



# WORTH A LOOK

News & Investment Insights for Retirement **Plan Producers** • Vol. 8/No. 4/Winter 2006

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## This Producing Stiles Never Goes Out of Fashion



Susan Stiles

**M**ore often than not, when you ask Producers to describe their businesses, they focus on the facts: the number of employees, the number of years since its beginning, the level of sales, etc. When asked about her business, Stiles Financial Services, top Producer Susan Stiles will tell you the *philosophy* behind that business. "The mission for Stiles Financial Services was to create an environment that was autonomous, independent, and that provided flexibility to my client base in how we delivered our services," states Stiles.

### Making every day independence day

In learning more about Stiles, it becomes clear that the ideas of independence, autonomy and flexibility guide her life, as well. After receiving her undergraduate degree from Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, Stiles returned to Cornell to earn an MBA in accounting and finance—as a single mother with a child under two. From there, she made a move to Minneapolis, a city where she knew no one, and began her career in the financial services business with a large insurance company. She says that entering this industry "was a fluke."

While completing the insurance company's training program, Susan found that her natural need to question and dig deeper was often met with responses such as "You're overanalyzing it." After that, it didn't take Stiles long to realize she needed to be on her own. "I have a very creative mind. I don't like structure. It makes me feel like I'm closed in," she explains. After some networking, she found an independent broker/dealer who let her work more in the way that she wanted. He provided her with a desk, a phone, and little else. "I made only what I earned. I just did what I had to do to make it," she says.

When the time was right, Stiles left that position and (with the help of the

relationships she developed) began what is today the thriving Stiles Financial Services.

### In a word...

Transamerica<sup>1</sup> Sales Consultant Ross Dahlof will tell you that Susan is one of the more successful Producers he's worked for. "There aren't too many Clients who don't give Susan the business once she reviews their plan," says Dahlof. "Her close ratio is very high."

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### Dear Producer:

In this edition, you'll find a number of examples of how continuing education is key to succeeding in our industry. First, you'll meet Susan Stiles, a Producer who attributes much of her success to her constant quest for learning.

We hope to give you the opportunity to add to your knowledge with our article on the Transamerica Investment Monitor, or TIM, our proprietary investment selection and monitoring process.

Finally, taking a moment to learn more about Transamerica's Plus 15<sup>SM</sup> Participation Guarantee—this issue's Quick Study feature—it could mean the difference in your bottom line.

Sincerely,

David Shute  
Worth A Look Publisher

<sup>1</sup> Transamerica Retirement Services, a marketing unit of Transamerica Financial Life Insurance Company and its affiliates, specializes in the promotion of retirement plan products and services. Transamerica Financial Life Insurance Company and its affiliates are members of the AEGON Group of Companies. Securities offered through Diversified Investor Securities Corp. (DISC) Member NASD.

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## Susan Stiles

(Continued from cover)

But Stiles herself feels differently. "I don't like the word 'success.' I'm still earning my stripes, trying to be better, to improve," she explains. "I need to be challenged on a lot of different levels."

### Giving Clients something to chew on

It's not surprising to learn that Stiles places a great importance on education—she needed only a weekend to prepare for her Series 7 exam. Stiles brings this love of learning to her Clients, as well. Once a month, Stiles invites a select number of Clients (usually 8-10) to an informative session known as "Lunch and Learn." The event not only serves as a roundtable for her Clients to discuss the challenges they share, but it's also an opportunity for Stiles and her guest speakers to further educate Clients on ERISA, fiduciary responsibilities, and other relevant issues.

From "Lunch and Learn" sprang another Stiles original. Susan explains the genesis of this idea, "One of the challenges in the retirement services

industry is knowing how to get Clients. I don't want to do 'dialing for dollars.' Intellectually, it's boring." So instead, she created another lunch session she calls "Soup to Nuts." These particular lunches are more geared toward prospects, many of whom have been targeted with the help of 401(k) Exchange. Each of these events features a vendor who discusses his or her product's specifics to help provide prospects with a benchmark for their current plan.

