

Why it's still a juggling act for women in financial services

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Financial Women's Association president discusses how women can start to effect change

By **Maureen Adolf** | *October 22, 2014 - 12:01 am EST*

Last year, I had the luxury of retiring from a 30-year career with a major financial services firm. I was pregnant when I began there; my daughter is 30 years old now. The exciting thing, from my perspective, is that the daughter I was expecting when I started with the firm was expecting her own daughter — my granddaughter — when I retired. There's a certain symmetry in that progression of events.

My daughter, granddaughter and I enjoyed a lovely summer because my working daughter was on maternity leave and, for the first time, I had the opportunity to devote more time to something other than work. And then it was over. My daughter went back to work just before Labor Day last year, my granddaughter started day care and I took a position with a law firm in December.

Why am I telling you all of this? Because in 30 years, between the time I had my daughter and she had hers, the challenges haven't changed for young professional women thinking about or juggling motherhood.

The concerns about when to start a family — what effect doing so will have on your financial/career path, what kind of child care can be arranged, and how to manage work responsibilities when a baby or child is sick — are all the same.

There have, over the years, been many employer efforts to pay attention to and accommodate “work-life balance.” Especially with the advances in technology, there is more of an opportunity for flexible work schedules and working from home. But despite modern attitudes about shared responsibility, most of these employer efforts are directed at women and, more often than not, it is women who avail themselves of these opportunities. While incredibly helpful, doing so can result in less face-time at work and a perceived lesser degree of commitment to work — both of which are critical to professional success, growth and financial rewards.

The juggling act that continues to challenge women is not easily solvable. There is no “one size fits all” answer to the perennial question, “Can women have it all?” We each have to decide what gives us meaning and purpose at different stages of our lives, knowing that our priorities will shift over time. Motherhood is one stage, but women are often the primary caregivers to parents, grandchildren, etc., at later stages of life as well.

There is no point in our lives during which we don't benefit from the support and experiences of others. Community is key. There are many examples of women who have met these challenges and achieved great success. The [Financial Women's Association](#) and corporate business resource groups for women offer opportunities for you to gain insight and guidance in navigating your pathway to success. Whether it's live events for networking or honing your tech skills or online resources to find a supportive peer or mentor to share your challenges, these are options that are available through resources like the FWA. I encourage everyone to take full advantage of all they have to offer.

As we all can learn from one another, I would like to invite readers to submit your own stories. Do you find it hard to achieve a work-life balance? What are your experiences? What more can be done? Help us understand the challenges, and how we can work together to address them.

Maureen Adolf is president of the [Financial Women's Association](#) and senior vice president of government relations at Nelson Brown & Co., a legal and consulting firm focused on insurance. She was previously corporate vice president and head of state government affairs and policy development at Prudential Financial.

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