitement within the Raymond James Women Financial Advisors Network and throughout the firm. But as we know, not all things go as planned, and a historic hurricane forced us to reschedule the landmark event. Meanwhile, the Raymond James community got to work providing relief to those affected, giving aid and comfort, and demonstrating the power of our generosity and our can-do culture.

In the wake of those challenges, we were thankful for the opportunity to finally host the Women’s Symposium in November in Tampa. With the support of our advisors and the firm, it was just as meaningful as we hoped it would be. The sense of community was palpable. We not only recognized the strong women who carved the path for the last 30 years, but honored those who are fearlessly paving the way for the future.

We hope you’ll find this issue to be a source of inspiration and feel a spirit of hope as you turn these pages. As you read, join us in celebrating the women who are innovating the industry – and making a difference in the world around us.

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## COVER STORY

### THE BIONIC WOMAN

Sarah de Lagarde turned tragedy into triumph by being the first female double prosthetic-wearing amputee to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. **p. 8**





## Spotlights

**INSPIRING BALANCE, EMPOWERING WOMEN** Career-changer Traci Richmond found her calling in finance and is committed to sharing it with the next generation. **p. 12**

**NAVIGATING A TECH REVOLUTION** Here at the dawn of the AI revolution, Dr. Raj Seshadri has ideas on exploring, experimenting and growing alongside new tech. **p. 14**

**HARMONY AND OPPORTUNITY** Michelle Marquez is leading with intention in this next phase of her business – and career. **p. 18**

**EMOTIONALLY INVESTED** Mary Evans combines her passion for neuroscience and expertise with finance to make clients comfortable – and help them reach their dreams. **p. 24**



When women support women in our industry, there are no limits to what is possible. View past and current issues of *Aspire* online.

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## Topical insights

**HISTORY MAKERS** A computing pioneer who helped invent the modern information economy. **p. 4**

**LESSONS FROM LEADERS** How to nurture your team and build greatness. **p. 5**

**MAKING HER MARK** Celebrating women who pioneered the future and continue to inspire us. **p. 6**

**WEALTH OF WOMEN** The women and opportunities of science, technology, engineering and math. **p. 7**

**STAYING CONNECTED** Keep up with recent news and events from around Raymond James. **p. 21**



## HISTORY MAKERS

# Grace Murray Hopper (1906–1992)

Computer pioneer and naval officer

Best known for her groundbreaking contributions to software development and the design and implementation of accessible programming languages, Rear Admiral Grace Hopper helped make computers available to the common person.

In 1928, Hopper graduated from Vassar College with degrees in mathematics and physics before pursuing a master's degree in mathematics at Yale. While teaching at Vassar, she completed her Ph.D. in mathematics at Yale in 1934.

But, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the US entry into World War II, she joined the war effort. First rejected on account of her education's value on the home front, she persisted and joined the US Naval Reserve (Women's Reserve).

Before “computer” meant machine, the term was used to describe a person (often, a woman) who could quickly and accurately perform calculations.

Hopper was assigned to a team working on the IBM Automatic Sequence Controlled Calculator, known as the MARK I, the first electromechanical computer in the US. One of the first three “coders,” she worked on complex calculations essential to the war – computing rocket trajectories, creating range tables for anti-aircraft guns and calibrating minesweepers.

In 1949, Hopper joined the Eckert-Mauchly Computer Corporation in Philadelphia as a senior mathematician. She had the opportunity to work on the Universal Automatic Computer (UNIVAC I), the first commercial electronic computer, and explored the idea of automatic programming and new ways to use the computer to code.

There, Hopper developed A-0, a programming compiler that translated human-created commands into machine-readable instructions. She then

proposed the idea of writing programs in words, rather than esoteric symbols. A few years later, she established FLOW-MATIC, the first programming language to use word commands. This innovation expanded the community of computer users.

She later was recognized for her work on designing the influential COBOL language and encouraging its broad adoption.

Throughout her computer career, Hopper remained a Navy reservist. She was even recalled to active service after retiring to help standardize the Navy's multiple computer language programs.



Nicknamed “Amazing Grace” by her team members, Hopper retired from the Navy as a rear admiral at the age of 79 – the oldest serving officer in the US armed forces at the time.

LESSONS FROM LEADERS

# BEYOND BUILDING A TEAM

How leaders motivate their teams and inspire greatness.

## RELY ON YOUR TEAM'S STRENGTHS

"The sign of a great leader is knowing what you know and knowing what you don't know."

– Angela Ahrendts, former executive of Apple and Burberry

## CREATE A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

"I think the foundation of creating psychological safety is making it acceptable, and even encouraging, for people to raise problems if they haven't figured out a solution yet."

– Adam Grant, Wharton professor and bestselling author

## OPENLY SHARE THE END GOAL

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

– Andrew Carnegie, Carnegie Steel Company founder and philanthropist

## BE SINCERE

"It turns out that trust is in fact earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection."

– Brenee Brown, researcher and best-selling author



## EVALUATE THROUGH A POSITIVE LENS

"Whatever anybody says or does, assume positive intent. You will be amazed at how your whole approach to a person or problem becomes very different."

– Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo

## CHALLENGE – AND LIFT – OTHERS

"Contrary to popular belief, the best way to climb to the top of the ladder is to take others up there with you."

– Maria Eitel, Founding CEO of the Nike Foundation

## ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LISTENING

"Communication is not about saying what we think. Communication is about ensuring others hear what we mean."

