

A professional portrait of Dominique Vignet, a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a dark blue blazer. She is smiling and has her hands on her hips. The background is a blurred office setting with wooden paneling and a window.

# CHANGING GEARS

A conversation with Dominique Vignet

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By: Robyn Ross & Dominique Vignet

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Dominique Vignet joined Burgundy Asset Management in 2015 as an Investment Reporting Associate. It was during her first years in the industry that Dominique discovered her passion for client service. Dominique shares her journey to becoming a Relationship Manager on the Canadian Institutional team.

**Robyn Ross: How has your background shaped your career?**

**Dominique Vignet:** I grew up in Montreal, the only child of a first marriage that ended in divorce. I went back and forth between the two households, so I became very accustomed to change. Both of my parents remarried and each had more children, which meant even more change. I learned adaptability and at a young age developed an openness to new people.

French was my first language. I was introduced to English in elementary school and made it my mission to master the English language because I didn't want to be limited by lack of fluency. If you only study a language at school, you'll never be fluent, so at the age of 17 I moved to

**different careers in business. Why did you decide to be an Investment Analyst?**

**DV:** The most coveted careers coming out of commerce are investment banking, investment analyst and management consulting. Students generally go along with what the vast majority of our peers are doing and what our professors, whom we hold to a very high regard, are telling us we should be doing.

I am a curious, ambitious person who always tries to understand how things work. These attributes were well suited to the role of an investment analyst. Little did I know that spending days by myself, reading financial statements, building and updating financial models was not for me. I was looking for more contact with people,

manager built on many of my research skills. I was able to understand technical data and ideas, and I also needed to learn how to express these in a way that could be appreciated by a diverse audience. I also needed to learn how to build greater trust with clients.

The other challenge with the shift in roles was that it meant moving to a new company. I approached this as though I was doing a company research project and determined that Toronto likely offered the most opportunity.

Other than a few university friends, my network in Toronto was non-existent. I analyzed the market, identified the key players in the industry, and met with many people—more than 80 people, in fact. I

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London, England to immerse myself fully. My parents were terrified of what might happen to me abroad. It was challenging, but helped me reach my goal of mastering the English language and I found it to be character building.

**RR: Why did you choose to study commerce, and why Concordia University?**

**DV:** Studying commerce was highly valued in my family. I was deeply influenced by family members and our conversations about the markets at the dinner table, and through all the businesspeople I had the opportunity to meet. I chose Concordia because I was determined to attend an English university, continuing my “immersion” in English, and because I was impressed with the entrepreneurial spirit of the school.

**RR: You could have pursued many**

and the opportunity to work with investors and service their needs was just not there. It's important to know and exploit your strengths. You are of greater value to yourself and to the team you work with when you're engaged in work you truly like.

**RR: You left your role as an investment analyst because you wanted to have a more client-facing role as a Relationship Manager. How did you come to this decision and how easy was it to make this change?**

**DV:** As an investment analyst, you are on your computer for hours reading company reports and building models. I would also present and discuss the companies I was working on. I discovered this was my favourite part of the job and the path I needed to pursue.

In many ways, being a relationship

travelled between Montreal and Toronto, organizing coffees, breakfasts, lunches, drinks, whatever I could get. I declined some positions and was turned down for many others.

Then one day a friend called to tell me about a firm that was looking for a bilingual person for a marketing associate position. The job was not exactly what I had in mind, but the firm had a great reputation and I took a role in order to learn about relationship management of investment clients from the ground up. Five years later, I was given that responsibility.

My progress has not been linear; it has been two steps forward, one step back. I took some calculated risks and was not afraid to ask for what I wanted. In retrospect, I realize my work as a marketing associate prepared me very well for client management.

## NEXTGEN

**RR:** *Grit and perseverance are words that come to mind in describing you. What other personal qualities have contributed to your success?*

**DV:** A job description and a job title should not limit or define who you are. I always strive to go above and beyond in every role that I am given. People need to understand your full capabilities, not just the task you've been asked to complete. Patience is a quality that has rewarded me over time. I am also consistent in my messaging to people, whether it's to my superiors, my peers or to clients. Clear and consistent messaging builds confidence and people find it reassuring.

**RR:** *What do you enjoy most about your work as a Relationship Manager?*

**DV:** First, I like to follow the markets, stay current on the companies in which we invest for our clients, and track the trends in our industry. This aspect of my work brings me back to my years as an investment analyst and feeds my curiosity. Second, I like the daily exchanges with smart people, whether they are clients, colleagues or consultants. My interactions with all these people inspire me constantly to do better. Finally, servicing clients gives me the best feeling. The satisfaction I get from helping others reminds

me why I decided to pursue this career.

**RR:** *What advice would you have for young women that are not 100% sure of their career path yet?*

**DV:** Follow your intuition and remember, you know yourself better than anyone. I would also say you have to do your homework, be curious, ask questions, reach out to people in the industries you are interested in and ask them to tell you their stories.

**RR:** *Talk about the importance of finding a sponsor and how that has helped you.*

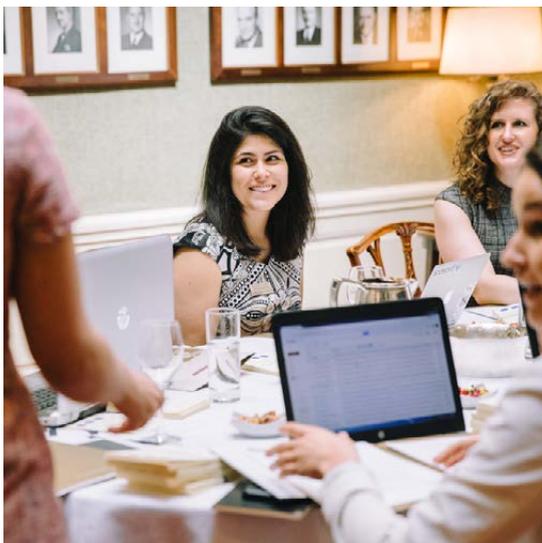
**DV:** Early in my career, I was certain that no one noticed my work, but that wasn't the case at all. I must thank my sponsor for doing more than notice my efforts. A sponsor can elevate your profile, make sure that your work is recognized and help you in your next career move—like your professional cheerleader with super powers.

Finding a sponsor takes time. You need to deliver consistently high quality work and make yourself invaluable. As a young professional, you have to differentiate yourself. We all have a competitive advantage; find yours and own it. Try to identify a senior person who can help you channel your strengths and bring out the best in you.

**RR:** *What does the future hold for women working in finance?*

**DV:** Let me share an experience that happened to me in 2011, though it is more like something that might have happened in 1950. I was told that one of the reasons I got a job interview for a boutique investment firm was because of my name Dominique, which is a unisex name. It was only because I was assumed to be a male candidate that I slipped past the pre-screening, which was based entirely on the assumption that men would do a better job than women in this industry. If I have a daughter one day, I will follow my parents' example and give her a non-gendered name so that any preconceived notions about what she can or cannot do will not apply. So my first piece of advice would be to be aware of, but not be limited by, preconceived notions around the roles of men and women in Finance.

I want to acknowledge previous generations of women who demanded changes and made an enormous difference in the industry. I recently traveled to India—a trip that transformed my life—and I saw how women in this country, as well as so many others around the world, still don't have the freedom or the opportunity that we have in Canada. We have to recognize the opportunities available to us here, and seize the moment. This is our time. **M**



Far left: Dominique Vignet  
Left: Dominique Vignet, Kate Mostowyk, Roz McLean