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THE MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN WHO ADVISE, PLAN, SPEND, SAVE AND GIVE



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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Next Chapter



Nicole Garrison and Shareen Luze

When the first issue of *Prosper•US* magazine hit my mailbox a year and a half ago, I remember devouring every story on every page. I knew our firm held a strong community of amazing women, but I was blown away and inspired by their powerful stories of personal and professional growth.

That's why I am so honored to take on the role of co-editor of *Prosper•US*, working alongside Nicole Garrison, our director of communications, whose journalistic background not only brought this publication to life but helped it become a coveted resource for our female advisor community.

I realize that I am stepping into this role—and into my broader role as head of Culture and Field Experience—at a truly interesting time. Over the past 18 months, in response to the global pandemic, we as a firm and a society have had to evolve. How we work, how we shop and how we learn are different today than they were a year and a half ago.

Navigating these uncharted waters has required a new kind of creativity and resilience that many of us didn't know we had! But we've pivoted, adapted and, in many respects, grown stronger. That's why this issue is really focused on stories of resilience and powering through seemingly insurmountable barriers.

From our cover story on the LSS group, the all-female team of advisors breaking barriers

in what is still a male-dominated industry; to the insights from Linda Donovan, who lost her husband at a very young age and had to adapt to life as a single mother while building her business; to Ayesha Yasin's story about how she pushed against religious and gender-based stereotypes to become a financial advisor 20 years ago—there are so many examples of how #WomenofRBC have stood strong and persevered.

We tell these stories because they are inspirational and can give others the courage and strength to keep going. But in celebrating such hard-fought successes, it's important to also acknowledge the toll they can take on our mental, emotional and sometimes physical health.

Those of you who know me know how passionate I am about fostering open dialogue about the importance of good mental health—both at home and in the workplace. That's why, in this issue and moving forward, we will also highlight

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OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS, IN RESPONSE TO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, WE AS A FIRM AND A SOCIETY HAVE HAD TO EVOLVE. HOW WE WORK, HOW WE SHOP, AND HOW WE LEARN ARE DIFFERENT TODAY THAN THEY WERE A YEAR AND A HALF AGO.”

resources and offer practical advice on how to foster that health. You'll note our listing of those resources in this issue's Balance Report, but expect to see them called out in other stories, too.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this newest issue of *Prosper•US* as much as I've enjoyed being a part of putting it together for the first time. Nicole and I would love to hear from you about which pieces resonated most and what you'd like to see more of in future issues. This is your magazine as much as it is ours!

Shareen Luze

SHAREEN LUZE

Head of Culture and Field Experience
RBC Wealth Management-U.S.

PHOTO BY CAITLIN ABRAMS; COVER PHOTO BY JORDAN HOLLENDER

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PODCAST PICKS

WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO

The shows of the moment, as recommended by the #WomenofRBC.

“For something light and fun while on a walk, I listen to *SmartLess*, or *Fake Doctors*, *Real Friends* since I was a fan of *Scrubs*.”
—**LAURI DROSTER**, Complex Director, St. Paul, MN

“Mike Rowe's *The Way I Heard It*. I love to try and guess the who or what he is talking about.”
—**KIMBERLY SNOW-LAWLOR**, Branch Director, Nashua, NH

“*Unlocking Us* by Brené Brown is a must-listen during this time. She discusses ‘first time’ events, when you should give yourself a little grace to figure things out.”
—**KAREN SHAW**, Senior Financial Associate, Lufkin, TX

“*Be You* by Jill Herman, about discovering who you are and being the real you. I find it energizing and uplifting.”
—**ANN SENNE**, Head of Advice and Solutions, Minneapolis, MN

“*The Bulwark Podcast* with Charlie Sykes and *Slate Money*.”
—**DARLA J. KASHIAN**, Financial Advisor, Minneapolis, MN

“*The Jordan B Peterson Podcast*, *Hidden Brain* and *Making Sense* with Sam Harris.”
—**NICOLE BAILEY**, Financial Advisor, Greenwood Village, CO

“*The Ed Mylett Show*. He touches on entrepreneurship, health, politics and more. I find the content uplifting and thought-provoking.”
—**TARA SEEGER**, Financial Advisor, Midland, TX

“Michael Kitces's *Financial Advisor Success Podcast*. I learn about what other advisors do to generate business and help clients.”
—**LINDA SAMA**, Financial Advisor, Jericho, NY

“*Women at Work*. Candid conversations with leading industry experts on issues facing working women.”
—**TRACEY H. PEARSON**, Financial Advisor, Nashville, TN

“Rob Dial Jr.'s *The Mindset Mentor*. The topics are so relatable to personal and professional life. It is always a great way to start my day!”
—**CORINNE C. PATTESON**, Financial Advisor, Baltimore, MD

“**ECONTALK**: I ALWAYS LEARN SOMETHING AND SOMETIMES GET A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON A FAMILIAR TOPIC.”

—**JENNIFER SWETLAND**, Financial Advisor, Lancaster, PA

SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

Wealth Planning in Widowhood

BY LINDA DONOVAN

In my early 30s, I fell in love with a fellow financial advisor. We married and combined our lives and practices. A few years later, when I was just one month pregnant, my husband passed away unexpectedly. The life I'd imagined—raising our twin girls, working as a team—evaporated. I was thrust into a new reality where responsibilities I thought we would share suddenly fell on my shoulders.

In the 14 years since, I've grieved with many clients who have also lost spouses. There is a lot of financial uncertainty in the immediate aftermath, so it's important to build a checklist and set priorities. It's a critical time for budgeting, to ensure they're preparing for retirement while addressing current expenses.

As a first step, I advise clients to meet with an estate planning attorney to review their late spouse's will, then create a list of assets and liabilities. It's also a time to grapple with tax implications. I suggest meeting with an accountant to review changes to their situation.

I know how hard it is to hear “It's going to be OK” after such a tragedy. Many years have passed, and now I can truly say I'm OK. My twins are thriving, and we learned to enjoy life again. It's important to allow ourselves the proper time to grieve, but it's also important to look ahead.