– Simon Sinek, inspirational speaker and author

## PRAISE GENEROUSLY

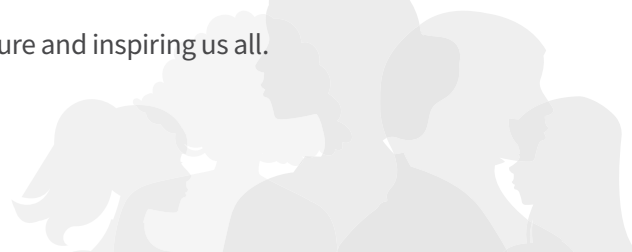
"Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune."

– Sam Walton, Walmart and Sam's Club founder



# Making her *mark*

These women are pioneering the future and inspiring us all.



## IT'S ABOUT TIME!

The four Black female scientists and mathematicians known as NASA's "Hidden Figures" – **Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, Dorothy Vaughan and Christine Darden** – were honored with Congressional Gold Medals in September 2024 for their contributions to space exploration and the race to the moon. The award is the highest recognition given to civilians by Congress.

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD

Established in 2007, the International Women of Courage Award honors women who have brought positive change to their communities, often at great personal risk and sacrifice. Twelve women were awarded in 2024, including these two winners:

**Agather Atuhaire** is a journalist, lawyer and social justice activist who advocates for human rights, public accountability, and the rule of law in Uganda. Her dedication has brought change to Ugandan institutions such as its parliament, water and sewer utility, capital city authority, ministry of health, and leading law school.

**Volha Harbunova** is a Belarusian human rights defender who has dedicated her life to advocating for the rights of women, children, the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized groups in Belarus. She was imprisoned after organizing women's marches and suffered threats for helping abused women. After seeking exile in Lithuania, she was appointed Representative for Social Issues to the Belarusian United Transitional Cabinet.

## POWER MOVES

In recent years, the number of women CEOs has risen to historic highs. As of 2024, 52 of the largest 500 US companies had a woman as CEO, compared to 41 in 2021. Some notable placements in the last year include:

- **Joanna Geraghty** became CEO of JetBlue, becoming the first woman to lead a major US airline.
- **Heidi G. Petz** became the first woman CEO and only the 10th CEO overall in Sherwin-Williams' 154-year history.
- **Adaire Fox-Martin** became CEO and President of Equinix, with a 25-year track record in the technology sector.

## NOBEL PRIZE WINNER

South Korean author **Han Kang** was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2024 "for her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life."



WEALTH OF WOMEN

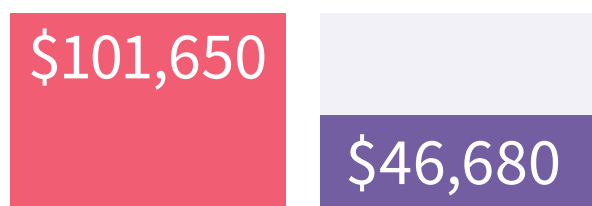
# Women in STEM

Women have shaped the fields of science, technology, engineering and math, and opportunities in these high-income fields continue to grow, from biomedical researcher to financial advisor.

**26%** Percentage of women in STEM careers

**MORE EARNING POTENTIAL**

US median annual wage, 2023



STEM careers

Non-STEM careers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



**STEM CAREER GROWTH OUTPACES OTHERS**

The number of STEM careers is expected to grow by more than 10% in the next 10 years, compared to less than 4% for non-STEM careers.

Of 20 fastest growing occupations, the majority are STEM careers, including nurse practitioners, actuaries, data scientists, security analysts and financial examiners.



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# THE BIONIC WOMAN

**Sarah de Lagarde** became the first female double prosthetic-wearing amputee to climb Mount Kilimanjaro – and she didn't do it alone.

**S**arah never thought a mere month after climbing Mount Kilimanjaro that her whole life would be turned upside down.

"I stood up there on that enormous crater almost 6,000 meters of altitude, the highest free-standing mountain in the world. The sun was rising on the horizon and the duvet of clouds had this otherworldly pink glow – it feels like you're on another planet.

"I felt so powerful and strong, and I was so confident," Sarah says. "I felt invincible, like nothing bad could ever happen to me. Little did I know that just a month later, I would lose my arm and leg."

On her way home from work as the global head of communications for Janus Henderson Investors, Sarah slipped and fell onto the London Underground tracks and got run over by two trains.

"That night I should have died 10 times over. That's what the doctors told me. I am so lucky that I survived," she says.

But Sarah has not only survived. She's overcome unfathomable obstacles, like learning to walk again, and with the support of community, has thrived.

## STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

The road to recovery after losing her right arm and left leg has been long and hard. She spent three weeks in the trauma unit, followed by six weeks in rehabilitation. She was desperate to get back home to her husband Jeremy and two daughters, Chloe and Daphne, and continue her recovery through outpatient services.

"I was very conscious of how I needed to rebuild my body and that I needed to remain stable mentally to do so," she says. "I wanted to get out of hospital as soon as possible to be reunited with my children and my husband."

She knew that surrounding herself with people who were fighting alongside her would make the journey a little bit easier.

"It's really hard to remain positive on your own. If you feel supported by people who value you and your contributions, then that gives you that extra spirit to fight," Sarah says.

Just days after the incident, coworkers and senior leaders from Janus Henderson visited her. At her bedside, she received FaceTime calls from colleagues in Tokyo and Sydney.

"I had just come out of the hospital when I was invited to the company Christmas party. I could barely walk so my husband had to accompany me. Our CFO gave a speech about the year, our strategic vision and thanked everyone. Then he closed by introducing me as a special guest, and there was a standing ovation. It was unforgettable. I was so unbelievably grateful."

She says the most important thing companies can do is create a safe space for people with disabilities. Sarah felt Janus Henderson was there for her throughout her entire harrowing journey – and the support continues to this day.

"People asked me why I was able to come back to work just four months after the incident. And it's because I felt like it was a safe environment to go back to," she says. "I knew I was coming back to this great place where people were supportive and accepting."

