



***Carrie Schwab Pomerantz, Chief Strategist,
Consumer Education
Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.
President, Charles Schwab Foundation***

Leading the Way in Financial Education

Carrie Schwab Pomerantz is a dynamo. She's also smart, poised, and extremely passionate about financial literacy for women and young people. In addition, she's a visionary for aligning strategy, culture and leadership within Charles Schwab & Co.

If you didn't know better, you might think that the eldest daughter of the company's namesake and founder joined the "family business" by default. That couldn't be further from the truth. To get a better perspective on this dynamic individual – the woman behind the name - you really need to reflect on her past.

The early years

"I guess I grew up in a typical family. My parents were divorced when I was 10 and after that, we had two households. At the same time, my Dad was a struggling entrepreneur / businessman."

While Carrie has four siblings, she's the only one who came to work at Schwab. She actually started there at the ripe old age of 16, just helping out. The company was still in its infancy, small but growing steadily. Her introduction to the world of business and financial services included answering phones, filing and helping out with secretarial duties.

The rise of the company was not meteoric, as some might think. "It was more an evolutionary process," Carrie explained. Perhaps much like her own growth and development as she continued to work there in the summers of her youth.

Experience brings new perspective

"I also worked at some other companies along the way," she said, "but I truly liked the way our family business connected me to people. This was also a time when our industry was being democratized and more individual investors were taking charge of their own finances. Schwab's culture was different from some other companies I encountered, e.g., the insurance industry. There were a lot of 'old boy networks' and in some instances, companies were taking advantage of consumers."

Carrie continued, "I was drawn to a more client-focused environment, not just a profit making one. I believed then, and I still do, that this is far more fulfilling. I think your work can be and should be good for business and have a greater purpose as well."

Her college and graduate school education also helped to round out Carrie's early work experience. It was there she learned to take a more objective perspective on the business world. She also learned more about the importance of aligning your business' strategy,

culture and leadership –which she would later use to benefit the long-term success of Charles Schwab & Co.

The Atlanta years - sweet Auburn & more

Certainly, one of the “defining moments” in Carrie’s personal life was meeting and subsequently marrying her husband, Gary Pomerantz. For 13 years, between 1988 and 2001 they lived in Atlanta, GA and began raising a family of three children. Gary was a journalist and worked for the local newspaper, the Atlanta Journal & Constitution. His literary talents were not only recognized in the news media, Gary became well known as the author of “Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Families” – the story of some of Atlanta’s and the South’s great old families and great struggles. Today Gary continues to write and teach in California at Stanford University.

While Carrie was living in Atlanta, she helped start Women in Finance for the Atlanta Women’s Foundation (AWF). She was in her early 30’s and as a wife and mother trying to juggle the everyday challenges of a family and work, she was very concerned about the plight of disadvantaged girls and women.

Fortunately, Carrie wasn’t alone in her passion to do something about this situation. She and a few other like-minded women began to raise funds, whatever they could, to help make a difference. They were hard to say “no” to and for three years in a row, they raised \$50,000 for the AWF.

“The next thing I knew, I was the Committee Chair!” Carrie said. It seems the AWF knew a good thing when they saw it!

Carrie left Atlanta in 2001 and returned to California, but she’s still remembered to this day for her many contributions to various organizations in Atlanta, especially as a champion of underprivileged women and girls.

Equal passion, a different foundation

Carrie’s involvement with the Schwab Foundation didn’t happen immediately upon her return to California. Interestingly, some people advised her not to do it. “They told me not to leave line operations, that it would be a mistake career-wise.”

But Carrie had a different perspective. And so, for the past five years, she has led the Foundation as its president and has had an opportunity to create something from scratch – a new direction and new focus. That focus is to support employee causes and fostering financial literacy for at-risk teens and young adults – through funding, involvement and expertise.

She’s also still very much engaged in the business side of Schwab. The other “official hat” that she wears – Chief Strategist for Consumer Education – is another of her passions. Financial literacy has become her mantra, and she has made it a distinguishing characteristic of the company.

“It all fits,” she say, as she comments about the multi-dimensions of her role under the Schwab umbrella these days. “It’s all part of helping to create a better world, for investors of all walks of life. And, the philanthropic components add to it, with people of wealth doing their part and giving back...”

On Women in leadership

Another reason Carrie is proud of Schwab is that they’ve always had a strong track record for women in leadership. “Currently there are about 40% women in our senior leadership team and I honestly don’t think there’s a glass ceiling,” she said. “Back when we were taking on Wall Street, we were not the typical ‘suits’ and women came to us for a different kind of work environment. Thirty-five years later they’re still coming. We also have two women on our board of directors.”

The vision thing

It’s always interesting to ask leaders who’ve already had a lot of accomplishments about their vision, the big picture ahead. Carrie was no exception and quickly shared what she considers her short and long-term view. “My 5 year goal is to still be a player at Schwab. I want to be the torch bearer for the company, and drive strategy that’s consistent with our heart, soul and culture.”

“In the short term, I want to help build an even bigger social responsibility platform and integrate it into our business goals 3 and 5 years out.”

It seems clear that Carrie is speaking from her heart as well as her head. She seems very sincere and committed to these goals – goals that should not only benefit business but also society at large. And, being the dynamo she is – there doesn’t seem to be any doubt as to her effectiveness or long-term impact.

The business world, the financial services industry, and our society could use some more Carries!

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