

# MINNEAPOLIS ST. PAUL BUSINESS JOURNAL

Special Report

February 18, 2011

## Olson uses 'holistic approach' with clients and outside professionals

BY ELIZABETH MILLARD  
STAFF WRITER

About five years ago, entrepreneur Linda Keller interviewed a number of financial planners, armed with a list of must-haves. Just divorced and with two teenage children, her main concern was finding a planner who could work with her daughters, as well as herself. She also had other requirements.

"I wanted someone who would take a holistic approach, and who would be able to work well with my estate attorney and tax accountant," she said. Another necessity was specialization in estates between \$3 million and \$8 million, so she wouldn't feel overlooked by an adviser catering only to higher net worth individuals.

Once she talked to Sharon Olson at Bloomington-based Olson Wealth Group, she knew she'd come to the right place.

"Using those criteria, Sharon came in tops on all counts," Keller said. "Sharon has surpassed my expectations. She's down-to-earth, highly responsive, listens carefully to my needs, but also raises alternatives for me to consider."

Those particular skills — working with outside professionals, communicating effectively with people of different generations and coming up with numerous strategies for each client — are the core of Olson's best practices.

"We consider ourselves stewards for our clients," Olson said. "Most of them have very complex lives with accountants, attorneys, brokers, insurance agents and other professionals. One of the things we do is to quarterback that team, to make sure they're all working together."

For example, if an accountant has a certain tax deduction goal, and Olson's team is pursuing a Roth conversion, those tactics may be at odds with each other. "It's important to bring all these aspects of finan-



Nancy Kuehn | Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal

**From left: Debora Terrell, general manager of client services; Sharon Olson, president; Aaron Britz, director of wealth management; William Creamer, chief investment officer**

### OLSON WEALTH GROUP

**Team members:** Sharon Olson, Aaron Britz, William Creamer, Debora Terrell

**City:** Bloomington

**Founded:** 1994 (as Olson Weiss), became Olson Wealth Group in 2008

**Web:** [olsonwealthgroup.com](http://olsonwealthgroup.com)

cial strategy together, in a unified way," she said.

Olson and her firm's advisers work as a team to bring unique strengths to every client situation.

"The way we complement each other works really well," she said, noting that her contribution tends to be a deep sense of compassion and caring, as well as long-term industry experience.

Her "humble beginnings," plus creating personal success through hard work and perseverance, also has helped her connect with clients. "For those who have developed their wealth in a similar way, they feel like they can identify with me."

Every client engagement is divided into four stages: discovery, planning, solutions and monitoring. Discovery begins with comprehensive information gathering, including financial records, but also expectations, risk tolerance, personal beliefs and investment perspectives. In the other stages, Olson's team works to balance family values and financial strategies with the understanding that every client and every family is unique and possesses very specific goals.

In implementing these practices in a holistic way, Olson has garnered strong client loyalty. Regularly, the firm's team gets invited to weddings and parties, and receives plenty of holiday cards.

"So much of our business is about the relationships that we create," Olson said. "I've had clients say they consider us part of the family. To me, that's an indication that we're doing just what we set out to do, which is to make a lifetime commitment to our clients."