

Alyssa Irving

Insurance fixed income portfolio manager, Wellington Management Co., US



“Mentors show up in various forms. Be open to anyone you can learn from”

My words of advice to young women building a career in insurance are first, mentors matter; second, take risks; and third, “work/life balance” is a misnomer.

I've had many mentors and bosses who have given me a chance and often taken a risk themselves by giving me stretch assignments. Every time, I was thankful for the opportunity and worked hard to prove they could count on me. Mentors show up in various forms. Be open to anyone you can learn from.

The professional risks I've taken have included changing companies, switching jobs within companies, giving difficult feedback, asking for long-term assignments. The risks that worked out well helped me build confidence and realise I could keep progressing. The risks that didn't work out so well helped me to become more

resilient and determined.

One of the reasons I joined Wellington was the women I met while interviewing here. There were so many senior women here balancing careers and family lives. But over time I have found that life is never really “balanced.” Something is always off balance, and that's OK.

My first boss at Wellington, a woman, had wise advice when I had my first son. She told me, “You'll never get an 'A' in everything, every day. Some days you'll get an 'A' with your kids, some days you'll get an 'A' at work, and some days you'll get an 'A' with your partner. Aim to never get less than a 'C' with your kids.” I take her advice to heart nearly every day and am fortunate to work at a company that understands balancing the personal and the professional means something different for everyone.

Elizabeth Kleinerman

Insurance fixed income portfolio manager, Wellington Management Co., US

Walking into a boardroom, aware of my differences as a young female, I often felt pressured to prove myself or go above and beyond to garner the respect and support that my older male colleagues seemed to enjoy without effort. But as a portfolio manager, I am expected to be confident and be a leader, and fortunately those traits come to me naturally.

A presentation training I attended early in my career emphasised “bringing yourself to the table” – that is, don't try to do things exactly like your colleagues. By allowing my personality and passion for what I do shine through, I've been able to gain the trust and respect of my clients. That has sustained me, giving me more confidence throughout my career.

I have definitely noticed differences over the last few years, both within and outside of Wellington. Wellington has been very focused on diversity and inclusion, which is showing up in noticeable ways.

First, people here are more open to different communications styles. Second, senior management is getting involved with mentoring and supporting women and people of colour.

That is having a cascade effect throughout the organisation. And finally, I feel like people at all levels are comfortable bringing their authentic self to work and are becoming more productive as a result. Wellington is not just talking about diversity and inclusion; we are doing something about it.

Outside of Wellington, I have started to notice more women on the boards of my clients and at senior management levels. Through networks like the Insurance Women's Investment Network (IWIN), many are benefiting from making connections with other women at firms all over the world. By sharing each other's experiences and views from inside insurance and asset management firms, I believe that we are moving the industry forward.



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