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SADIQ S. ADATIA
Chief Investment Officer,
Sun Life Global Investments

THE PERFORMERS

× CANADA'S INFLUENTIAL THOUGHT LEADERS ×

What is your investment philosophy and how did you develop it?
My basic philosophy isn't about simply value or growth – it's about protecting money. It comes from my background as a consultant in the pension world. I understand, first and foremost, the amount of time people spend working to earn and save their nest eggs. So, the first thing you want to do is protect it and then grow it, carefully.

How has your philosophy changed over the years?
The years have continued to strengthen my conviction of how important it is to protect capital. We are now seeing more and more economic shocks in the market, both globally and here in Canada. With shocks comes more volatility, which further emphasizes my approach of making sure I am protecting clients' money.

What's driven performance for you?
Thinking globally is key. I'm always watching what's going on around the world, trying to understand the impact events have on our portfolios. My performance is the result of a close focus on asset mix and risk. If you stay stagnant with your portfolio, your risk is either going up or down without you really doing much about it. With our approach, we are constantly looking at the risk-return trade-offs and adjusting the portfolio, accordingly. This ensures that you are always getting appropriately rewarded for the risks you are taking on.

How have your clients changed since you started out?
Clients have become a lot more knowledgeable and now demand better products and better performance. They also understand it's getting harder to succeed without professional management in these uncertain markets and the value of a tactical approach.

Which market or world events taught you the most?
The Tech Wreck and the 2008 financial crisis taught us that no one sector or market can remain hot all of the time. There's a time when you need to pull the trigger and take money off the table. It goes back to the philosophy of protecting clients' money and also being very cognizant of risk. At the same time, the years following 2008 proved that being tactical in your asset mix can add tremendous value. Not having that approach, which many people did not, resulted in people having to work longer than expected – it's changed what they thought their retirement was going to look like.

What critical success factors have been in place to help you get where you are today?
Success for me has always been connected to what's going on in markets around the world. I have a passion about investing, and when you have passion for something you're going to do it well. I also have a soft spot for people, so when I manage money I don't think of it as managing money for a client, I think of it as managing money for a friend.

What trends do you see evolving in the marketplace?
People have moved to managed solutions; instead of just buying, say, Canadian equity or U.S. equity, they're actually buying a packaged solution that meets a certain objective (i.e., a certain risk profile or income objective). At the same time, people have come to a realization that returns are likely to be lower in the future. As a result, income products have become a big trend and I think that will continue to grow, going forward. We're also seeing boomers move away from a decades-long accumulation phase to de-accumulation – this is a big focal point right now and supports the income trend.

TO THE POINT.

iPHONE OR BLACKBERRY?
Both. iPhone for personal and Blackberry for business.

WHAT TRAIT DO YOU VALUE MOST IN A COLLEAGUE?
Integrity and honesty. When you are in the money management business people want to invest with people who have those characteristics, and that is what I look for, as well, when I hire people..

WHAT'S PLAYING ON YOUR iPOD?
One Direction if the kids are in the car. If not, Jay-Z, Bruno Mars, Maroon 5 and some jazz to help me mellow out.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE FOR A BUSINESS LUNCH?
Bymark for the patio, Canoe for the view. Buca is starting to become a favourite, as well.