

KELLY TSIMIDIS: NICHE PLAYER IN A GLOBAL MARKET

By Jennifer Peng

Revenue Canada experienced its own ‘mini brain drain’ when one of its rising stars left to join the private sector in 1995. “Working at Revenue Canada was a great training ground,” says Kelly Tsimidis (MBA ’97). “But in such a huge bureaucracy, I didn’t feel that I had the opportunity to pursue new ideas. Moving to a smaller organization has allowed me to expand my abilities.”

The pursuit of knowledge and innovative work have long been passions of Kelly’s. After graduating from Rotman, she knew she wouldn’t return to the structured world of the public sector and instead, accepted a plum role at Burgundy Asset Management Ltd.

A niche player in the investment management services industry catering to high-net-income worth individuals and their families, Burgundy is uniquely positioned to succeed in the convergence-friendly sector by providing the kind of one-to-one service and independent research advice that only small organizations can offer. The company, which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, emphasizes long-term investment returns for its


customers, not quarterly performance. In recent years, this focus has taken Burgundy outside of its strengths in Canada in search of the best opportunities worldwide.

“More and more investors are recognizing that for long-term, high investment returns, they’re going to have to invest globally, so we continue to build our expertise outside of Canada,” says Kelly. Going global — and being good at it — is just one way in which Burgundy values the individual investor. “As the number of small independent investment firms decreases,” says Kelly, “the Burgundys of the world become more attractive to investors who don’t want to be just another cog in the wheel.”

Nevertheless, Kelly keeps a watchful eye on the big banks from her office on the 25th floor of the Exchange Tower. When she started at Burgundy, she was given the chance to build many aspects of the business, including the IT and marketing departments. She quickly ramped up her responsibilities and is now a vice president, with her sights set on new business development.

A consummate ‘people person’, Kelly emphasizes listening to her clients to determine the right investment strategy, an attitude that encourages her customers to keep introducing Burgundy to family and friends. “Our goal is to build long-term, close-knit relationships.”

Clients aren’t the only ones who get treated with individual attention at Burgundy: Kelly benefits from the company’s open-door policy, which encourages junior professionals to share ideas with senior man-



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agement. She has learned a tremendous amount from the senior partners, who understand that they must nurture their young talent and encourage them to be innovative while setting their benchmarks high. “Our senior partners very much encourage the younger staff to run with ideas. They really foster ‘thinking outside of the box’.”

Kelly predicts that she will have a long future at Burgundy, even as opportunities continue to grow within the Canadian investment industry as several non-traditional and U.S. corporations enter the marketplace.

Like Kelly, many of her former classmates are also embracing smaller organizations that offer unlimited potential for growth over larger ones where there was once stability. ‘High risk, high return,’ at least in terms of professional development, seems to be the motto of her generation, according to Kelly. “It’s a fantastic industry, everything’s always changing. I never have a day that resembles the previous one. The challenges brought on by the dynamic nature of the business create a very fulfilling career and environment. It’s a lot of fun,” she says.

When she’s not busy building the net worth of her clients, Kelly enjoys very active pursuits. “I run, I roller blade, I go up north all the time — I like to be outdoors as much as possible.” But true to her nature, she always has a goal in sight. “I’m writing Level III of my CFA in a couple of weeks. Continuing education is such a huge and important commitment. Since graduating from Rotman, I haven’t stopped, but I’m glad, because if I took had taken a break, it would have been much more difficult hard to get back into it.” **RM**

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