

Labor of Love

Sharon Olson's passion for finances is something clients can bank on

BY KERRY SULLIVAN

Sharon Olson learned the value of a dollar at a very early age. "I had a paper route when I was seven," she recalls. "Every week I would take my \$1.70 to the credit union and watch my little number grow."

Nearly 40 years later, as a certified financial planner and principal of Olson Weiss, LLC, she is still watching numbers grow, only at a much larger scale. "It doesn't matter how many zeros there are, the idea is the same."

Olson's philosophy, which she has come to perfect over the past 25 years, is one of the

POWER PLAYER: Sharon Olson

Title: Principal, Certified Financial Planner, Olson Weiss, LLC ■ **Age:** 47
Hometown: Peterson, Minn. ■ **Current Residence:** Lake Minnetonka ■
Education: Minnesota State University-Mankato ■ **Directorships:** Ann Bancroft Foundation, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Team Ghana, Women President's Organization ■ **Family:** Daughter, Vanessa ■ **E-mail:** sharon.olson@olsonweiss.com ■ **Web site:** www.olsonweiss.com



Sharon Olson

reasons she is being nationally recognized for the third straight year, as one of the nation's Top 100 Wealth Advisors by *Worth Magazine*. "I was nominated after a client wrote a letter to the magazine explaining

what I had done for them and their family business," Olson says. But just getting a nod doesn't guarantee a spot on the list of who's who in financial advising. Olson says she spent nearly 40 hours filling out her applica-

tion, which obviously grabbed the judges' attention among the thousands of yearly entrants. "I'm very grateful for the honor. It's very good for business growth."

Business is good for Olson and her partner Tad Weiss right now. Currently, the firm manages the finances for less than 100 clients. Larger firms might consider that mere business or profits. But with at least one of those clients trusting their \$80 million fortune to Olson, and a 98 percent client retention rate, others would disagree. "We don't have some program where we

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stuff everyone's information in and the same stuff comes out with every client," Olson says. "All of our plans are personalized. As our clients become more sophisticated and their family situation or estate size becomes more complex, we've had to provide services to satisfy their needs. The breadth of services that we offer develops with our client's needs."

Olson attributes her strong intuition and personal service to understanding what her clients are trying to accomplish. But it's not all about the hard numbers for the Minnesota State University at Mankato graduate. "Our initial process is to really get to know our clients. We describe ourselves as a boutique shop. We know all of our clients by name and know their kids and their grandkids."

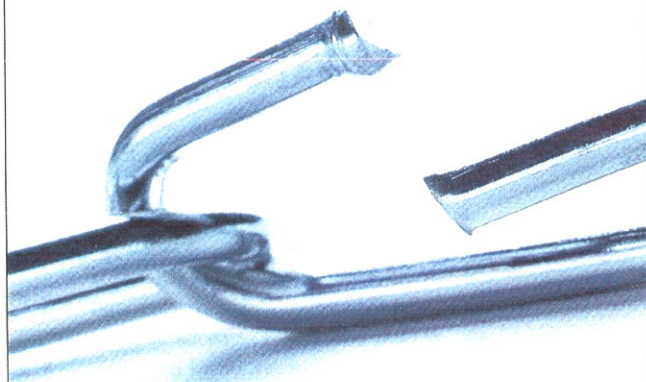
Quarterly meetings with each client are standard to help the client stay ahead of the changing economy and trends that affect their bottom dollar. "We try to be more of a financial partner than a planner because we are able to provide services outside traditional wealth management services."

After a few rocky years in the economy, Olson says markets are rebounding nicely. "The 2002 market was tough. There were days when it was hard to get out of bed. But moves in the market like that impact our business in different ways," she says. "Sometimes difficult times make people look at their current situation and that will be the motivation to come and get some help from us."

As the market fluctuates and profits see-saw, clients can always bank on at least one thing at Olson's firm to be consistent: "We continue to be very strict about maintaining the right asset allocation and rebalancing that allocation if things get crazy." ©

Kerry Sullivan is a contributing editor to *MinnesotaBusiness Magazine*.

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