

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



"We need the next generation of leaders, including women leaders, to continue pushing boundaries in the world of wealth."

Laurence Audy

*Assistant Vice-President, Innovation & Strategic Initiatives,
Defined Benefit Solutions
Sun Life*

What do you love most about your leadership role?

I strongly believe in our purpose in Defined Benefit Solutions (DBS) and at Sun Life: to help Canadian defined benefit (DB) plan sponsors de-risk their pension plans and help our plan members achieve lifetime financial security.

In my role, I enjoy drawing on all my skills and building more of them to inspire the team. These skills include my industry knowledge, team strategy and analytical thinking, as well as soft skills like effective communication, collaboration and people leadership.

Most importantly, I love the people I work with. They're a very talented group of actuaries. I enjoy working with them, motivating them and challenging them to achieve their best so we can succeed as a team. It's also great to be part of a team that attracts top talent—that way, we can grow the market and our business.

How are you driving innovation in the Canadian pension risk transfer market?

Sun Life's culture allows us to pivot, so people feel safe to speak up and take smart risks. Our "fail fast" approach drives innovation by allowing us to test a new idea and learn quickly. We prototype, time box investigations and

have frequent touchpoints. Promising ideas move on to the next stage of testing, while we set aside ideas that look less promising.

This "test and learn" environment can be challenging for actuarial folks who are often meticulous, precise and analytical in their approach to problem-solving. But it's also an important element to keeping my team engaged. We keep driving innovation, as well as pushing ourselves and the market to grow.

How has your perspective on work and life changed over the years?

Earlier in my career, I was often reactive and simply went with the flow. Over time, I realized I needed to be proactive and deliberate about my goals. Mentors and sponsors have helped me define my leadership and career objectives. This has helped empower me to become a leader. Although gender representation is not at parity at senior management levels, I've learned it's important to find influential women, as well as men, to support my career progression.

My perspective has also shifted when it comes to personal and team success. At the beginning of my career, I focused more on my own success. Now, my focus is on the success of the team. If they're all successful, I'll be successful. My goal is to engage,

empower, delegate and ensure the team is set up for success.

What's your advice to women who are starting their careers in wealth today?

It's an exciting time for women to start a career in wealth. The industry has evolved a lot in recent years to include more women in leadership. This allows for more diverse perspectives on important industry topics and more creativity to solve problems.

After being on the team for five years, I took on my current leadership role in January 2022. I wanted to have a greater impact on the team and Sun Life's success. When applying to the role, I knew there were some gaps in my experience. However, I took the risk, applied to the position and found ways to close the gaps. This has allowed me to be successful in my role.

The confidence gap between women and men means many women do not apply for more senior roles. My advice to women is to be curious, challenge yourself and take smart risks. Get comfortable being uncomfortable and reach beyond your limits. We need the next generation of leaders, including women leaders, to continue pushing boundaries in the world of wealth.