Linda Donovan is a Houston-based financial advisor.



IMAGES: FTIARE / SHUTTERSTOCK (HEADPHONES)

GROUP SYNC

WE the People

In a virtual world, the brand-new employee resource group Women Empowered forged cross-country connections. BY NICOLE DUNHAM



When the pandemic hit, RBC Wealth Management's Women Empowered (WE)—an employee resource group committed to cultivating community and support for female employees—was only a few months old and suddenly sentenced to screens. But for the 800 members spread across state lines, a virtual world presented an opportunity to expand WE's reach.

A lengthy string of virtual events became a lifeline for the group. Shortly after remote work began, WE tapped Romy Newman of Fairygodboss for a skill everyone needed a crash course in: advocating for yourself in a virtual world. Newman tackled everything from setting WFH boundaries to flexing your communication muscles.

Several months later, Ann Senne, the group's executive sponsor, hosted a conversation with Dr. Stacy Coleman Symons about the science and benefits of mindfulness—just when we thought we might lose ours.

“Mindfulness is such a powerful tool to take our minds and bodies beyond calm and into well-being,” says Senne. “This conversation offered practical advice and strategies on how we can be kind to ourselves and be present in the moment so we can truly enjoy our experiences.”

WE leadership then handed the baton to members, who hosted virtual workshops sharing their talents, like sewing masks, shaking—or stirring—cocktails and “yoga-ing” away the stress.

With so many members impacted by the killing of George Floyd, the organization also launched collaborations with other employee resource groups to shine a light on the intersec-

tionality of being a woman and a person of color. During these discussions, a panel of female employees shared how being a woman of color has impacted them, and Mikki Kendall appeared for a conversation on her book *Hood Feminism*, sharing practical advice on lifting others up in community.

Women Empowered, open to all RBC employees—not just women—turns two in January and currently includes about 200 male members. It continues to host virtual events, connecting members and fostering inclusive, supportive relationships.

“As an extrovert, being isolated at home was hard during the pandemic,” says Autumn Farrington, a financial advisor out of Denver. “While I kept in contact with my team and clients via telephone, I longed for the social interaction. WE hosted many events, both fun and educational, that provided a place to be social in a virtual world, gain some knowledge and meet new friends. I look forward to future WE events, even when the pandemic is truly behind us.”

Lead Like an Ally

As a father of three daughters, WE member Jim Monner knows firsthand how male allies can positively influence the lives of young women. The senior director of Technology and Services at RBC Wealth Management says encouragement from male coaches and teachers has made a noticeable difference in his daughters' lives that he hopes will carry on when they enter the professional world. “I'm much more aware of inequities in work opportunities for women now than I was early in my career. I also see how societal pressures negatively impact the confidence of young women and how they can have a lasting impact. I'm fortunate to be in a position to do something in response.” —JENNY PAFFEL



Nicole Dunham is the manager of Fixed Income Business Development at RBC Wealth Management and cofounder of WE.

KUDOS

Honorable Mentions

RBC Wealth Management-U.S. was named the Outstanding Practice award winner by *InvestmentNews* in its 2021 Excellence in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Awards. The firm was also among the companies on the Best Places to Work list for a third year in the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*.



PRO TIPS

COUNSELING CLIENTS THROUGH DIVORCE

Decades of building wealth make it more challenging to divide assets in an equitable manner. Here are some areas to consider. **BY ANGIE O'LEARY**

For certain empty nesters, the pandemic was a preview of what retirement with their spouse might look like. Many didn't like what they saw and are calling it quits. These later-in-life dissolutions are known as "gray divorces," and they are on the rise. The financial implications of a divorce are many, and being aware of these sometimes-overlooked considerations will help your client think comprehensively.

Taxes

Nearly every financial decision and every asset comes with a tax bill. Understanding the tax implications is important, so consulting an accountant or tax advisor can help to determine what makes the most sense for a couple's situation before divvying up assets.

Insurance

Life insurance often plays a key role. As alimony terminates on the death of the payer, life insurance may be used as a tool to guarantee a stream of income if the paying spouse passes, and naming the ex-spouse as beneficiary may be required as part of a divorce.

Retirement Assets

Retirement assets that have accumulated over 25-plus years can represent a substantial part of a couple's wealth. Splitting those assets comes with some special considerations—and often a second step. A qualified domestic relations order, or QDRO, recognizes joint marital interest in the retirement assets, giving the ex-spouse a share of those assets.



Social Security

If you're ending a marriage that's longer than 10 years, you're generally entitled to half of your spouse's Social Security, providing that the benefit is greater than what you would qualify for and that you remain unmarried. If you qualify for your own Social Security, but the amount is lower, you will get an additional amount up to the 50 percent spousal benefit.

Estate Matters

You should update your estate plan as soon as legally possible. For example, you will

want to update your health care proxy, power of attorney and will; change beneficiaries on your retirement accounts and life insurance; retitle assets; and amend your trust.

Financial Implications for Women

Women face unique financial headwinds. They often earn less than men and start retirement with smaller amounts saved and lower Social Security benefits, so they can be in a particularly precarious position after a divorce. When coupled with a later-life divorce, the financial outcome can be disastrous, especially for women who were primary caregivers to the children.

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Angie O'Leary is head of Wealth Planning at RBC Wealth Management-U.S.

MOVIE NIGHT

Thinking Outside the Box (Office)

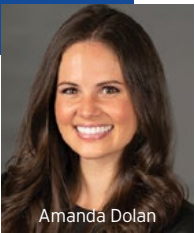
RBC Wealth Management invited advisors and their clients to safely celebrate summer at an al fresco showing of *The Mighty Ducks* in the movie's home state. On the football field at Huntington Bank Stadium, home of the University of Minnesota Golden Gophers, 200 mighty Minnesotans pitched lawn chairs and spread blankets to savor the sultry late-July evening. The event was thanks to RBC Wealth Management's partnership with Gopher Sports Properties and Ronald McDonald House Charities®, Upper Midwest, providing sponsorship of families with ill and injured children so they can attend home games as a fun outing together.



