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Women of Influence: Gina Bolvin is about as eclectic a financial adviser as you're going to find

Gina Bolvin

Title: President and CEO, Bolvin Wealth Management Group Inc.

Education: Bachelor's degree in communications, Syracuse University

Residence: Boston

After graduating from Syracuse University, Gina Bolvin found herself in a training program at Smith Barney, on the fast track at a large financial house for a career in finance. But she wasn't happy.

"I just wanted to be on my own," recalls Bolvin. "I was fiercely independent."

Fortunately, her father, Dr. Michael Bolvin, encouraged her to follow her dream of starting her own financial firm, a field she had loved since she was young. So she made the then audacious move of starting up her own firm, Bolvin Wealth Management Group.

Today, Bolvin Wealth Management, affiliated with LPL Financial in Boston, oversees nearly \$200 million in assets and employs four people. Bolvin couldn't be happier. Her natural entrepreneurial streak has paid off. Bolvin, who likes to write and read fiction on the side, recently talked with BBJ correspondent Jay Fitzgerald about her company, industry, career and personal interests.

THE INFLUENCE FACTOR

Who would you consider a mentor in your career and why? My late dad who had four daughters. He inspired all of his daughters to have unshakable belief in ourselves.

Who do you turn to for guidance and professional advice? My husband, who is my partner in every way because he has great judgment and is the most ethical person I've ever met.

What advice would you give young women entering the financial advisory industry? Welcome! Go for it! There's a lot of room for women in this industry. I believe women are better listeners and that makes a great adviser. Never apologize for being ambitious.

The stock market seems to have calmed down a bit after a lot of volatility earlier this year. What happened? Oil prices rebounded as a result of progress being made in balancing oil supply and demand. Asian markets stabilized as a result of better data, and less chaotic policy from China. Interest rates were stalled with the Fed pulling back from a proposed four rate hikes to two.

No one can predict the future, but what do you see generally unfolding over the next six months or so in terms of investing and the investment world?



Gina Bolvin, president of Bolvin Wealth Management Group.

I generally shy away from short-term, crystal-ball predictions because I believe that sound investment advice has always been based on long-term investing. BWMG focuses on managing retirement savings with long-term strategies ... The three above factors that caused the volatility in the first quarter are still looming and there may be short-term volatility for the remainder of the year. In addition, we are coming off the second longest bull market in history and it may be more challenging to see the types of returns we've seen in the past eight years. Ultimately, what we believe drives volatility – in both directions – is the surprises: "Fed Speak"; geopolitical events; and, this year, an unusual election cycle.

Why did you start Bolvin Wealth Management Group? I became a financial adviser because I was inspired by my dad, an entrepreneur and an astute investor, who encouraged me early on to save money and invest for the future. He helped me open my first IRA when I was 18 years old. When I was unsure about becoming an adviser at Smith Barney, he rallied me by asking "What do they have that you don't have?" Six months later, I left that firm's training program because I shared his entrepreneurial spirit. While I don't like to play the "woman card," my own business offered more opportunities for growth that were not available at the wire houses. My own firm has allowed me to be in charge of my own destiny. All I had to do to succeed was roll up my sleeves and get to work. No Coasting. (My mantra.)

What do you do to relax when not working? As

we speak, I'm shaping a completed manuscript of my novel, "Love.com." It's the journey of a financial adviser whose search for love is as volatile as the market. I also run, swim, bike and snowboard.

What's the last book you read? I'm in a writer's group at Grub Street Writers Center and each week I love reading the manuscripts my classmates turn in. I just finished reading "Heartburn" again by Nora Ephron and, no surprises, it features a strong woman protagonist.

Do you have a favorite vacation spot you like to go to? I'm extreme. Any place where there's tons of snow – or a beach.

How big do you see the company getting in, say, five years? BWMG has more than doubled its gross revenue in the past six years. Some of this is because we have a great team. I'm fortunate that my husband, Bill Bernarduci, joined BWMG in 2011. He is a wealth advisor and former ERISA-employee-benefits- securities attorney who helps clients understand and maximize their employee benefits and government benefits like Social Security. We also work together to formulate estate plans. Our plan is to continue to grow organically through word of mouth, and by providing great service to our clients.

Do you have a favorite all-time investment in which it did better than you ever expected? As opposed to a singular investment, we focus more on strategy, and yes, I love recessions and volatility, which I believe offers good opportunity to buy stocks on sale. One of the reasons you pay an adviser is to have discipline. I'm proud that in 2009 and 2010 I had the fortitude and skill to slant my clients' portfolios towards stock investments designed with the goal of helping their portfolios rebound. Unfortunately, I did see investors – and advisors – panic and sell out in a declining market.

Do you want to share one of your least favorite investments, something that you learned from and said to yourself "Never again"? In my opinion over the long term, the worst investment ever has been to bet against the U.S. economy, and I've never done it.