## REACHING THE SUMMIT

Because the incident happened so shortly after Sarah climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, people who visited her in the hospital would use her accomplishment to inspire



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SARAH DE LAGARDE





encouraging words. They would say things like, “You just climbed Kilimanjaro; you can get through this. You’re brave. If we know you, you’ll be back climbing it again one day.”

At the moment, she couldn’t even fathom it. It was impossible to even get up to go to the bathroom by herself.

But, as time passed and she got stronger, she started wondering if she could make it a reality. After a conversation with her husband who vowed to help her get to the summit, she set out on 18 months of extensive training.

She was going to be the first female double prosthetic-wearing amputee to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. And she wasn’t doing it alone.

This time around, it was much sweeter because of the community she assembled around her. Her husband, two daughters (age 10 and 13), two medical professionals who were by her side during recovery and the same crew she

## 80% HUMAN, 20% ROBOT

When Sarah’s husband said he wanted her to have the “best bionic arm on the market,” she didn’t realize it would cost in excess of £250,000. He started a GoFundMe, which she thought may help offset the exorbitant cost. Astonishingly, the goal was met in just 19 days.

Sarah’s bionic arm has generative AI that “reads her mind.” When she wants to move her arm, 16 electrodes wrapped around the socket read the movement of the residual muscles in her arm and transmit the data to a server. The AI records her gestures so it can predict them in the future, reducing the time it takes to complete each task. She says preparing to use her new arm was like “learning a new language,” describing it as “magical.”

had when she climbed two years prior were going to climb with her.

“The crew had heard about my incident because it was on the news even in Tanzania, so they knew the story and wanted to help me get to the top again.”

She needed sponsorship to finance the expedition for which Janus Henderson was incredibly generous. There was a lot of research about which prosthetics would be best and the gear she needed to accommodate her new circumstances.

An aside: At one point during the trek, Sarah was proudly wearing her Janus Henderson gear and an American stopped to comment that he knew the company. He said he lived in Denver and had been investing in the fund for 40 years, adding that he is quite happy with his returns. “I couldn’t believe it. There was something so good about this,” she says.

Sarah reached the summit on August 14, 2024.

“I needed to do it to find closure, I suppose. And also to reassure my family, my kids, that with the right help, nothing’s impossible.”

While Sarah recognizes this climb was organized because of her, she was focused on others. The climb raised money for a charity that recycles prosthetics from the UK and distributes them to developing countries or zones of conflict.

“I think it’s our duty as members of society to protect others. I realized that I was lucky enough to have

access to medical care. I visited a prosthetic center in Tanzania and the contrast is quite stark. You feel that equity of access doesn’t really exist yet.”

#### HER NEXT FEAT

Sarah’s most recent undertaking is even harder than what she’s already gone through.

“The one thing that still really rattles me is that Transport for London, which is the company that operates the London Underground, has denied all liability,” she says. “If they’re not accepting liability, they don’t think anything was wrong, which also means they’re not changing anything. And there are two million commuters a day on the London Underground and 16 incidents as severe as mine every month.”

Sarah is determined to see solutions implemented. She advocates for closing platform gaps and using AI-powered algorithms to detect irregularities on platforms and tracks, and noise and movement sensors that can mitigate the risk of tragedies.

“I need to find a way to get my voice heard and to involve politicians to ensure there aren’t more victims,” Sarah says. “I really would love if the sacrifice of my limbs was not in vain and that I could somehow be reassured that I’ve done all I could to protect my children and two million commuters from something awful happening to them.”

But Sarah’s mission doesn’t stop there. She aims to work on healthcare equity. This incident has been life-changing, and she’s determined for it to be a catalyst for progress.

“One of the lessons that I try to share with my children is to say life is very uncertain. There will be ups and downs. You can’t insulate yourself from incidents or diseases. There will be a point in your life that something challenging will happen, either to you or to somebody close to you, and it’s going to be hard.

“To overcome that adversity, if you share your struggles, people will listen,” Sarah says. “They will identify with you because they’re probably going through something that is really challenging for them as well.”

A storyteller by trade, Sarah is going to keep telling her story – with the hope it inspires community, connection and societal betterment. 🎧

# Inspiring balance, *empowering* women

Branch manager **Traci Richmond** is committed to her team's well-being while encouraging the next generation of women in finance.

“I went from feeling very removed and detached in my office alone, typing a lot of legal briefs, to talking to clients every single day – and it immediately captured me,” Traci Richmond says of her career change from law to finance.

After seeking more tangible impact following the birth of her son, Traci joined her mother's financial planning practice. It's not a career path she ever considered for herself and thought it might be a stretch when her mom invited her to give it a try.

Traci had watched her mother build an impressive career, becoming one of the first women in her region to obtain her CFP® certification in the '80s and rise to the top of her game as an advisor.

Traci was thrust into the business just as her mom was moving her book – and she never looked back.

It was a welcome change at the time to her life in law. One that's blossomed and grown into a fulfilling passion that she strives to share with all the women who surround her.

## A CARING CAREER

Traci recognizes – and is thankful, even calling herself “lucky” – that the profession has provided such a rewarding career journey. And she wants other women to see the possibility for themselves.

“We need to debunk the myth that it's all about math and greed. Women need to understand being an advisor is a caring profession, like a nurse, a counselor, or a teacher. What we are doing is caring for humanity, not their physical health but their financial health. You can make such a difference,” Traci says. “And you can be well compensated and have a life that you can control and direct.”

And she makes it her job as a leader and branch manager to ensure her team is well-equipped to deliver a caring experience to clients. Money is emotional, which forces clients to be vulnerable at times.