RECRUITMENT 2.0

Let's Get Digital

New Head of Advisor Recruiting Amanda Dolan streamlines the recruiting and onboarding systems to adapt to a virtual workplace. **BY HANNAH PEDERSON**



Any time an advisor moves to a new firm, it creates a disruption for both the advisor and their clients. But at RBC Wealth Management-U.S., technology is helping to ease that friction.

Leveraging digital tools like e-signature and online account opening and servicing, the firm has brought efficiency to the transition process for advisors and clients. The result? New RBC advisors and their clients' assets are onboarded to the RBC platform much more quickly and effortlessly, creating an all-around better experience for everyone involved.

The groundwork for this approach was laid a few years ago, but the real turning point came in early 2020 when Amanda Dolan—who was promoted to head of Advisor Recruiting in June—and her team built and rolled out a virtual recruiting and onboarding program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"All of a sudden, the things we did in person weren't possible, and we had to pivot," Dolan says.

The new process has proven so seamless that it's reshaping the recruiting experience at the firm today and into the future.

Even as offices throughout the country begin to reopen, a digitally enabled approach to recruiting and onboarding is still more important than ever. With Dolan leading the charge, RBC Wealth Management will be able to boost the competitive recruiting position the firm has established in recent years to a whole new level.

Currently, Dolan and her team are working to

enhance the digital approach implemented in the early stages of the pandemic to continue to accelerate onboarding and deliver solutions throughout the entire transition.

"We're continuing to digitize the recruiting and onboarding experience so that RBC Wealth Management is not only the firm of choice for advisors looking to grow their business but also the place where it's smoothest to make a transition."

Dolan has spent her whole career at RBC Wealth Management, first joining the firm in 2010. She's held a variety of roles throughout her tenure, and before her recent promotion to head of Advisor Recruiting, she spent a year as advisor onboarding experience manager.

She has also been involved in the firm's multiyear technology transformation, which has introduced state-of-the-art, integrated fintech tools and services designed to modernize the way advisors and clients interact and collaborate.

In fact, her work on the virtual recruiting platform contributed to one of RBC's most successful recruiting years on record—during a time when it would have been easy to put recruiting on a back burner.

"The years we'd already invested in RBC's digital transformation gave us the agility we needed to continue to be successful in the quick move to remote work," Dolan says. "And it helped us show the value of a digital recruiting and onboarding experience to advisors and clients."

RACE RECAP

Helping Feet

The dopamine rush of a jog has nothing on the brain boost from RBC Wealth Management's annual Race for the Kids. The event, hosted in four cities around the country, came to St. Paul, Minnesota, on Saturday, August 7. RBC employees, friends and family rallied for the run despite rain, raising more than \$120,000 to support Ronald McDonald House Charities®, Upper Midwest, which aids families dealing with a child's serious illness or injury. A global virtual race took place on October 16 and 17, allowing anyone to participate through an app. This is the 12th year of the event, which supports 35 kids' charities in 19 countries.

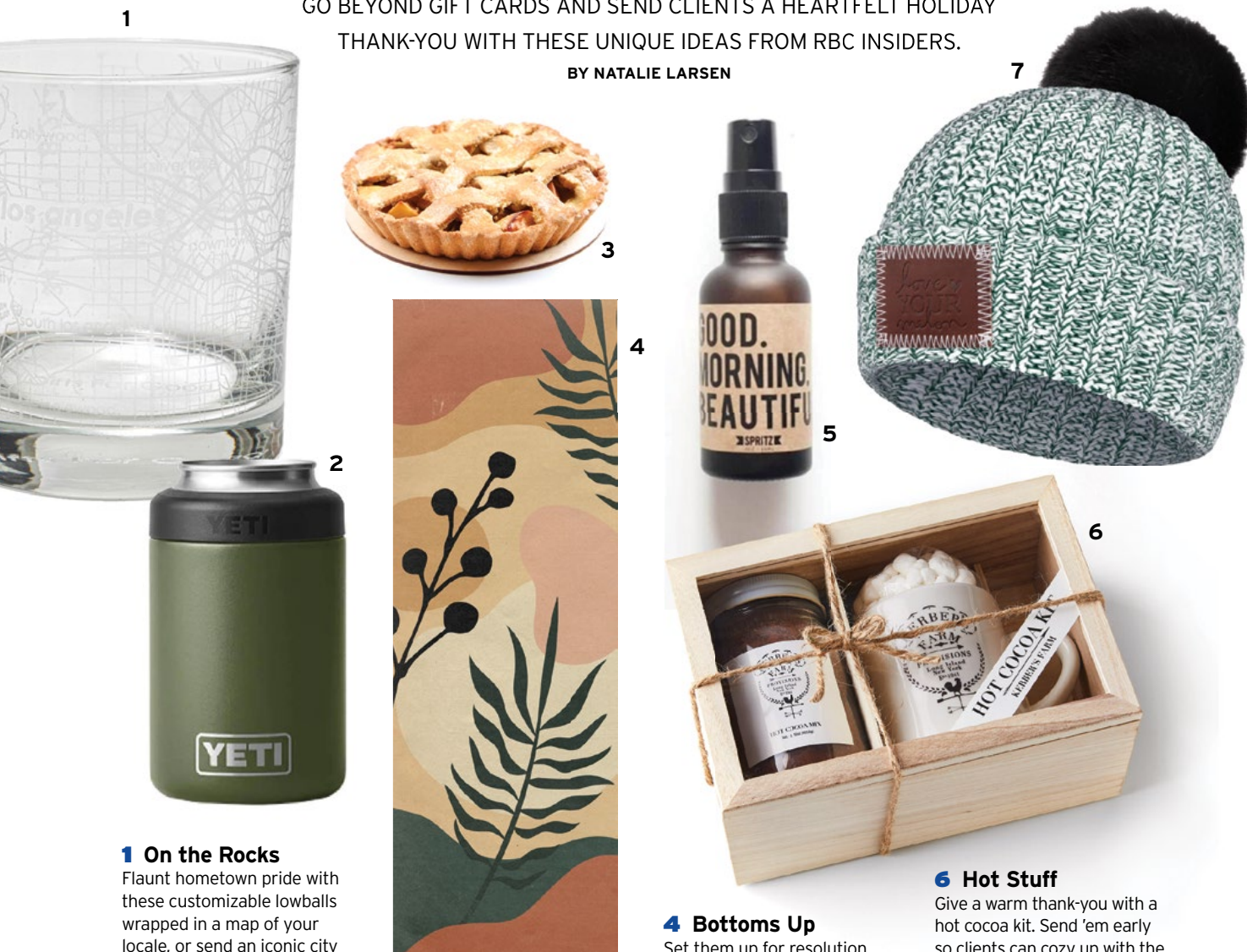
// You can still donate at rbcraceforthekids.com.



