

From fashion to finance: Exclusive Interview with Samantha Vassallo, Suntrust Private Wealth Senior Vice President and Wealth Advisor



1. How did you get into your field? What alternative career could you see yourself having?

“I initially went to college for fashion merchandising and marketing. I was in a 3-1 program, where I had planned to get a 4 year degree in Business Economics and spend my senior year at FIT (The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City). I was doing really well in my accounting classes and a professor (who was a mentor to me) suggested a career in accounting. I never attended FIT my senior year and started my career (after graduation) as a tax accountant for Deloitte in New York City. When I moved to Florida twenty years ago, First Union (now Wells Fargo) was hiring CPAs and attorneys with a strong tax background to start their financial planning practice for their wealth management division. I covered the state of Florida and Texas in helping corporate executive of large companies with personal planning. I joined SunTrust Private Wealth 11 years ago as a Wealth Advisor/Senior Vice-President and manage relationships for our clients.”

2. What has been the most interesting aspect of your job?

“The Family Dynamics - each family is unique with their own needs and desires, and I work with multi-generations. It’s interesting to learn the family history, and there is an emotional side to decisions when understanding the drivers behind the family’s financial decisions. Sometimes I think a psychology degree would be as helpful to me as my finance degree!”

3. What is your favorite part of your job?

“My clients and my teammates – I work with a fantastic group of people every day! Many of my clients and teammates have become some of my closest friends.”

4. What does a day in the life of a Wealth Advisor consist of?

“I have numerous meetings with clients during the day - reviewing investments, banking and estate planning. I also entertain clients in the evening or on weekends. So, I attend a lot of dinners, charity and sports events and concerts.”

5. What is one piece of advice you would give your younger self?

“Study abroad and choose elective classes that are of interest to you.”

6. What inspired you to join the Viner Mentor program?

“I am passionate about providing education to everyone – it can completely change the trajectory of one’s life.”

7. Have you ever had a mentor? What was the most impactful thing you took away from that relationship?

“Yes – my accounting teacher in college. She completely changed the direction of my senior year of college and impacted my career path.”

8. What is one aspect of your professional journey that not many people know about?

“Most people don’t know I wanted to work in the fashion industry when I first went away to college.”

9. Where you involved in any extracurriculars or campus organizations in college? If so what was your role?

“I held many leadership positions in my sorority and was also involved in the Panhellenic Council.”

10. What did you learn from the experience in participating in clubs?

“The camaraderie of spending time with a great group, and about leadership and training.”

11. What was your greatest takeaway from your college years?

“You learn as much about life while living away from home during your college years, than you learn in the classroom.”