“We're asking our clients to share everything about themselves. And when we're doing that, we have to be vulnerable as well,” Traci says. “If my team is happy at work, it'll be easier for them to be empathetic.”

“Women need to understand being an advisor is a caring profession, like a nurse, a counselor, or a teacher. What we are doing is caring for humanity, not their physical health but their financial health.”

TRACI RICHMOND



This is why Traci takes her team's overall well-being so seriously. She closes down the office the last two weeks of the year (as long as everyone meets their goals, which has happened every year since she started this initiative). She hires a summer intern to lighten the load during the months that employees tend to take time off and encourages them to take advantage of it.

"I want my team to feel like they're doing productive, meaningful work that they're good at. And burnout is absolutely the biggest enemy in achieving that," Traci says, which is why she strives to create a culture that mitigates the risk.

### CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Traci is committed to her team's success, which shows in the culture she's created in the office and the mentorship she provides. Her all-women team ranges in age and experience, including other career changers just like her.

"I like to give autonomy to my team members. I take a supportive role," she says. "We're all headed in the same direction. I have no doubt, not even a hint, that every single member of the team comes to work every day for clients – to help them achieve their goals and make their lives better."

She's built an atmosphere in the office where the women know they can lean on each other, and she's a proponent of team members finding other communities that'll benefit themselves and their careers.

"Having a community is so important. One of my advisors who went through the Advisor Mastery Program [AMP], and is now starting to build her own book of business, continues to maintain connections from the program. So, she has me, but she also has this peer group and they're all in the same place in their business – she can help them and they can help her."

Traci has experienced the benefit of nurturing these connections firsthand.

"Being on the Raymond James Women's Advisory Council was the single best move I made for my clients in my career. It made me so much better as an advisor. It made me so much better as a team leader. It got me more connected with people. I now use the technology offerings in a completely different way. I'm so much better for having spent time with these women," Traci says. "In fact, some of my best advisor friends came from that council and I'm still in touch with them today. A bunch of us got together just last summer in Michigan, and it was so sanative and energizing."

### MAKING AN IMPACT

Traci uses her mentorship skills beyond the office and volunteers her time teaching high school girls about finance. She's seen too many women get into trouble when they have someone else handle their money or they don't take an interest, so she wants to empower the next generation of girls to be in complete control of their own destiny.

### *Trip down memory lane*

Traci remembers when *Aspire* magazine was merely an idea. She says, "When Michelle Lynch took over the Women's Advisory Council, I remember her sharing the news that we were going to start our own magazine. And there was such a buzz among the members of the council. We felt like we were going to be legit with our own glossy print magazine."


"I've been giving a financial literacy presentation called Smart About Money™ to high school senior girls for 10 years and counting. I do it in the spring, as they near graduation. There are about 80 girls in each graduating class, so I've probably reached about 800 girls by now," she says. "I start out with a real-life scare story about a woman who went through a divorce to realize she had no concept of what was going on with her money."

While Traci's hope of giving this presentation is for the girls to take charge of their money and give them the confidence to manage it effectively, she admits it would be rewarding if any of these girls considered finance a career option.

"There just aren't enough women advisors. We need more women, and we need them to project their caring competence in the field. That's why I want the women in my business to be well-trained, incredibly successful financial advisors – that's really what we need to be for our female clients as well. I want to mentor women to create their business however they want to create it."

Traci has seen the impact of doing honorable work in the field firsthand. She has an advisor on her team who was drawn to the field after seeing what Traci's mom was able to do for her parents' finances years ago.

It's all come full circle.

And Traci is committed to supporting women along the whole journey. 

# > NAVIGATING A TECH REVOLUTION

The market makes us all technologists, in a way, says Raymond James board member **Dr. Raj Seshadri**.



In 1965, Gordon Moore, a co-founder of Fairchild Semiconductor and Intel, predicted that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit would double every year through the next decade, later adjusting this to two years.

This prediction, known as Moore's Law, has driven the development of microprocessors for over 50 years, symbolizing the growing influence of computing technology in our society, economy and daily lives. This evolution is seen by some as a boon and others as a burden.

For Dr. Raj Seshadri, the chief commercial payments officer at Mastercard and a member of the Raymond James Board of Directors, its risk committee, and compensation and talent committee, the world shaped by Moore's Law represents both opportunity and challenge. From a young age, she was drawn to its possibilities, leading to a multifaceted career at the intersection of technology and commerce.

"We are living amidst exponential growth in technology," Seshadri says. "Whether storage, transmission, memory or processing – capabilities are increasing. Compare the computing power that landed a man on the moon in the '60s compared to what's on your smart phone today – it's astonishing."

With a doctorate in physics from Harvard University and an MBA from Stanford University, Seshadri began her career in the lab before transitioning to business, drawn by its breadth and opportunity for practical problem solving and impact.

She has held several leadership roles of increasing responsibility at AT&T Bell Labs, McKinsey & Company, and US Trust. She spent time at Citigroup in global strategy and Citi business banking, and at Blackrock, where she led the firm's iShares retail ETF business and served as chief global marketing officer for iShares. She is now the chief commercial payments officer at Mastercard after a tenure as the head of the company's global data and services organization, which grew from 12% of the company's revenue to nearly 40% over the past decade.

Though not all her roles were strictly "technology" jobs, technology has been the driver of positive change in each of her positions, Seshadri says. In the Moore's Law world, we all should be technologists to some extent.

"There are things that were only possible mathematically when I was a student that can now be done computationally," she adds. "We've lived through a lot of change, and more things will change in the next 10 years than has changed in the last 10."