The Present Moment

GO BEYOND GIFT CARDS AND SEND CLIENTS A HEARTFELT HOLIDAY THANK-YOU WITH THESE UNIQUE IDEAS FROM RBC INSIDERS.

BY NATALIE LARSEN



1 On the Rocks

Flaunt hometown pride with these customizable lowballs wrapped in a map of your locale, or send an iconic city grid like NYC or LA. *Map rocks glasses* (\$35.90) from *Gifts for Good*, giftsforgood.com. —Jaime Sahlstrom, Financial Advisor, Minneapolis, MN

2 What's Cooler Than Being Cool?

Known for its ultra-insulated goodies, YETI's colorful cold-keepers make a great base for personalization. *Can insulator* (\$24.99) from YETI, yeti.com. —Elizabeth Schroder, Financial Advisor, Westport, CT

3 I Only Have Pies for You

Warm hearts by hand-delivering pies before Thanksgiving. "We spend a whole day delivering pies for our top clients. The pie and personal delivery are very appreciated, and we sometimes have an opportunity to meet family members." —Jennifer Swetland, Financial Advisor, Lancaster, PA

4 Bottoms Up

Set them up for resolution keeping with an artful yoga mat. *Yoga mat* (starting at \$107) from *Big Raven Yoga*, bigravenyoga.com. —Christian Ofner, Financial Advisor, Denver, CO

5 Say It with Scents

Show them how essential they are with oils and sprays for body and home. *Good Morning Beautiful spritz* (\$25) from *Happy Spritz*, happyspritz.com. —Julie Sullivan, Branch Director, Billings, MT

6 Hot Stuff

Give a warm thank-you with a hot cocoa kit. Send 'em early so clients can cozy up with the season's first chill. *Hot cocoa kit* (\$34) from *Food52*, food52.com. —Mari Bunney, Financial Advisor, Clive, IA

7 Beanie There

The signature sign of winter: a knit hat finished with a furry pouf. And Love Your Melon donates hats to children living with cancer. *Beanie* (\$45) from *Love Your Melon*, loveyourmelon.com. —Melanie Folstad, Financial Advisor, Chevy Chase, MD

IMAGES: BIG RAVEN YOGA (YOGA MAT), PHOTO BY FOOD 52 / TY MECHAM (COCOA)

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK: FLAMINGO IMAGES (WORKOUT), MIMAGEPHOTOGRAPHY (JOURNALING)

5 Ways to Stay Healthy through the Holidays

A HEALTHY HOLIDAY SEASON DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A CONTRADICTION. CHECK OUT THESE TIPS FOR MAKING WELLNESS A PRIORITY THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST DEMANDING MONTHS OF THE YEAR. BY JENNY PAFFEL

1

Mental Health Is a Must

With the stress of family get-togethers and a growing to-do list, now's the time to prioritize your mental health. Not sure where to start? Check your workplace benefits. RBC Wealth Management supports employees with convenient telehealth medicine options as well as several programs that offer free, confidential counseling for employees and their family members. Plus, employees have access to mental health webinars. And when employees need to unwind and de-stress, they can log into the meditation app Headspace, thanks to a yearlong subscription paid for by the firm.

2

Work Out Your Way

Holly Amos, an office manager at RBC Capital Markets in Dallas, lost 50 pounds by walking over her lunch breaks while working at home during the pandemic. She joined Living Well, a healthy-living platform available to employees, to track her progress and get inspired by colleagues' posts in the newsfeed. PrimeGo and LIFT session apps are also available to employees and provide on-demand workouts, planning tools and scheduled

reminders to move during the day. Both programs are free and can be customized to fit your fitness level.

3

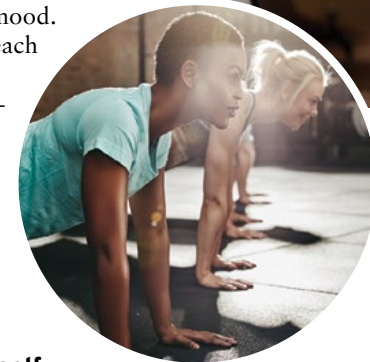
Gratitude Is an Attitude

Research shows that taking stock of what you are thankful for can lower stress and improve your mood. Set aside time each day to make notes in a gratitude journal. And when you want to smile, go back and read your list.

4

Reward Yourself

Need a little extra motivation? Treat yourself. When you reach a goal (fitness or otherwise), recognize your hard work with a reward. Immerse yourself in your favorite hobby or celebrate with a special meal at home. Companies like RBC Wealth Management know that sometimes a little extra nudge is needed on a health journey. That's where the Living Well platform can help by encouraging employees to complete healthy activities and earn points that can be exchanged for gift cards.



5

The Benefits of a Buddy

Whether it's a colleague, your best friend or a family member, lean on your great relationships through the holidays. Your workout buddy can keep you accountable, and your best friend is there to listen to whatever's on your mind. Research from the Mayo Clinic shows that adults with strong social support are less likely to have significant health problems like depression, high blood pressure or a high body mass index (BMI). Studies have even shown that those with friends are likely to live longer than those with fewer social connections.

