



AMBITION *with* PURPOSE

How Burgundy investment counsellor Sarah MacNicol turned her passion for people and problem solving into a career.

By: Robyn Ross

Sarah MacNicol joined Burgundy in 2015. Now an investment counsellor, she works directly with individuals and families to steward their investment portfolios. Sarah earned an Honours Business Administration from the Ivey Business School at Western University in 2015. She was awarded the chartered financial analyst designation in 2019. In conversation with Robyn Ross, Burgundy's head of people and talent, Sarah shared her journey to investing and her passion for working with clients and helping them achieve their goals.

Robyn Ross (RR): What were you like as a child?

Sarah MacNicol (SM): I spent a lot of time on my studies. I always loved math and problem-solving. I was also very involved with athletics. I am the middle child, between two brothers, so I learned early on to speak up and speak often. We played a lot of sports together, which cultivated my competitive spirit and ambition.

RR: *Tell us about your high school experience?*

SM: I went to an all-girls school and thrived in that environment. I attribute much of who I am and how I see the world to that experience. There, it was “cool” to do well in both academics and athletics. It instilled a grounded confidence in me, pushed me to be ambitious, and allowed me to see the world as a place filled with opportunities. I was also a competitive rower in high school. I had to wake up at 4 a.m. every day, row for a few hours, go to class, then spend the evenings studying. This set a structured regimen and a disciplined mindset. I was always taught to believe that with hard work and preparation, one can achieve anything, and that my gender was not a relevant lens to look through.

RR: *Tell us about your experience entering the field of finance?*

AB: During my first two years at Western University, I specialised in economics, and during my third and fourth year, I studied business at Western’s Ivey Business School.

I found that the careers that were highlighted when I was in university were quite narrow. We really only heard about jobs in investment banking, accounting, consulting, and marketing. I knew I wanted to be in finance, but I was unaware of the different facets of finance that were available. I started to apply to any finance-related job and, to no surprise, my first few interviews did not go well. In fact, I had some pretty comical interviews where I was internally begging myself to leave! However, after these interviews went astray, I knew that I needed to determine what was important for me in a career. After some thought, I determined two things: First, that I love speaking to people, and second was that I wanted to marry my interest in finance with my interest in people. That’s when I narrowed my search and started looking for a client-facing role.

RR: *How would you describe a positive*

company culture?

SM: It is a feeling that you get—a sense of community based around shared values that is reflected in people’s work ethic. It is how people converse, how they bounce ideas off each other, how they challenge each other, and how they laugh with one another. It is important to work hard and also have fun along the way.

RR: *What has been your career path at Burgundy?*

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SM: An acquaintance of mine who was working at Burgundy told me about the organization, and it sounded like a place I wanted to be part of. People talk about the importance of forming networks, and what I learned was how important those early connections can be. I started off at Burgundy as an institutional marketing associate, which gave me excellent exposure and training. After two years, I realized that I wanted to work with individuals and move to the private client group. I

eventually gained the confidence to tell my manager that I was interested in working with private clients. She was wonderful and supportive, and directed me to the right people. I learned that if you don’t put your hand up and tell people your aspirations, no one will actually know what they are. When the next opening came up, I applied and was chosen for the position.

As an associate in the private client group, I worked for two investment counsellors, and early on I was invited to sit at the table with the clients and learn. This exposure confirmed my ambition to be an investment counsellor and take a leading role in client relationships. Advancing from an associate to an investment counsellor was a natural transition from there.

I have had a number of sponsors and mentors along the way, but I also have had to be my own champion and use my own voice to ultimately get to where I am today.

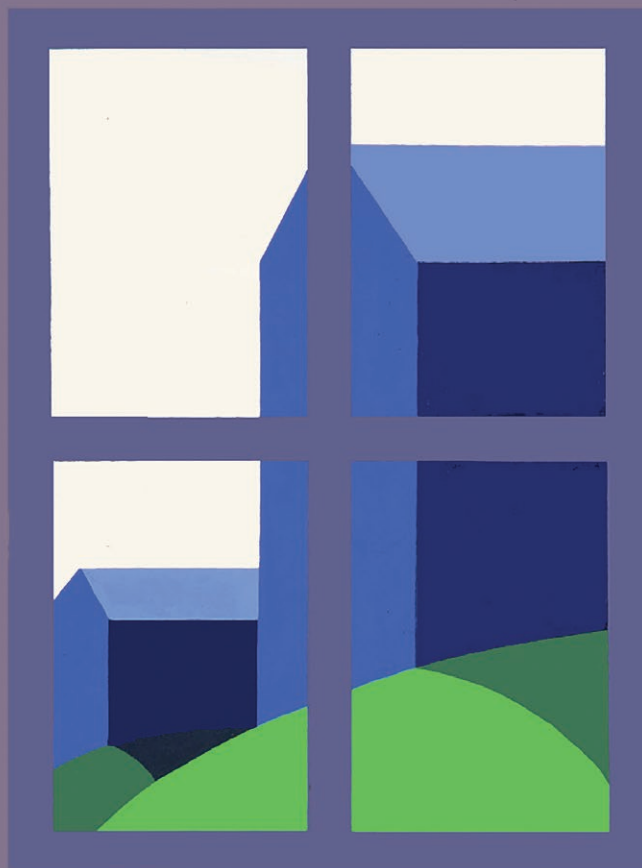
RR: *What is the most rewarding part of your job?*

SM: It’s seeing clients understand how their money is working for them. For example, one of my first one-on-one client meetings was with a person new to investing. I found it satisfying to be able to explain concepts and strategies, and then watch how the client’s understanding deepened more and more with every meeting.

I want to keep building upon the relationships with my existing and future clients. I know that they will continue to evolve over time. The best part of working with individuals is that you get to know about their families, their lives, and their goals. I hope that I do my job so well that I have the privilege of being introduced to the next generation and make the relationships that I have today 100-year-long relationships!

RR: *What is a guiding principle that you live by?*

Work hard but have fun. It is important to enjoy life and your career, but don’t forget to have a few laughs along the way. **M**



BURGUNDY ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD.

BROOKFIELD PLACE, 181 BAY ST #4510, TORONTO, ON M5J 2T3

WWW.BURGUNDYASSET.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT MINERVA@BURGUNDYASSET.COM

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