#### AI GOES MAINSTREAM

OpenAI kicked off an artificial intelligence land rush in 2022 with a public release of ChatGPT, ostensibly a chatbot, demonstrating a type of machine learning program known as a large language model. ChatGPT



“ You need to approach new things with intellectual curiosity because there is always something more, something new, something different with technology.”

**DR. RAJ SESHADRI**

“It’s easy to fall on either side if you’re not thoughtful about it. Not pursuing opportunity has downside risk. Failing to keep up in the market has downside risk.”

**DR. RAJ SESHADRI**

was fluid and human-sounding, deriving language patterns from a vast database of publications and social media. Audio and visual AI systems were soon also released to the public. Within a year, AI systems from a variety of makers were finding use in nearly every sector of the economy, from making PowerPoint presentations and fielding customer service queries to assessing medical data and guarding financial accounts.

It is not hyperbolic to say that we are likely experiencing the early days of another technological revolution. Whether you consider yourself a technology person or not, you’ll need to reckon with it one way or another: what it can do, where the pitfalls are and how you can use it to support your business goals.

So how do you stay up to speed? “You need to approach new things with intellectual curiosity because there is always something more, something new, something different – with technology,” Seshadri says. “Try it and experiment with it. Listen, learn, read, talk to people. Use it to achieve more unique and differentiated outcomes.”

An AI that can write like a person can help you put down a first draft of a client presentation, for example, or proofread your emails.

“You can use it for cognitive offloading,” Seshadri says, “freeing your time to do the things only a human can do.”

From there, you can get creative. Every technology has its known purposes and its yet-to-be-discovered applications. Some technologies, like an AI office assistant, arrive on market with clear applications and quickly integrate into our lives and businesses. Other technologies, like the blockchain, are harder to forecast. While best known today for maintaining cryptocurrency economies, its highest value as a distributed, unalterable keeper of history is likely still untapped and in the future. But for both types of technologies, immediately apparent or yet unclear, there is always something new to discover.

In the early days of a new technology, new uses can emerge rapidly. Image processing AI can create a novel picture of a cartoon dog driving a taxicab. It can also be used to convert programming source code into images and then detect potential malware hidden within.

It’s exciting but also a little concerning when the world seems to shift beneath your feet.

Prudence is wise, but it’s not helpful to approach new technology with just trepidation, Seshadri says. Respect what you know and don’t know, but don’t let fear keep you from experiencing it and benefiting from it.

“When ChatGPT came out, some companies said to batten down the hatches – don’t touch it. There are privacy and regulatory considerations, and it’s unclear if things you say to a public large language model will emerge in an answer it gives someone else later.

### AI GUARDRAILS

Large language models, a type of AI system, have been quickly adopted across business disciplines. While this generative AI can be incredibly helpful in the office, it is a “black box” technology, meaning it’s not always clear where answers come from or where your inputs will end up. Remember:

- Don’t share privileged information.
- The answers aren’t grounded in truth, but in text predictions based on things other people have written. It can create plausible sounding but completely wrong information.
- Unless created with the benefit of specialized data, it may not be up to the task of producing work about specialized topics.
- Asking it to summarize a long article can give you the gist of it, but what you and it deem important can be very different.
- Stay up to date with your broker/dealer’s technology team.
- Give it a whirl.



In contrast, to drive innovation, we encouraged our employees to experiment, but within guardrails.

“We took a proactive, yet nuanced path at Mastercard. We created safety mechanisms but allowed employees to explore and create in a controlled environment, driven by governance principles, oversight and responsibility.”


Neither Prometheus’s fire nor Pandora’s box, but the potential for both.

“There is a middle path,” she says. “It’s easy to fall on either side if you’re not thoughtful about it. Not pursuing opportunity has downside risk. Failing to keep up in the market has downside risk.”

And there are clear upsides, as we’ve seen with other technology that was once revolutionary and is now part of our daily lives.

“In college, we had typewriters,” she says. “Then came Excel, Word. Today you can listen to music in very different ways than in the past. These have done good things for us, made many things more accessible, higher quality, simpler and cheaper. The evolution continues, so don’t be afraid of AI tools and analytics.

“Embrace them.

“Things that can be done by a tool, algorithm, or platform are things you don’t have to do anymore. Use them and save your time to do the things no tool can do. Tend to the emotional side of wealth, spend more time with clients to better understand what they need. Reassure them. These are the things only a human being can do, and now you can do more of it.” 

## > FINDING HER WAY

When Raj Seshadri came to the US from her home in India for her post-secondary education, she chose an unexpected path.

“Unlike a more typical path for an India-born child,” she says, she eschewed an education in engineering or medicine to attend Mount Holyoke College, a small liberal arts college in Massachusetts – one of New England’s famed Seven Sisters colleges.

“In India, you go to medical school or engineering school. At age 17 and 18, I had a choice of those, but Mount Holyoke ignited a community that fosters intellectual curiosity, excellence and collaboration, and getting in with a full scholarship was a big win. People back home said I studied everything but nothing, but it opened up a lot of new and different doors for me. Frankly, I wouldn’t have had the career I had if I didn’t have that liberal arts college experience,” she says.

After earning a doctorate in physics from Harvard, she left the Bay State of Massachusetts to go west to earn an MBA from Stanford.

“I love physics, I love math, but I was learning more and more about less and less, and talking to fewer and fewer people.” She realized it wasn’t her. “There are people who want to go deep in areas, others who want to go broad. It’s not just what you’re good at doing, it’s what you’re interested in, and what motivates you to keep learning and growing.

“Part of your life’s journey is understanding yourself.”

As she has worked on problems as diverse as data analytics and security and marketing exchange-traded funds, her science background helps her frame problems and isolate variables. Her commitment to being a lifelong learner has taught her that “there is no such thing as an unsolvable problem, you just don’t know the solution yet.”