Jenny Paffel is manager of integrated content and communications. She joined RBC Wealth Management in June 2021.



TOP TALENT

FOR THE LSS GROUP, A MOVE TO RBC WEALTH MANAGEMENT
CHARTS A NEW COURSE ON WALL STREET AND BEYOND.

BY JENNY PRICE + PHOTOS BY JORDAN HOLLENDER

When Eden Lopez, Leslie Schwartz and Paula Steinberg each left college in search of a career, there was only one place that had the heartbeat of energy and opportunity they were looking for—New York City.

Fast-forward to the present, and on any given day, one of the three women who lead the LSS Group could be jetting off to Los Angeles or Nashville for face time with top clients in the music and entertainment industries. But New York, the hub of finance, is where it all began. The city is both their hometown and their headquarters. And it's where they grew their careers and built a 25-year partnership that fuels the \$1.2 billion business they brought to RBC Wealth Management's Manhattan branch from J.P. Morgan last year.

"New York was traditionally where you came to test your mettle," Schwartz says. "Being a woman in business anywhere in the world still requires knocking down glass ceilings and having the courage to persevere in spite of roadblocks. We are all women with backbones, but that alone wouldn't suffice."

The trio followed similar paths into finance, starting out as assistants at the same large firm before moving up the ladder and navigating the power structures of Wall Street. "It's sort of an unusual path, because most assistants don't become senior partners," Lopez says. "But our story is one that shows people you can start anywhere, grow in this industry, and you can be successful."

A BIG MOVE THAT PAID OFF

While Lopez, Schwartz and Steinberg loved the pace, excitement and diversity of working at the center of the finance industry, there was something missing. They didn't have immediate access to the resources they knew they needed to keep growing their business and serving clients the way they wanted.

The three managing directors found what they were looking for when they made the move to RBC Wealth

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EDEN
LOPEZ



“IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, PEOPLE TEND TO PEAK AT A VERY EARLY AGE. IT’S OUR JOB TO MAKE SURE THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW FOR THEIR SUCCESS.”

Management, where they knew several key people in finance and several former colleagues had moved, last fall. “I feel like we’ve all come back home,” Steinberg says. “It’s a good feeling.”

While transitioning their billion-dollar book of business was a difficult feat in the weeks leading up to the 2020 election in the middle of a pandemic, it was made much easier by teams that RBC Wealth Management flew in to help with the details and paperwork. “They under-promised and over-delivered,” Lopez says. “That doesn’t happen—ever.”

LSS Group, which runs a significant amount of fixed income business, was drawn to RBC Wealth Management in part by its fixed income platform, which Schwartz calls “second to none.” When they discussed making a move, the three saw a chance to collaborate with the firm’s top investment bankers, traders and leaders in ways they never could before at other firms.

“To have that opportunity was kind of mind blowing to us,” Steinberg says. “We had the resources and the full infrastructure behind us to build and potentially double the business. ... We’re not even a year into it, and we’ve got a couple billion dollars under management.”

Another benefit at RBC Wealth Management is a supportive environment and a culture of mentorship that’s been hard to find on Wall Street, all three women say. “It starts from the top and it trickles on down,” Schwartz says. “There is a real sense of camaraderie and collaboration.”

STRAIGHT TALK WITH TOP CLIENTS

The LSS Group has managed money for people in entertainment for decades, developing a niche based on their understanding of the business and the unique needs of those who work in it. Those relationships frequently start with a call from a business manager they already

know who has a client in need of guidance to control their spending and start putting money aside.

“In the entertainment industry, people tend to peak at a very early age. It’s our job to make sure they have something to show for their success,” Lopez says. “Not everybody is going to become the next Bruce Springsteen or the next Garth Brooks or the next Rolling Stones.”

There’s also often a need to help these unique clients avoid the pitfalls of get-rich-quick schemes that people in their lives pitch them, she says. Their role as financial advisors is to make sure clients understand that a promise of getting rich quickly doesn’t come without a lot of risk, and that the smarter move is to develop a long-term plan for their financial future.

“I always say, ‘I’m here to protect you from yourself,’” Lopez says. “They’ve got tons of years ahead of them to figure out how to support themselves and their families. It’s a time they need a team of professionals in the room that will make sure they don’t go broke, that will help control their spending. This is why we work hand in hand with business managers.”

Another plus in joining RBC Wealth Management was its ownership of City National Bank, a connection that resonated with a large share of their entertainment industry clients who were already doing business there. The ability to collaborate with City National mattered because many of those entertainment clients operate their finances quite differently from those in traditional business sectors.

“We don’t just run portfolios on the credit side. It’s not just bonds; it’s not just equities—it’s also the debt side of the balance sheet,” Schwartz says. “It’s also lending and things that collateralize what are not necessarily the most traditional assets.”

Because entertainment industry clients like in-person conversations when possible, the women of the LSS Group are often on the road. “In the last six weeks, I’ve been in L.A. three times, and I’ve been in Nashville twice,” Lopez says. “We’re hustling.”

MANHATTAN TO MUSIC CITY

Nashville is a long way from New York. And while three women working at the center of finance wouldn’t seem to have much in common with up-and-coming female singer-songwriters, they are kindred spirits in the same struggle.

Having reached a level of success in a field where women make up less than a quarter of financial advisors, the LSS Group saw an opportunity to help women facing barriers in country music. Two years ago, they became the first-ever presenting sponsor for Song Suffragettes, a singer and songwriter collective that offers a forum for overlooked talent.

“I’m so proud of them,” Schwartz says. “I feel so good that we can impact their hopefulness and their talent and give them a platform.”

Song Suffragettes launched in 2014 in response to the glaring lack of opportunity for women in Nashville—just 10 percent of artists who get played on country radio are women. “The numbers are astounding in Nashville of what percentage of female singer-songwriters actually make it,” Steinberg says.

