

Profile of Success: Amanda Gallagher, Senior Associate at New York Life Insurance Company

fwa.org/spotlight/profile-of-success-amanda-gallagher-senior-associate-at-new-york-life-insurance-company/

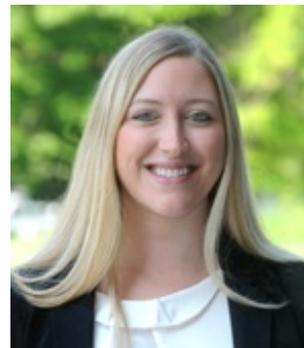
How did Amanda do it, especially in tech? Hear from her on what it's really like when first stepping into a leadership role, tips for women just entering the workforce, and more!

Question: How did you get into the technology side of life insurance?

A: While studying Economics at NYU, I had a technology internship that exposed me to the critical role technology plays in enabling a company's strategy. While I was tech-savvy, I hadn't been immersed in the real-world challenges businesses face, and how technology can be leveraged to solve them in new ways. I was fascinated. From there, I started as a developer working on technology applications that enable our company to communicate more effectively with clients, and have since moved into various other roles focusing on our technology strategy.

Question: What are some challenges you have overcome or seen others overcome within the life insurance sector?

A: For me, becoming a first-time leader was challenging in expected and unexpected ways. I quickly learned the importance of honest and open communication – how (and this applies to any industry) a team's success starts with a shared understanding of goals and expectations from their leadership, and a vision that is clear, challenging and important. When you step into a leadership role, people often start looking to you for answers, and I think it's important to actively encourage questions. Encouraging curiosity encourages new ideas, and can empower a team to not only find problems, but also solutions. I try to apply all experiences to future situations – successes, failures and lessons learned. And if at any point I felt I struggled in a situation, I try to view failures as moments of opportunity – jumping off points for continual improvement.



Amanda Gallagher, Senior Associate at New York Life Insurance Company

Question: What are some new trends in technology altering this space?

A: Technology is powerful in any industry, because of its ability to transcend boundaries and connect people. Big innovations are happening at the intersection of industries, when people from different perspectives and backgrounds are able to come together to collaborate on an idea or challenge. People will always be a company's most valuable asset, and technology enables us to connect them in new and efficient ways.

Making sense of 'big data', and the technology tools that enable us to do so, is also huge. There is a ton of data out there, and companies that are able to rationalize, simplify and gain real insights from this data are able to improve their customer experience, make progress in

previously untapped markets and price products more effectively.

Question: What advice would you give to women just entering the workforce?

A: Taking true ownership of your career is so important. I have had fantastic leaders, mentors and sponsors, but also learned early on that at the end of the day, I am responsible for the growth and path my career takes – that thought can be scary at first, but ultimately I’ve found it empowering. Hold yourself accountable to the goals you want to achieve. Continually seek feedback and adapt. Don’t be afraid to take risks early in your career – you might find a passion, or discover new potential in yourself.

Question: What are some key steps needed to increase the amount of women present in your industry?

A: Awareness and exposure to the career options available earlier in their education. Specialized skills, like those you’ll find in finance, technology and other STEM careers, often have wonderful high school- and college-level programs that are pipelines to success in these careers, but women need to be exposed to these options early, to develop the interest and skills necessary for success. I volunteer my time with non-profit organizations that focus on increasing financial literacy in women and getting young women and girls interested in technology.

Question: How has the FWA impacted you and your career?

A: I think it’s still challenging to be a woman with ambition. There are still headwinds, and having a robust support network of women – whether they be mentors, peers or friends – has been invaluable to me. I think it’s important that as any individual progresses in their career, they don’t forget to reach their hand back to help others, as someone once might have done for them. The FWA has a strong record of paying it forward – before I was a member, I first got involved by speaking on a panel to young professionals in the [FWA/Baruch Mentorship Program](#). These types of opportunities helped by connecting me with senior leaders at my company who were already involved with the FWA, and these women became my role models, champions and friends.