### Leadership roles

Mastercard Chief Commercial Payments Officer

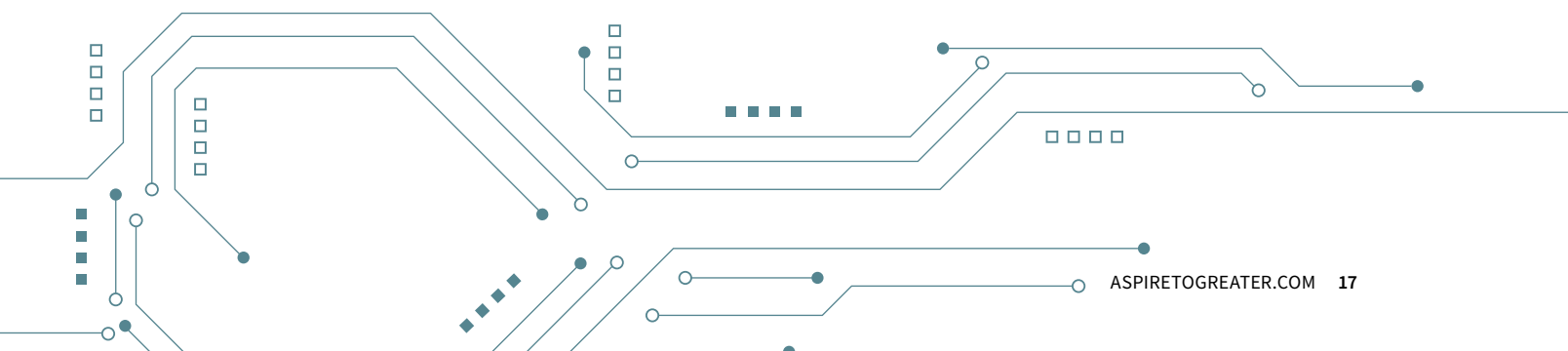
Raymond James Board of Directors

- Risk Committee
- Compensation and Talent Committee

New York Philharmonic Board of Directors

Mount Holyoke College Board of Trustees

American India Foundation Global Board of Directors





# HARMONY & OPPORTUNITY

**Michelle Marquez** is being intentional with the next phase of her practice and career.

“I’ve been in the business for 20 years. Half of my career has already been spent, unintentionally, doing things to be successful,” Michelle says. “For this next phase, I want it to be more about what I do best and where I find the most value in what I do.”

And, after much reflection, she’s decided it’s going to be helping founders and business owners, especially women and minorities, navigate investment banking opportunities and generational wealth transfers.

It’s what excites her, fulfills her and makes her feel like she’s giving back.

Most importantly, it’s intentional.

## THE FIRST HALF

Michelle’s initial focus in the industry was born out of coincidence, an opportunity she seized, which became a lucrative niche. She spent the first part of her career helping professional athletes with their finances.

“I was young at the time. I was trying to figure out my way. One thing I always do is take an opportunity, even if it looks bleak. I’m available. I’ll take it because you never know where it will take you,” she says.

That’s exactly how she landed in the professional athlete arena. She helped a man fumbling with mortgage paperwork at the airport, who introduced her to a friend—a professional athlete.

That man entrusted her with managing his wealth and word of mouth traveled – until she was doing financial literacy presentations for the entire team. (Fun fact: The Golden State Warriors even gave her a championship ring because she was such an integral part of their franchise.)

By working with these men, she honed her skills of building genuine relationships and often felt more like a therapist than a financial advisor. She learned to listen, applied her problem-solving skills and helped them through life’s unique challenges.

“We talk about life, their children, their family, and even their fears about money. We discuss what it feels like to not be able to help family or feeling used by friends because of their wealth,” Michelle says. “With their male advisors, they felt like they had to put on a strong

front; they wouldn’t be as open about their mental or emotional struggles. Being a woman was an advantage because they would be a little more vulnerable with me.”

## THE SECOND HALF

While Michelle still serves this existing client base, she’s more selective about the professional athletes she takes on. This next part of her journey is going to encompass what those athletes strive to achieve – leaving a legacy – but she will specialize in clients with generational wealth.

“I’m not a transactional person. I want clients who are willing to create a relationship with me for the long term,” she says. And this means nurturing a relationship that will last for generations.

“With the transition of wealth, and the amount of money going to millennials and women, they’re not talking analytics. They’re talking values and what this wealth means for them as individuals,” Michelle says.

She’s already coaching women on managing wealth transfers that come from their husbands, parents or grandparents. Michelle recently held a seminar for women about mental wellness, which included tips for managing future wealth transfers. She often gets invited to events like the Asian American and Pacific





“One thing I always do is take an opportunity, even if it looks bleak. I’m available. I’ll take it because you never know where it will take you.”

MICHELLE MARQUEZ

Islander (AAPI) women’s dinner where she shares inspiring words and helpful practices.

Reflecting on the first phase of her career, Michelle realized her keen ability to see the big picture. She unintentionally landed a couple large investment banking deals and felt passionate about working with these clients. Pursuing this route also allows her to focus on intergenerational wealth transfer—a win-win.

“I will be intentional in landing these investment banking deals, and I want to work with women and minorities. I plan to create a free flow of information for women and minorities who lack proper representation in these situations,” Michelle says.

“Many feel lost in looking for the next steps for their business. So, I want to be that conduit.”

#### NEW FOCUS, NEW FEEL

Narrowing her focus means a shift in marketing and branding. Michelle is going all in and wants to make sure her new approach is apparent.

Her tagline has changed from “life in bloom,” which meant Michelle was open to serving anyone at any phase of their life, to “harmony and opportunity,” reflecting her two new specializations.