Over time, the group has involved more

than 300 artists. Twenty-one have received recording contracts, and 49 have landed publishing deals. Its continued success wouldn’t be possible without the backing of the LSS Group, says Todd Cassetty, the Nashville music executive who founded Song Suffragettes.

“In addition to being titans in the financial world, they’re also the gold standard for women supporting other women,” Cassetty said when thanking Lopez, Schwartz and Steinberg during the Song Suffragettes’ seventh anniversary celebration in March.

About 100 music lovers pack The Listening Room in Nashville for each Monday-night performance, including prominent industry leaders that the LSS Group frequently invite as their guests to connect them with emerging talent.

Lopez recalls the moment a few months ago when she introduced a young female artist to a senior music industry executive at a Song Suffragettes event.

“She was shaking. She couldn’t even believe this was happening to her,” Lopez says. “I pulled her aside and I said, ‘Take a breath. You’ve got this.’ ... And she killed it. That’s the kind of stuff that makes it all worth it.”

Eden Lopez (middle) at a Song Suffragettes event in Nashville in 2021.



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LESLIE
SCHWARTZ



“WE STRIVE TO BE THE EXAMPLE OF ONE PLUS ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS FIVE. THAT’S HOW WE’VE ALWAYS WORKED. IT’S A SISTERHOOD.”

CARING FOR CLIENTS DURING COVID

While their lives were fast-paced as they managed the transition to RBC Wealth Management, Lopez, Schwartz and Steinberg noticed many of their clients were slowing down or pressing pause. As their travel, daily commutes, fundraising dinners and never-ending lists of kid activities were put on hold by the pandemic, they wanted to take a breath and think more broadly about their futures.

During the long months working remotely, Steinberg would step away from her home office to walk outside and talk on the phone with clients who were taking a break from their computer screens to do the same. Those conversations offered a chance to better understand what clients were thinking about and led to stronger relationships, she says. Money took up about 5 percent of the conversations—95 percent was focused on other topics, especially family life during the pandemic.

“Whether you had a million dollars or half billion dollars, people were uncomfortable, at best, and really

scared and without a playbook,” Steinberg says. “People are always around on the good days. To be around when things are uncomfortable and stay the course and be in touch with people on issues where there was a lot of uncertainty and there continues to be uncertainty—I think that that went far.”

Lopez says that while they initially worried that the relationships they had worked so hard to build over coffees, lunches and office visits would suffer, they soon realized there was an opportunity to make stronger connections. They started by doing more video calls to see clients’ faces and devoted more time to those meetings.

“All of a sudden, we had larger chunks of uninterrupted time where we could really get to know them—their hopes, their dreams, their fears,” Lopez says. “As we move closer to in-person meetings with clients again, we hope that those meetings will continue to be longer than they have been in the past.”

LSS Group also found creative ways to support clients. For parents who confessed to struggling while working at home with kids, they sent fun activities or dropped off coffee or lunch. They provided a list of delivery options

if clients felt they couldn’t leave the house for groceries, household necessities or prescriptions. They shared information about apps to stay social and engaged with family and friends, and they even set up virtual wine tastings.

“I don’t see how we can ever go back to the way things were—not entirely, at least,” Lopez says. “There are things the pandemic taught us that made us better as advisors and as humans—namely, how to connect with clients on a deeper, more meaningful level.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

The three women brought 100 years of collective experience to RBC Wealth Management. As they look back and look forward, they feel a sense of pride and see a wealth of possibilities.

“It feels amazing to have a solid and loyal client base that has strengthened over time, as well as the confi-

dence to be able to execute with the resources of this wonderful firm,” Steinberg says.

Lopez says that to survive in this business and still be successful after all these years, with the obstacles they’ve faced, is a badge of honor. “If you’re in this industry and you’re a few decades in, you’re a rock star,” she says. “It says something about you as a woman.”

The global resources they can more easily access at RBC Wealth Management are already proving to be critical to their success, Schwartz says. “There is this sense that we haven’t begun to scratch the surface. ... To feel like there’s so much potential is a very thrilling thing.” ■

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1+1+1=5

When one member of the LSS trio can’t make it to an important meeting or trip, another steps up. That’s been their story through marriages, different phases of motherhood, divorce and tragic loss. “We have each other’s backs in all kinds of weather,” Steinberg says, noting that the three are in touch 24-7 on issues both professional and personal and can finish each other’s sentences.

“What we’ve learned over the years is that you can’t do everything 100 percent. There is no balance in that,” Steinberg says. “Something’s going to fall, and the goal was always to see how many balls you can catch and hope that you catch the ones that are the priority first. And the others, you just try to manage the downside.”

One of the ways they manage the demands of their work is being there for one another when it matters most. “If Eden wanted to be at every one of her kids’ events, she damn well was going to be there if we could help it and cover for her,” Steinberg says. “Because it was important to her and was important to the kids.”

At the start of the pandemic, when markets were extremely volatile, Lopez was hospitalized for seven weeks with an autoimmune illness

not related to COVID. “That was a really true test of our partnership, our friendship, our family,” Lopez says. “And our business did not skip a beat. My partners stepped up, and they made it so that I knew it was all going to be OK.”

Schwartz says their teamwork is what adds value both for their clients and to their work culture. “We strive to be the example of one plus one equals five,” she says. “That’s how we’ve always worked. ... It’s a sisterhood.”

They recognized that same culture at RBC Wealth Management when LSS Group made its transition last year, Steinberg says. Women from all over the firm emailed them to share advice about what worked for them when they joined the firm to help them get acclimated and on track more quickly. “You really don’t see that at some of the larger firms,” Steinberg says.



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PAULA
STEINBERG



“IT FEELS AMAZING TO HAVE A SOLID AND LOYAL CLIENT BASE THAT HAS STRENGTHENED OVER TIME, AS WELL AS THE CONFIDENCE TO BE ABLE TO EXECUTE WITH THE RESOURCES OF THIS WONDERFUL FIRM.”



DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR EMPATHETIC MEASURES

In the wake of the pandemic, RBC Wealth Management names first-of-its-kind head of Culture and Field Experience to keep employees at the center.

BY JENNY PRICE • ILLUSTRATION BY GRACIA LAM

Since the start of the pandemic, the complex and competing roles and identities employees fill at home and at work have come to the forefront like never before. An exhausting juggling act for some, this confluence of events has been a tipping point for others, prompting workers to leave their jobs in startling numbers and become part of what has been dubbed “the Great Resignation.”

Many have cited a lack of corporate support, flexibility and understanding as their reasons for leaving. But at RBC Wealth Management-U.S., these new demands and stressors have given rise to the creation of a new executive role focused on workplace well-being, diversity and inclusion, and employee health.

“Never in the history of corporate America have the well-being of employees and creating a positive workplace culture been as integral to business strategy,” says Shareen Luze, who this fall became head of Culture and Field Experience at the firm. “While RBC Wealth Management has always operated with these values in mind, I am excited to take that commitment to an entirely new level and ensure they are knitted into the fabric of everything we do.”

A 15-year veteran of RBC Wealth Management, Luze will report directly to CEO Michael Armstrong and sit on the firm’s 10-member executive committee, where she will serve as a champion for employees at the highest level. She will also oversee the firm’s Corporate Citizen-

ship group and implement a new diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy that is designed to bring greater sustainability, continuity and impact to the firm’s DEI work with employees, clients, community and the financial services industry.

“Our people-centric culture has long been one of our firm’s key differentiators, which is why this new role is a natural next step for us,” says CEO Michael Armstrong. “As head of Culture and Field Experience, Shareen will help ensure that our employees, as well as our culture of respect and collaboration, are at the core of our strategy and guide each decision we make.”

The announcement is a welcome sign for employees who are critically examining company policies in the wake of the challenges of the pandemic, says Lauren Pasquarella Daley, PhD, senior director of Women and the Future of Work at Catalyst, a global nonprofit that helps companies build workplaces that work for women.

“We really see empathy as a key leadership skill, now and into the future,” she says. “Of course, the pandemic has just accelerated all of these trends. So it’s very exciting for us to see such a great organization as RBC Wealth Management creating a role that reports directly to the CEO and addresses all of these topics.”

The pandemic has accelerated a paradigm shift in many workplaces, and organizations that are forward-thinking will create people-focused positions like this, Daley says. “People have been able to bring their whole selves to work,” she says. “I don’t think there’s really any going back at this point.”

At RBC Wealth Management, giving people permission to be their true selves at work was a focus even before the pandemic began.

“We’ve had a group of female executives, including Shareen, who have long led from the heart,” says Armstrong. “They’ve talked about their daily juggles as working moms, the pressures they feel to be perfect and the challenges that they face as sisters, spouses, daughters. Whether they know it or not, they’ve organically created a culture of authenticity at our firm that I’m not sure exists to this degree anywhere else.”

The firm’s efforts matter not just to current employees, but to prospective

employees, at a time when a growing number of professionals are seeking career opportunities with organizations that have policies and practices that line up with their personal and professional priorities, including meaningful diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and offering flexible and remote work, says Daley.

“In my analysis of the future of work, a lot of the areas that this new role will be addressing are ones that we’ve highlighted as trends and areas of opportunity for building inclusion moving into the future,” Daley says. That includes the emphasis on wellness, a focus that is critical after an 18-month period of rapid change and disruption, she says.

Wellness—mental health in particular—is a personal passion of Luze, who has spoken publicly about her battle with anxiety. “I’ve been trying to be authentic and show how incredibly flawed and messy we all are,” says Luze. “We all have personal issues come up in life, and if a company is supportive during those times, that’s how we build not just loyalty but trust and community.”

As the former head of Human Resources, Luze led the firm’s efforts to support employees during the pandemic as they struggled to balance roles as caregivers and professionals. She was the driving force behind several initiatives to make sure people had the resources they needed to deal with personal issues and maintain their mental health, including funds to cover the cost of emergency child care and expanded benefits to cover virtual medical care.

Luze has championed DEI initiatives at RBC Wealth Management by supporting the development of *Real Chats*—listening forums created by the firm’s head of D&I, Wanda Brackins, which focused on issues important to employees of color—and the Lead Like an Ally workshop series, which helps employees learn how to speak up for inclusion. Luze says diversity and inclusion success in the long term will be defined by

not only RBC Wealth Management’s retention numbers but by how much its workforce looks like the rest of the world.

“It sounds pie in the sky, but I want our advisor population to be at least 50 percent women and far more ethnically and racially diverse than it is now.” ■



“WE ALL HAVE PERSONAL ISSUES COME UP IN LIFE, AND IF A COMPANY IS SUPPORTIVE DURING THOSE TIMES, THAT’S HOW WE BUILD NOT JUST LOYALTY BUT TRUST AND COMMUNITY.”

—SHAREEN LUZE

PHOTO BY CAITLIN ABRAMS (LUZE)

Celebrating Women of All Creeds, Colors and Backgrounds

BY AYESHA YASIN



People say that the small things we do on a day-to-day basis ripple into larger acts of change, like remembering to recycle, not texting and driving, or simply saying hello to strangers. But there are still those days when a cataclysmic event quickly changes your world forever: a market crash, a global pandemic or 9/11.

For me, an immigrant from Pakistan who came to the United States in the 1990s to study, work and build a better life, that is certainly the case.

I knew when I left my home in Pakistan to attend college in Washington, D.C., that I would have to work hard. I had no network in the U.S. and no family money to help propel me. I worked the night shift at my neighborhood Macy's as well as an unpaid internship at Merrill Lynch, all while keeping up with my studies. My goal was always to join the financial industry, in which my father and brother both worked, when I graduated.

They say timing is everything, and my timing was off.

I was starting my career as a financial advisor right after the tragedies of 9/11, when the perception of Muslims in America was tainted. No way could I be successful when Americans distrusted my skin color, race and religion.

