

# Lynne's Journey: The Power of Paying it Forward



**Lynne Sawyer**

*Chief Operating Officer  
at BNY Mellon Wealth  
Management*

- 35 years of experience
- Joined BNY Mellon in 2020

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## **What made you first consider a career in financial services?**

I went to a liberal arts school, but I majored in economics. I found that the breadth of financial services really appealed to me as it incorporates different skillsets. It allowed me to use my liberal arts background to be creative in terms of working with clients, and I was also able to develop business expertise drawn from my economics background.

I grew up outside of Boston and went to college in Connecticut. When I graduated, I decided to pursue a career in financial services, and many firms were based in New York. I thought it would be a great place to get started and could be a lot of fun. The pace of the city and the pace of financial services are almost equal. New York is very active, vibrant and busy. When I was first working in New York, I felt like that pace was reflective in both my personal and professional life.

## **How did you come to join BNY Mellon?**

What really attracted me to BNY Mellon was the combination of a historic bank that continues to be innovative. When I spoke to people here, the entrepreneurial

spirit in the Wealth Management business was exciting to me. There is a lot of opportunity and Wealth Management is on a growth trajectory. We have the best of both worlds: We have a strong foundation and structure, but we're also nimble enough to actively drive change.

## **How has the industry changed over the course of your career?**

One area of constant change is in the technology space. We have gone from calling your relationship team to place a trade, and getting cash at the ATM, to online trading and buying your coffee with the tap of your phone.

Separately, COVID pushed us to new levels of digital experiences and encouraged us to envision different ways to engage with our clients. However, technology alone won't magically change the relationship we have with our clients. Personal interaction is still of utmost importance in our business. That said, technology does give us more options to actively engage with clients.

In the money movement space, we're looking into faster payments. Automated Clearing House (ACH) used to take three days, but now we're looking at how these

transactions can be even more immediate. Consider online wire transfers. That's what clients are looking for, and our technology is changing to meet these challenges.

### **You worked overseas. What did you gain from your experience in another country?**

It was one of those times in my career where I went to my boss and said, "Okay, what am I going to do next?" We looked across the business and there was a client service team in Dublin, Ireland, supporting institutional global custody clients. It needed a lot of structure and transformation. It was a fixer upper, to be honest. But it was a great opportunity because I'd never worked outside the U.S. I do a lot of mentoring and one of the things I say when I mentor is "You have to be ready to take the risk." I thought, I have to take my own advice here. So, I took the leap and went over to Dublin.

When I look back on my career, there are defining moments. That was definitely an important pivot for me as it taught me a lot of intangible things. I learned how to deal with different types of clients and different cultures. Learning the global aspects of a firm is incredibly beneficial.

On a personal note, Dublin was a great home base as I was able to spend some of my vacation time traveling in Europe. I was able to visit countries like Italy, France and Spain while I was over there.

### **Have you had mentors who have helped you throughout your career? Do you enjoy mentoring?**

When I look back at my career, there were senior women who were incredibly impactful. They either took a risk on me, or actively coached me. They provided guidance and were great sponsors. I've been incredibly lucky that these women took the time to give me opportunities and experiences that I could leverage.

Mentoring has always been very important to me. It's a "pay it forward" way of thinking. Now as a senior executive, I continue to do a lot of mentoring. I'm a Board co-chair at a women's leadership development nonprofit called Wings for Growth. I've been mentoring in their signature program for three years, and I'm also a mentor here at BNY Mellon in our Wealth Management program that recently kicked off.

Mentoring keeps me fresh. When I talk to mentees about their challenges, business goals or opportunities, it keeps me connected with what's going on in the industry and at the different levels of the organization. I find that incredibly fulfilling, and I love to see our future leaders flourish.

### **What do you like best about your current role?**

My current role is very new to me. But I really like the breadth and scope of it. It has its challenges,

but I enjoy putting the puzzle pieces together, finding synergies and connecting people to collaborate on an issue.

I love knowing how things work, digging into the details and driving change – which is good, as there is a lot of that to be done.

### **What advice would you have for a young person entering the business?**

When I joined banking as a management associate in a retail bank, a lot of people in my class thought, what am I going to learn? In those initial jobs, I developed a lot of foundational skills that I've used my entire life. I learned how to have a relationship with clients, how to fix a problem, how to work on a team, and how to handle multiple projects at the same time. If you asked me in the moment if I thought that this was time well spent, I might have been on the fence.

My advice to my younger self, and to people who are entering the marketplace now, is roll up your sleeves, dive into projects and soak up all you can from those first jobs. Put in the time, build the knowledge and establish your base. It will serve you well during your career.

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