Michelle chose “harmony” to reflect intergenerational wealth because she wants to help families navigate wealth transfers smoothly and help new recipients find their own harmony with the wealth. The word “opportunity” comes to mind when marketing to founders and business owners, reflecting her focus on investment banking clients.

Michelle explains, “What I bring to the table is the ability to address opportunities in as harmonious a way as possible.”

After all, she’s done the same. 

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# STAYING *connected*

A GLIMPSE OF THE LATEST NEWS AND EVENTS AT RAYMOND JAMES

## 30th ANNUAL WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM

The much-anticipated 30th annual Women's Symposium took place November 18–20, 2024, during which we celebrated the progress we've made in the financial industry. What's grown from a couple dozen advisors meeting in a conference room to a premier professional event with hundreds of participants, the Women's Symposium is a source of inspiration and empowerment across the firm.

With the support of the **Women Financial Advisors Network**, the event did not disappoint. From keynote speakers to breakout sessions, advisors from around the country and across the firm came together to discuss how we can continue to foster inclusivity, empower women and create the future.



**2025 WOMEN'S SYMPOSIUM** Mark your calendars for **November 17 through 19** for the 2025 Women's Symposium at the JW Marriott Grande Lakes in Orlando, Florida. Keep an eye out for details in your inbox.



Join us in congratulating the 2024 Women of Distinction award winners. *From left to right: Amber Seale, CFP®, CPA, CLU®, CDFA®; Neely White; Valery McMann, CFP®; Beth Jeter Hrubala, CFP®, CRPC®, CDFA®; Nicola Tomlin; and Tsitsi Mutiti Chartered FCSI – Investment Manager*

## WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARD

The Women of Distinction Award is designed to recognize women in advising who have served as role models to other advisors or service associates in their branches or the industry. Through mentoring and coaching, they've supported the professional growth of women by sharing their experiences, knowledge, ideas and feedback. In addition to these qualities, nominations should also include a woman who is actively involved in her community through volunteer hours, and board participation. The ranking may not be representative of any one client's experience, is not an endorsement, and is not indicative of an advisor's future performance. No fee is paid in exchange for this award/rating.

### RAYMOND JAMES CARES

We experienced a historic hurricane season that brought unprecedented destruction in the area surrounding our home office and beyond. But, in these difficult times, we saw people from our firm band together in incredible ways.

Between **Friends of Raymond James**, matching donations, and firm donations to the Red Cross and local charitable partners responding to the storms, Raymond James committed more than \$2.4 million in support of relief efforts for Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Additionally, the **Raymond James Executive Committee** and **Board of Directors** have collectively pledged over \$450,000 in personal donations to Friends of Raymond James.

In January 2025, Raymond James made a first contribution of \$150,000 to organizations supporting wildfire relief efforts in Los Angeles, and pledged to match up to \$100,000 in associate and advisor donations to the American Red Cross through January 31. The firm is expecting to make further contributions as the response effort unfolds.



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Our boutique investment managers work to provide a diverse set of strategies that help investors pursue their long-term goals. Our client-first service aims to empower you to grow your business, fulfill your advisory duties, and exceed your clients' expectations.



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### VETERANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The **Veteran Financial Advisors Network**, VFAN, held its annual meeting in Palm Harbor, Florida, September 6, 2024. It was an energizing gathering for veterans and their supports to learn from one another and identify ways to advocate causes important to the military community. **Valor**, our associate inclusion network for veterans, also held its annual golf tournament, raising over \$262,000 to support nonprofits specializing in veteran care.

### #RJWOMEN LEADING THE WAY

**Lisa Detanna** has been inducted into the Barron's Advisor Hall of Fame.

Barron's Hall of Fame Award 2024 was released 5/10/2024. Each recipient has appeared in 10 or more Barron's annual Top 100 Advisor rankings. Neither Raymond James nor any of its advisors pay a fee in exchange for this award.

**Kimberley Mondonedo** was featured as an Advisor to Watch by AdvisorHub. The Mendall Financial Group, to which she belongs, was recognized as a 2024 ThinkAdvisor Luminaries Firm Award winner for excellence in marketing and public relations.



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# EMOTIONALLY INVESTED

**Mary Clements Evans** relies on neuroscience to guide her business decisions and build client relationships.

**F**orget rocket science. Financial planning is neuroscience. “Here’s a shocker: We’re emotional about our money,” Mary says. “I don’t think the industry likes to admit that money is so very emotional.”

She’s sharing her view in a forthcoming book titled “Emotionally Invested,” set to be released this spring.

“I’ve had this in my head for 16 years. When I got in this industry, I saw a lot of things that I thought were wrong and they just weren’t helping people,” she says. “I want to change the way financial advisors talk to people.”

She’s leading the charge with how she approaches her business, her clients – and her own life.

## SIMPLIFYING FINANCE

Coming from a career in corporate accounting, Mary was always the “numbers person” who got called upon to teach internal courses on “financials for non-numbers people” or who was asked to partner with the other departments to help them figure out their budget for next year.

“I think one of my best skills is that I can take the complex and put it in very simple terms,” she says. “So, throughout my whole career, they always chose me to talk to the non-financial people. And I never realized that this could be a great skill to use as a financial advisor.”

She admits there’s nothing quite like gratitude from individuals whose lives

you’ve impacted so greatly.

“Working with small businesses, individuals and families is so incredibly rewarding,” Mary says. “Oh my gosh, I get thanked every day by people for being able to retire, not having to worry about their savings, being able to educate their children or going on a dream vacation.”

She makes prospects feel comfortable by having a complimentary three-meeting approach before they become clients.

“The first meeting is just getting to know you. At the second meeting, we start to develop your plan. And at the third meeting, we make recommendations. I just take it slow and easy,” Mary says.

