

**Conversations with Commerce Trust podcast**  
**August Episode: Women in Investing**  
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**David Hagee:** Hello and welcome to *Conversations with Commerce Trust*, our show about the markets, investment themes, and economic insights that matter to you. I'm your host, David Hagee, Chief Investment Officer with Commerce Trust. Today we're discussing the roles of women in wealth management with Cathy Arshadi, our Director of Financial Management, and a member of our Senior Leadership Team here at Commerce Trust. Welcome to the podcast, Cathy.

**Cathy Arshadi:** Thank you so much, David. I'm happy to be here.

**David:** Cathy is one of our favorites. We're excited to have her on the podcast today talking about women in investing. really looking forward to it. Cathy, could you walk us through your background and your career path into your current role?

**Cathy:** I would be happy to. I started right out of college at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (Fed), and it was a wonderful place to work. I learned a lot. I did like a management trainee-type job there, so I got to see how the entire bank worked. One of the things I learned really quick was I wanted to work somewhere that made money. I left the Fed, and I came to Commerce.

I've been here 31 years, I worked for the first five years of my career here on the commercial side of the bank, and I worked for our senior credit officer, so got to see all kinds of issues on the commercial side. He also was in charge of indirect and student loans, so I had a little bit of variety of other products in the bank that I got to experience, applied for a position in the trust company. I knew nothing about the trust company, but I did get the position and had great opportunity to learn and grow and develop for the last 26 years. Now, I'm the director of financial management here, which means that I make money. I help run the business. I take care of our budget and our financials. I take care of our compensation and I also have a huge piece in strategy.

**David:** Cathy is the straw that stirs the drink if you will. Without Cathy, we'd be in big trouble. Definitely appreciate all Cathy's input there. Inside of Commerce Trust, I'm struck that about half of our client-facing employees are women. Cathy, as a senior leader inside Commerce Trust, what would you say has been helpful for you on your path into senior leadership? What things define that path?

**Cathy:** It's really interesting because we have very different talent development opportunities now in 2023 than we did back when I was young and starting my career. I was very, very fortunate in that I had a lot of informal mentors and great managers that helped develop me throughout the years. They gave me opportunities that I may not have had otherwise. I interestingly have worked with all men all of these years. You learn a lot from that in and of itself and I always like to say ...

**David:** Mostly what not to do, right?



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**Cathy:** Yes, exactly. They learned a little bit from me too, but not being afraid to say, "Hey, wait a minute. I would love a chance at this, or I would like to learn this." I was availed those opportunities and that really, really helped propel my career.

**David:** Cathy, it's great to talk about what's changed over the past 25 years. Certainly, from a development point of view, that's a great point on mentoring. It has really moved from a very informal, hopefully, you can attach yourself to somebody, to a much more formalized process where you're assigned somebody and it's a regimented mentoring process. What else has changed in terms of how we develop people?

**Cathy:** One thing that's really, really fun and interesting that we are doing to invest in our women is we put together a program called Women Supporting Women, where we are grooming both our talent internally at Commerce, mixed with our clients, and bring the two groups together. I like to say we're bringing a community of women together to help grow. One major initiative that we have is building relationships through education and events that are fun for both sides and lots of professional development. Lots of interesting things that can be done because you learn from each other in that unique way.

The goal is, again, to create community through employee enrichment, professional development, client engagement, and give these, especially young women an opportunity to mix with the clients, to ask questions and grow like they may not have an opportunity elsewhere. I'll give you an example of something really interesting that we did. We did an event here in St. Louis that was a succession planning event for women business owners.

We brought together some clients who are business owners along with the professionals here at Commerce, private client advisor, a tax professional, an investment professional, an insurance professional, and we had a great conversation about "how do you transfer a business." What do you do? Maybe it goes to the next generation. Maybe there's going to be a successful buyout by a management team.

There's lots of ways that a business can be transferred but sharing those ideas and the pitfalls was invaluable to the audience. Our young staff, our young women, learned just as much as the client participants that were there. All the speakers brought their own perspectives and left the audience with a myriad of ideas and issues that may have never crossed their minds before. That's just an example of something that we are doing that's very unique to Commerce to help grow our team.

**David:** That's fantastic. Really, as you look at that program, those sorts of conversations probably don't happen enough but especially that they're happening for women-led businesses and women-owned enterprises is just great that we're able to get everyone at the table together. I'm struck by a recent Fidelity report that mentioned that two-thirds of women now have investment accounts outside of their retirement plan. It tells you that the investing world has been embraced by women more so than it was, say, 25 years ago.



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The other thing I'm struck on the investment side of the house is that when we look at things, Vanguard found that women log into their accounts about 40% less frequently than men. It means they do a lot less trading. If you look at the longer-term averages here, women outperform men by about four-tenths of 1%. That's maybe because they're more patient and more analytical and follow maybe less fads and trends. What do you think?

**Cathy:** I would agree with that. I would also add that they're not afraid to ask questions. They ask good questions. They're certainly not afraid to admit they don't know something. Sometimes we see that with men a little bit, they're going to hold back and not want to ask something that they should be asking because they feel they may look foolish or what have you. Women tend to be goal oriented. They've got their eye on the future. They've got their eye on taking care of their families and how they're going to be taken care of in the long run. I think that they appreciate the knowledge and the guidance from a professional investment philosophy and team, sometimes a little bit more than men.

**David:** I couldn't agree more. As a long-time portfolio manager, I think you hit the nail on the head there. As we talk about women in investing and about how that's been changing over the past 25 years or so, I'm struck by how Commerce has approached women in investing as a firm that does investing for people. We use a team approach. Maybe you could speak a little to that, Cathy.

**Cathy:** Sure. Over time, it's really been nice to see that we have more and more women in our investment roles. We have more women portfolio managers than we had years ago. We also have more women in the other positions that we give to our clients, such as a private client advisor or a private banker, or a financial planner. We put together a team for our clients to help them meet their needs, depending on what their needs may be. It could be a major financial plan. It could be a succession plan for their business. It could simply be wanting to know how they're going to retire successfully.

At Commerce, we have put together those teams for our clients based on what they want, not what is great for Commerce. Sometimes women are more apt to want to work with other women. They could be widowed, they could be a divorced situation, they could be a single woman. Having that opportunity, we could provide an all-female team for them or a mix of male and female, whatever they're interested in. That's been really, really refreshing and exciting to grow.

**David:** I think that for us as a firm, that's been a great thing that we've been able to meet our clients where they're at and be able to make sure that they're comfortable inside that role. I think to me, the other piece that really reinforces that is our role as a fiduciary. You could talk a little bit about what we do as a fiduciary for our clients.

**Cathy:** As a fiduciary, we do what is right for the client. It's not the goals of Commerce, it's not the goals of the portfolio manager. We are here to support that client in their needs and their end goal. We, again, give them a team of professionals to help them achieve those goals.



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**David:** As we think about that fiduciary role, I think that's very important to say that we are aligned with the client, no matter who the client is, that whenever we make choices, it's in their best interest, not ours. That's a key differentiator in terms of how we deliver things. With that, thanks for the great and enlightening discussion today, Cathy. For more information on today's topic, please visit our website, [www.commercetrustcompany.com](http://www.commercetrustcompany.com) and download our latest commentary.

Also, if you've enjoyed what you've heard you can subscribe to the show on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, or wherever you get your podcasts. Thank you for joining us on *Conversations with Commerce Trust*. I'm David Hagee. We'll talk again soon.

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