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# BOOMER BANTER

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## GETTING TO THE HEART OF YOUR RETIRING CLIENTS' WISH LISTS MEANS COMING DOWN TO THEIR LEVELS.

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you've been in this business a decade or more, the phrase "become a trusted advisor" is perhaps a bit redundant. But thinking realistically, what phrase better captures what you really ought to want to become for your clients, especially now that you're dealing with boomers who may be in the midst of a trickier-said-than-done retirement transitioning period?

Last November's Take This Case and Solve It conference held in Toronto, presented by Evelyn Jacks and The Knowledge Bureau in partnership with *Advisor's Edge*, captured the essence of how to become that trusted advisor, not just through the interactive audience practice of breaking down a case study (see *AE*, February 2007) but in talks given by Jacks, B.C. advisor Nancy Shewfelt and Toronto-based Richard Croft, president of R.N. Croft Financial Group Inc.

In her discussion on boomers, taxes and their economic impacts, Jacks points out the significance of an advisor's role as a natural steward of his or her clients' resources, particularly during what may be a difficult transition from working life to retired life. "You have this distinction today of working in a demographic sweet spot; you have the opportunity to capture the largest transfer of wealth on an intergenerational basis in the history of Canada," heralds Jacks, noting Canada has not only the largest cohort of boomers in the world but the youngest as well—meaning they don't relate to the word "retirement," in the manner

of their predecessors. "They're wealthy, educated, and affluent. They have a demand for a different kind of service and their impending retirements—and the fact that the word retirement really means nothing to them; it's not a word that they can relate to," she says. When you think about the fact that 10 million boomers represent nearly half the country's taxpayers, and are going to be exiting the marketplace, it's in an advisor's best interest to think about his or her role "not just as the most trusted advisor as it relates to the investment side of things, but ... as a strategist for the overall plan, and as a quarterback for the overall plan," says Jacks. That means test your mettle when it comes to managing other professional relationships. For example, if you're the accountant, ask yourself if you can manage the relationship with the financial advisors; and if you're the financial advisor sitting at the head of the table, then figure out how best to develop and manage your team of experts.

That's what Nancy Shewfelt does with her Wellington West Capital Inc., White Rock, B.C. practice. With 25 years under her belt and running a \$380 million business serving between 800 and 900 households, Shewfelt calls herself a relationship manager. Her power comes naturally by keeping it real throughout all her client interactions. With her West Coast breezy banter, she might sound like your big sister or cool aunt, but her style works to strength-

en client relationships. “I like to talk from reality; the whole thing is just a puzzle and no client walks in expecting us to be experts on everything. I’m not an expert ... what I am is a quarterback on the consultant [side],” she says.

While she has bits of knowledge on all areas of a client’s portfolio, if there’s a particular area that requires pointed at-

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tention, say a tax-related item, she’ll turn to her team of eight people and select the right ones to assist. “When markets go up and markets go down,

I could care less about my own portfolio; these people’s whole retirement is on our shoulders, so we take it seriously. We call in the experts; we don’t pretend to know everything, we just bring them in,” she explains.

A good trick to partnering with other experts, especially for those advisors looking to expand their businesses, is to find people who possess skill sets opposite to your own. In Shewfelt’s case, that would be husband Clark Shewfelt, vice-president, senior investment advisor of the Shewfelt McMillan team. “He’s the brains, I’m the personality!” Shewfelt jokes, but adds the relationship works because when and if the client reaches the point where he or she can’t quite understand Clark’s taxonomy spiel, she’ll rein them in.

When working one-on-one with her retiring clients, Shewfelt says there are four key objectives to look at: the vision, the process, your connection and your expectations. Creating the vision happens during the discovery process, which involves what she calls “working the client up.” That includes all the small talk and whatever it takes to put them at ease. Likely, you’ve never met these people before, she explains, yet you know they’ve got about \$10 million.

“You have to find in the first couple of minutes something that you can connect on with them—whether it’s how did they come to you, were they referred by an accountant, by a client—find something to warm them up. They might be equally as intimidated as you, so you need to relax them,” she says.

See life from their perspective. Understand their situations and be the planner from within their shoes. Start by asking: “What is your business? Tell me about it. How well do you run it? How did you start it? What made you successful? What are the things you’re most proud of that you’ve accomplished in your business? What will you miss the most?

“Really understand what their business is all about, and

make sure you write notes about this because it’s telling you a lot about who the client is and what matters to them in life—that’s going to tell you the secret to what makes them happy—which is really what we’re trying to find out,” she notes.

Next, look for visuals. Watch body language and look for intense pride or stress they might show you. Then, get personal. What are their hobbies; their lifestyles; what would a perfect day in the life of that client be? Understand who that client is and what are his worries and his stresses about retirement. Ask about family relationships and find out favourite things the client likes to do—and keep jotting it down, Shewfelt explains.

You can get a good sense of a client’s risk profile too by asking these types of questions. “If the client has just told you that a perfect day in her life is to go putter around in her garden, read a book and go visit with her friends, this is not a risk-taker. And if [her husband] is telling you that all he wants to do is go hang-gliding or skydiving or race a car, you know that he has a bigger risk tolerance. So your risk is associated with your lifestyle. And you shouldn’t be pushing someone who is not a risk-taker into high-risk investments.” <sup>AE</sup> **STASESON**