### Super (service) models

Prominently displayed in Stiles' office is a painting of an artistically rendered pineapple. While in Hotel School, Stiles learned that the pineapple is a symbol for hospitality. When Stiles shifted to the financial services industry, this idea stayed with her, transforming into a commitment to service. "I don't like to use the word 'sell.' It's not about selling. It's about providing a service," says Stiles.

Stiles demonstrates her commitment by adhering to a definite Client service system. This system includes features such as regular Client plan reviews, assistance with creating the Investment Policy Statement, and a comprehensive analytical approach to keep changing and improving the plan where needed. "I take it to another level of complexity," says Stiles. "It's a constantly improving service model." Dahlof believes that it's Stiles "unique combination of knowledge and follow-through" that makes her so successful.

Stiles is equally complimentary of Dahlof. "Ross is the first wholesaler I have ever taken to a Client meeting," she says. "He's smart,



Susan Stiles and Ross Dahlof

knowledgeable and knows the industry. He's always available and has the answers. And if he himself doesn't know the answers, then he knows exactly where to find them."

And she has this to say about Jennifer White, her Transamerica Account Executive: "She's responsive and knowledgeable. I like the way she works." Stiles includes both individuals in her team approach to servicing her Clients. "I like Transamerica's service model," she comments. "As I've gotten bigger, I need to rely on my vendor to provide the support that *I would expect* for a Plan Sponsor. I place a pretty high value on that."

### Two sides of a (gold) coin

Stiles is in many ways a dichotomy. She has managed to combine her creativity with systems that are effective enough to meet her high standards, but flexible enough to keep her challenged. She's an analytical thinker, but often calls her selling technique "behavioral driven." And despite the millions of dollars of Transamerica sales under her belt, she doesn't believe in success. "I think it's more important to feel fulfilled," she says. "I love what I do and how we do it." ☀

## Susan's Keys to Success

- Perseverance** — "Remember, it's a numbers game."
- Positive Attitude** — "I look at each rejection as putting me just that much closer to the next yes."
- Education** — "Yes, it's who you know, but you better also know what you know."
- Good Listening Skills** — "Don't just hear what your Clients are saying, but also what they aren't saying."
- Full Disclosure** — "Honesty is the best policy."

# Introducing the Transamerica Investment Monitor (TIM), a Real Know-It-All

**H**ave you had the pleasure of meeting TIM? If not, now's the time to get better acquainted. The Transamerica Investment Monitor, or TIM, is Transamerica's proprietary investment selection and monitoring process which provides your clients with the information they need to build a quality investment platform for their plan. In doing so, TIM is also a valuable tool in helping Clients to meet their fiduciary responsibilities.

## Keeping Score

The core component of TIM is its quarterly Investment Monitor Scorecard<sup>1</sup>. The scorecard is a comprehensive display of the analysis conducted using the TIM process. The scorecard offers yet another way that you can help your Clients to perform and document their due diligence obligation. And that's a great way to set yourself apart as a knowledgeable, service-oriented Producer.

Each product within the Transamerica family has its own scorecard that lists all the investment options available for that product. Each option is subject to a comprehensive and rigorous analysis. While Transamerica's Investment Committee appreciates the importance of an investment option's performance, it does not chase numbers. TIM's strategy also considers investment options that behave consistently within their asset class and have lower than average management expenses. Here are the six different criteria used to determine if an investment option is appropriate for our investment line-up:

## Quantitative Analysis

- Performance Measurement
- Style Consistency
- Fees and Expenses

## Qualitative Analysis

- Investment Process and Portfolio Composition
- Management Tenure
- Organization

## Score/Status

Once all the facts are in, then each categorical score (considering its particular percentage weight of importance) is calculated to arrive at a total, or overall, score for each investment option.

*5.00 to 4.00: Significantly Exceeds Criteria*

*3.99 to 3.00: Meets/ Exceeds Criteria*

*2.99 to 1.00: Below Criteria*

## Below Criteria Action

If an investment option fails to meet our stringent criteria, or if there is a significant organizational or managerial change, then Transamerica may take the following course of action.

