

Q&A

MICHELLE CLARY

Founder/CEO
 Piton Wealth



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Number of employees you oversee: 12

Brief background of your business:

The business began with me as a single advisor in a network. Delivering truly comprehensive financial planning for clients in the best way possible has meant continued growth and more independence. Piton Wealth now means a whole team that embodies that commitment to our clients and the growth of our service.

How did you land your current role? How long have you been in it?

I'm now in my third decade in the financial advising profession. The vision that I had for the service I wanted to deliver meant founding Piton Wealth. My role as CEO has always grown toward realizing that vision. When someone else takes over as CEO, the role will be to keep growing toward that vision.

What is the biggest challenge facing wealth advisors today?

Wealth advisors have so many tools that they can use, but the challenge is to keep all the data and work oriented toward clients' life goals. No software or technology automatically does that, and increased wealth on paper does not automatically mean the clients are achieving all the goals that they can. The advisor has to craft an appropriate plan for a client and then maintain it constantly, while not losing touch with the relationship and the fact that we are serving unique clients, each with distinct objectives and values. Our value proposition would be easy to commoditize if we were ultimately serving ubiquitous needs, but we are serving people and families with deeply rooted core objectives, each differing greatly from one another. Not losing touch with this is both the most rewarding and the most challenging part of the role we serve in our clients' lives.

What is one characteristic that you believe every leader should possess?

A leader needs to have the ability to accurately describe reality while always providing hope for the future.

What are your top three tips for someone new to investing?

To keep it simple, I will go with: (1)

start early, (2) stay the course, and (3) diversify.

What do you tell people who fret about the ups and downs of the market?

It's all about the timing in relation to your goal. Set the goal, work with an advisor to develop an appropriate and balanced strategy, and then adjust as you go. You cannot control what the markets will do, but you can be prepared for the possibilities. That's why we are Piton Wealth, by the way, because a piton is a mountain climbing tool that provides stability as you climb higher, while protecting you from the risk of a fall.

What advice would you give someone going into a leadership position for the first time?

Remain humble and when times become challenging, always remind yourself that pressure is a privilege.

Who are your role models or mentors and why?

I have so many treasured role models, the list is deep and rich. My most cherished role model is my own father. He is loyal, honest, hard working, wise – and has shown me the most profound unconditional love that is humanly possible.

How would you measure success in your workplace?

Without a doubt, success at Piton Wealth means that we deliver irreplaceable value to our clients both financially and emotionally as they progress through the journey of life. I would define success as a leader of our team members at Piton to be coaching and developing each of our individual team members to be able to deliver this service to more people to impact and change more lives, while building an organizational structure that fosters both individual and team growth, which allows us to care for our clients longer and better. It is all a continuous circle and all seamlessly interconnected.

What do you consider your leadership style to be?

Partly because of my competitive athletic background and the significant impact coaches (both sports coaches

and business coaches) have had in my life, my leadership style definitely comes from a coaching perspective. I naturally see untapped potential in people and love to encourage motivated people to accomplish more than they thought possible in their lives. This holds true for clients, Piton team members, and my own children. My boys have been raised to expect to hear from me the “two things they did well and one thing they need to work on” at both the big and trivial events in their lives.

How do you balance work and family life?

With our youngest graduating from high school in the next few weeks, and my husband and I getting ready to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary in May, I am so blessed to call a successful, thriving marriage and two very accomplished children my most cherished “assets” (financial planning pun intended). As a family, we have been very deliberate in dedicating time for ourselves through the years while making sure our boys saw us work hard (so we are leading by example in this area) and also spending quality time with them as we were raising the boys through every stage of their lives. All that said, early indications are that empty nest-hood and seeing our boys “fly” independently is also an absolute joy – the deferred gratification and reward of many years of hard work.

What do you like to do when you are not at work?

Our family has deep roots on the tennis court, though I am spending more time on the golf course these days.

What's your best time management strategy?

I have become expert at combining priorities at the same time. For example, playing tennis (social) with a friend (social) who is also a client (business). I am

also a world-class sleeper, which allows me to rest well, recover fast and get on with the next objective very efficiently.

Best tip to relieve stress?

Juggle Glassybabys while the Tesla is on autopilot! (Just kidding, of course; three of my favorite things, but not at the same time.) My doctor at Empowered Health has introduced me to deep breathing techniques, which are great for stress relief breaks during the day. At the beginning of the day, I seek to start with prayer and Bible study. A neighborhood walk with girlfriends, my husband, or dogs has been a wonderful way to end the day with activity yet enjoy time with loved ones at the same time.

What's your favorite podcast? Most-used app? Or favorite website? Favorite book?

Podcast: “Coaching for Leaders” by Dave Stachowiak
 App: Focus at Will
 Daily read: Wall Street Journal and The Kiplinger Letter
 Favorite books: “Built to Last” by James Collins; “Traction” by Gino Wickman; “Atomic Habits” by James Clear

Do you have a personal mantra, phrase or quote you like to use?

Do or do not, there is no try.
 -Yoda