And then there was my gender.

While women were making great strides—female participation in the U.S. workforce had hit a record 57.5 percent in 1990, and the decade ushered in the first woman in space, the first female attorney general, the first female secretary of state and the first

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AS THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN ENTERS THE WORKFORCE, THEY WILL BE PART OF A MORE ACCEPTING ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE SOCIETY'S PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S ROLES HAVE CHANGED DRASTICALLY OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES.

female CEO of a Fortune 100 company (Hewlett-Packard)—those gains weren't equally felt in financial services. The wealth management industry, in particular, was still composed almost entirely of men.

Despite these hurdles, I am not someone who cedes to adversity. I kept my mind focused, gave myself pep talks, found a few mentors and pretended like I didn't hear the whispers and sometimes outright insults.

My tunnel vision eventually landed me a job as a financial advisor, where I quickly brought on my first client, then my second and then my third. Now, 20 years later, at RBC Wealth Management-U.S., I have a four-person team and a very successful business serving high-net-worth clients.

As I built my business, I knew that anyone I approached might have a stereotypical wall up. But instead of addressing those biases, I explained my story slowly from the beginning, helping each person see my mental

fortitude, my perseverance and, eventually, my actual talent in managing money.

Today, 25 years later, I am proud to say that I'm not only building my own business as a managing director at RBC Wealth Management, ranked one of the best places to work, but I am also helping bring in the next generation of female advisors. My daughter has joined my team as a fourth-generation finan-

cial advisor and a first-generation American. In the end, my new country supported me in these endeavors, and for that I am grateful.

In fact, as the next generation of women enters the workforce, they will be part of a more accepting environment because society's perceptions of women's roles have changed drastically over the past two decades. This generation shouldn't have to prove that they belong in the financial industry. Women, like my daughter, should be able to enter this profession equal to their male peers.

However, the struggle for women remains real. Just because some gender barriers have been knocked down doesn't mean women don't face other inequalities every day.

Even in this day and age, there are still little immigrant girls similar to myself who are told that their accents are too thick, their religion is wrong, their education is not good enough or they don't blend in.

We must acknowledge and celebrate that women come in all shapes and sizes, from different races, religions and backgrounds, and we are all deserving of a fair chance to work and succeed.

Then—and only then—will we know we've truly achieved equality.

Ayesha Yasin is a financial advisor and managing director at RBC's Miami Complex.

Female FAs Take Home Coveted Awards

BARRON'S

TOP 100 WOMEN FINANCIAL ADVISORS

Ann Marie Etergino, Chevy Chase, MD

FORBES

TOP NEXT-GEN WEALTH ADVISORS

Hilary Doherty, Kirkland, WA

Tania Kvakic, Phoenix, AZ

WORKING MOTHER'S

TOP WEALTH ADVISOR MOMS

Shea Boulware-Creed, Peoria, AZ

Catherine Chen, San Francisco, CA

Gabrielle Clemens, Boston, MA

Hilary Doherty, Kirkland, WA

Karen English, Spokane, WA

Brooke Hawley, Seattle, WA

Tammy Higgins, Edina, MN

Heather Krause, Seattle, WA

Jackie Larson, Minnetonka, MN

Brooke McGeehan, Princeton, NJ

Beth Norman, Madison, WI

Kylie Strum, Rochester, MN

Holli Terry, Frisco, TX

The Barron's "Top 100 Women Financial Advisors" award is based on the following criteria: professionals with a minimum of 7 years financial services experience, acceptable compliance records, client retention reports and more. The financial advisor does not pay a fee to be considered for or to receive this award. This award does not evaluate the quality of services provided to clients. This is not indicative of this financial advisor's future performance. **Working Mother's Top Wealth Advisor Moms** SHOOK considered women advisors with children living at home under 21 years of age. The ranking algorithm is based on qualitative measures derived from telephone, virtual and in-person interviews and surveys, considering factors such as: service models, investing process, client retention, industry experience, review of compliance records, firm nominations, etc.; and quantitative criteria, such as assets under management and revenue generated for their firms. Investment performance is not a criterion because client objectives and risk tolerances vary, and advisors rarely have audited performance reports. Investors must carefully choose the right advisor for their own situation and perform their own due diligence. SHOOK's research and rankings provide opinions intended to help investors choose the right financial advisor and are not indicative of future performance or representative of any one client's experience. Past performance is not an indication of future results. For more information, please see www.SHOOKresearch.com. **Forbes Top Next-Gen Wealth Advisors** Source: Forbes.com (September, 2021). SHOOK considered advisors born in 1982 or later with a minimum 4 years as an advisor. Advisors have: built their own practices and lead their teams; joined teams and are viewed as future leadership; or a combination of both. Ranking algorithm is based on qualitative measures: telephone and in-person interviews to measure best practices, client retention, industry experience, credentials, review of compliance records, firm nominations; and quantitative criteria, such as: assets under management and revenue generated for their firms. Investment performance is not a criterion because client objectives and risk tolerances vary, and advisors rarely have audited performance reports. SHOOK's research and rankings provide opinions intended to help investors choose the right financial advisor and are not indicative of future performance or representative of any one client's experience. Past performance is not an indication of future results. Neither Forbes nor SHOOK Research receive compensation in exchange for placement on the ranking. For more information, please see www.SHOOKresearch.com. SHOOK is a registered trademark of SHOOK Research, LLC. The financial advisor does not pay a fee to be considered for or to receive this award. This award does not evaluate the quality of services provided to clients. This is not indicative of this financial advisor's future performance.



Your path can lead to RBC Wealth Management

Life is a journey—RBC Wealth Management can be your destination.

We provide opportunities for women with diverse backgrounds and from multiple industries to join our team of financial advisors, known for their passion for helping people and a desire to have a positive impact. If you are looking to take your career to the next level, RBC Wealth Management is where you want to be.

To learn more about how your path can lead you here, visit www.rbcwm.com/yourpath.



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