## Level 1

### Increased Monitoring

- Requires increased communication and reporting from the investment management team of the underlying investment
- Conducts an in-depth review of the investment management team and organization consistent with our qualitative criteria

## Level 2

### Watch List

- Continues to closely monitor the investment option
- Possibly closes the investment to new investors

## Level 3

### Manager Change or Complete Closure

- Transamerica may choose to hire a different sub-advisor to manage existing assets (if allowed for by the structure of the investment option), or the investment option may be completely closed

For more information about the Transamerica Investment Monitor (TIM), the Investment Monitor Scorecard and TIM's scoring methods, visit [www.TA-Retirement.com](http://www.TA-Retirement.com) and select the "Financial Professionals" tab. TIM could be just the acquaintance you need to grow your business. ☺

<sup>1</sup> The Investment Scorecard Methodology is Transamerica Retirement Services' proprietary rating methodology. Transamerica reserves the right to modify, eliminate or add criteria at any time.

<sup>2</sup> If an investment option demonstrates improved scores, Transamerica may decide to move that option to a different level of monitoring. And if Transamerica has made a manager change to an investment, that investment may initially be placed in the increased monitoring category

<sup>3</sup> Transamerica may also close an investment option to new investors outside of the general time guidelines for the following: (1) the current investment manager of the underlying investment option places a restriction on the investment option where no new investors are allowed due to capacity issues; (2) To replace the investment option with a more competitive alternative; or (3) For other reasons at the discretion of the Investment Committee.

<sup>4</sup> Transamerica may also completely close an investment option outside of the general time guidelines for the following: (1) If the underlying mutual fund completely closes; (2) If there is a lack of Participant interest; (3) To streamline investment options across product offerings; or (4) For other reasons at the discretion of the Investment Committee.



# Quick Study: Plus 15<sup>SM</sup>: Breaking Ground, Keeping Promises

**A**s a Transamerica Retirement Services Producer, now you can offer your Clients something *no other provider can*, the Plus 15<sup>SM</sup> Participation Guarantee.<sup>1</sup>

The way it works is simple, when Clients choose Transamerica as their retirement plan provider, we promise that we'll increase their plan participation by 15 percent<sup>2</sup> or we'll waive their first-quarter plan administration fees after the Client transitions to Transamerica – *guaranteed!*

Plus 15<sup>SM</sup> isn't just good news for your Clients, it's also a great opportunity for you and the success of your business. Here's the reason why. Nothing makes Clients happier than greater participation. As you know, Transamerica has always been able to provide Clients with the plan provisions and educational tools needed to make that happen. Now, with Plus 15<sup>SM</sup>, Transamerica also gives you the ability to confidently guarantee that participation.

Take a moment to review the following requirements to see how your Clients might qualify for this unique feature.

## Plus 15<sup>SM</sup> Qualifications

- Current plan participation must be less than 75 percent
- 100 percent of eligible non-participating employees must attend an Enrollment Workshop prior to enrollment deadline
- There cannot be a material decrease in benefits provided under the Transamerica Plan from the current plan

- Client must provide current participation data
- Client must select a minimum of four Transamerica-recommended Participation Drivers

Have you been including Plus 15<sup>SM</sup> in your sales strategy? If not, now's the time to start. It's a one-of-a-kind guarantee that can bring a lot of promise to your business. Contact the Internal Sales Support Desk at (888) 401-5826 to learn more today. ☎



<sup>1</sup> In order to qualify for the guarantee, Plan Sponsors must choose a minimum of four out of eight plan provisions Transamerica Retirement Services recommends, or adopt a Safe Harbor plan.

<sup>2</sup> Plan participation is defined as the number of employees actively contributing and/or receiving employer Safe Harbor contributions under Internal Revenue Code Section 401(k)(12). Plus 15 participation will be assessed in comparison to the status of the plan participation data of the current plan immediately prior to transitioning to Transamerica.

**WORTH A LOOK** is published quarterly by Transamerica Retirement Services. The newsletter's mission is to provide information to help Producers increase sales of 401(k) and profit sharing plans, strengthen Client relationships, and expand their business.

Publisher: David Shute  
Editor: Annie Muir  
Producer Web site: [www.TA-Retirement.com](http://www.TA-Retirement.com)  
To e-mail us, see "Contact Us" on the Web site.  
1150 South Olive Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015.  
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