## GROWING, GENUINELY

Mary never made a cold call in her life (much to the chagrin of a previous

firm) because she felt strongly that her business should be built on authentic connections and real relationships.

“I was the go-to person if you had a financial question, and people knew I was honest, never pushy,” Mary says. “I tell people all the time to do good things for other people every day of your life. Because it is stunning the number of people who will remember that.”

She also knew that referrals would be the most powerful way to establish those strong relationships – “because if your brother’s really happy with me, you’re coming in here already liking me,” she says.

One of the ways she found success was holding events – both educational and social. (It sure beat cold calling.)

“When I first thought about establishing a client base, I thought to myself, ‘I’m good at hosting parties.’





So, I contacted professional women that I knew, and invited them to an event called Wine, Women and Wealth. We had it at this mansion with a ton of chocolate. I offered financial guidance; that's how I kicked it off."

### THE PARTY'S JUST GETTING STARTED...

Mary still hosts regular events for clients and their guests. Even when her office was just 900 square feet, she had a dedicated education corner with a few chairs.

Now, in an 8,000-square-foot office, 3,000 of it is reserved for a sleek event space.

"I have tables and chairs that can transform the space from a classroom to party room in about 30 minutes," Mary says.

"Here's my theory: When you meet somebody and become friends, you feel like you've gotten to know them better once you've been to their house for a dinner or party. You feel like you've learned more about them by being in their space. This office is my house. So, we do everything here. Every event is here. Every party, every seminar."

Besides the requisite chocolate, Mary makes sure there's something at every event that gets people talking – from a shocking statistic to a delicious appetizer.

"I want to make sure they've seen something, heard something or eaten something that they're going to be talking about the next day," she says.

"So, when they're at their sister's house next weekend or out to dinner with friends, they're talking about their financial advisor's event."

The office is decorated with pieces curated by Mary, including furniture from her mother's home, and has a beach theme reflecting her style.

"We don't use a desk and chairs for client meetings. It's all sofas, recliners and a coffee table. You just come in, sit down, relax, and we're going to talk about your money."


### POWER OF THE MIND

Mary is a self-proclaimed book-aholic (she reads for two hours every morning, almost entirely nonfiction) and loves studying neuroscience, psychology and stoicism. In another life, she might have explored a related career path. But she's thankful she landed here, finding the perfect blend of her interests and talents in behavioral finance.

Just as she encourages her clients that they can reframe their relationship with money by using the power of their mind, she applies this to all aspects of life.

"When you understand how the amygdala works and the prefrontal cortex, and how they communicate with each other, why you do the things that you do,

you can help change the way that that you respond," she says. "It's not what happens to you, it's how you respond to it. You can learn to change your response."

Mary understands how hard this can be, but she's proof that people are resilient. Just a couple of years ago, she tragically lost her son to a brain tumor. She doesn't take anything for granted and takes fun seriously by enjoying her husband, her four stepchildren and four step-grandchildren. She spends more time at the beach – at a vacation home that her husband had to convince her to buy (she tends to be more of a saver than a spender). "Life is to be enjoyed, and humor has the power to get you through a lot of very difficult situations," she says. 



### Do you have FOMO or FORO?

In Mary's book, "Emotionally Invested," she says everyone is on the spectrum of fear of missing out (FOMO) or fear of running out (FORO) when it comes to money. Her advice? Learn your tendency then address your relationship with money to land somewhere, healthily, in the middle.



## Your strength is backed by ours

Raymond James proudly recognizes that our own successes are dependent on the hard work and dedication of the advisors who choose to call our firm home. That's why we're committed to furthering the successes of all advisors and are the first to offer support wherever it's needed.

Since its founding in 1994 and throughout the next three decades, the Women Financial Advisors Network has helped expand opportunities for women in financial services and beyond. We invite you to take a brief look at our history – and become part of our future.

1994

The Raymond James Women Financial Advisors Network, then known as the Network for Women Advisors, makes its official debut, holding the inaugural Women's Symposium in Marco Island, Florida, that same year, and kicking off a tradition that has endured for 30 consecutive years.



1996

Raymond James appoints its first woman branch manager.

2004

The Women Financial Advisors Network launches its first coaching program.

2007

The Women's Advisory Council welcomes its first international member from Canada.

2013

The network launches the Registered Associate Mentoring Program (RAMP) alongside a new dedicated network for Canadian advisors with Raymond James Limited.

2017

The industry's first magazine for women advisors, *Aspire*, launches to great acclaim.



2019

WFAN celebrates its 25th year, and the Women's Advisory Council welcomes its first member from the United Kingdom.



2020

Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 26th annual Women's Symposium is a smashing success. Held virtually for the first and only time, the symposium hosted 1,480 registrants comprising more than 750 woman advisors and 40 prospective woman advisors across the United States, United Kingdom and Canada tuning in for live and on-demand sessions.



2024

The Women Financial Advisors Network celebrates 30 years of empowerment, growth and achievement. Having grown to over 1,300 financial advisors and inspired three other inclusion networks at Raymond James, WFAN is a beacon in the financial services industry and has carved a brighter path forward for all advisors from diverse backgrounds.

Here's to the next **30 years!**



For more information, visit **WOMENADVISORS.COM**



*redefine what it means to*  
**SUCCEED**

The Raymond James Women Financial Advisors Network is behind you.

Since 1994, the Raymond James Women Financial Advisors Network has dedicated time and resources to the growth, development and success of women financial advisors like you. From educational tools to developmental workshops and networking events, we offer women advisors the opportunity to establish and strengthen their connections to learn and grow – together. **To learn more, visit [womenadvisors.com](https://womenadvisors.com) or call 866.903.6333.**



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