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EPISODE 9:

The Art of Storytelling with

Aoifinn Devitt

CIO of the Moneta Group



Robert Morier: Welcome to the Dakota Live! Podcast. I'm your host Robert Morier. The goal of this podcast is to help you better know the people behind investment decisions. We introduce you to chief investment officers, manager research professionals, sales leaders, and other important players in the industry who will help you sell in between the lines and better understand the investment sales ecosystem. If you're not familiar with Dakota and their Dakota Live! content, please check out dakota.com to learn more about their services. Before we get started, I need to read a brief disclosure. This content is provided for informational purposes, and should not be relied upon as recommendations or advice about investing in securities. All investments involve risk and may lose money. Dakota does not guarantee the accuracy of any of the information provided by the speaker who is not affiliated with Dakota, not a solicitation, testimonial, or an endorsement by Dakota or its affiliates. Nothing herein is intended to indicate approval of support or recommendation of the investment advisor or its supervised persons by Dakota. So thank you for hanging in, Chris, on that disclosure. I always appreciate it.

Chris O'Grady: No, that's unfortunately very necessary in this industry.

Robert Morier: It is. Things are always changing. And things have obviously changed quite dramatically in the last year or so in the markets. We've been talking to a number of guests over the last several weeks. This is a relatively new podcast. We're on episode 13, so we're trying to get this going with some momentum. So far, so good.

Chris O'Grady: It's great. The guests have been great. Anytime you can speak to somebody in the investment industry, you're going to learn something new. So these are great.

Robert Morier: Agreed. Yeah, last week we had Mark Steed, the Chief Investment Officer of the Arizona PSP Retirement System on our show. It was a wide ranging discussion, from the pension fund to the personal and what happens when those two can blend together. For Mark, that was some incredibly good news that we learned on the day that he interviewed for the CIO role. He had learned something very special about his family, and he was able to go into that interview with a, kind of, a clean head, and he got the job.

Chris O'Grady: Yeah, the priority is family first. And I guess his children have been suffering from hemophilia, and there is a lot of progress on the science. And he got some news that day that there's a potential cure, and it's like, OK, who cares? I won. So that's great.

Robert Morier: Yeah, it was a great story. Well, many of my questions from that interview and questions today were inspired by our guest today who's with us. But

before we get there, I want to say hello again to you, Chris. Thanks for joining me. Welcome back to the desk.

Chris O'Grady: Thanks for having me, any time.

Robert Morier: Well, I am very happy to introduce our audience to our guest today, Aoifinn Devitt. Hi, Aoifinn. How are you?

Aoifinn Devitt: Hi, very well. Thanks.

Robert Morier: Good. Well, Aoifinn is the Chief Investment Officer of the Moneta Group and Founder and host of The Fiftyfaces Podcast. That's the podcast that we've been listening to, and we're inspired to get this started because it's been so interesting to hear the stories behind the investment professionals and other folks that you've been speaking with over the last couple of years. So it's really a pleasure to have you here. Warm welcome to the show.

Aoifinn Devitt: Thanks again.

Robert Morier: So Aoifinn, we have a great deal of questions for you before we get into our conversation. I want to quickly share your background for the audience. With more than 2 decades of financial industry experience and a diverse international background, Aoifinn joined Moneta as the firm's first female Chief Investment Officer. In her seat, Aoifinn aligns Moneta's investment programs with broader firm goals while also overseeing the research, evaluation, and selection of asset classes and investment vehicles. Moneta is a \$32 billion RIA with offices in Saint Louis, Denver, Kansas City, Boston, and Chicago. Aoifinn is typically in Chicago, but I think today you're on the road. So again, we're glad you're here. As you'll come to learn, Aoifinn values knowledge sharing and education, which motivates her to ensure investors and her podcast listeners are informed as possible as she strives to reduce complexity and demystify the world of investing for them by educating rather than just giving advice. Aoifinn joined Moneta in 2021 with extensive experience working with institutional clients and alternative investments as well as overall portfolio oversight functions. Her global career, with stops in London, Hong Kong, New York City, and now Chicago. Originally from Ireland, Aoifinn spent her early career working in London as an investment banking associate at Goldman Sachs. Actually, all three of us on this podcast today are Goldman Sachs alumni. So we can talk about that or avoid it at all costs. We can make a decision as we go on.

Chris O'Grady: We're on the rescue ship.

Robert Morier: And she was also a Specialist Consultant at Cambridge Associates. Aoifinn founded Clontarf Capital, a pan-alternatives research and consulting firm.

And more recently, she served as CIO for the Policemen's Annuity and Benefit Fund of Chicago and Head of Investment for Ireland at Hermes Fund Managers, Ireland. Aoifinn is also a licensed attorney who has been a member of the New York bar since 1996. She earned her law degrees from Trinity College, Dublin, beautiful library, and Oxford University. She also earned her MBA from INSEAD in France and her MSc in Applied Neuroscience from King's College in London. And finally, in addition to her work at Moneta, Aoifinn hosts and produces The Fiftyfaces Podcast, which showcases diversity and inclusion within the investments industry and other professions. She has now run 50 as of the end of 2022 marathons, so congratulations, and is fluent in both German and French, and is enjoying traveling whenever she can. So Aoifinn, I'll say one more time, welcome and congratulations on all your success. Thanks for being here.

Aoifinn Devitt: I'm delighted to be here. Thank you.

Robert Morier: Well, at last count you are on episode 177. So 50 marathons, 177 episodes of your flagship Fiftyfaces Podcast. You've had a variety of focus series as well ranging from diverse founders and venture capitalists, global women in tech, Nigerian voices, medicine and science, and the pride series which highlights LGBT voices in our industry just to name a few. So I'm going to start with the easy question, Aoifinn. Where do you find the time to do all of this?

Aoifinn Devitt: It's a very good question. I believe you can always find the time. In my case, I find it in the early morning. I will probably carve into my sleep, 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock in the morning, which is where I find the time to exercise as well as to do the recordings and do the editing. It's a quiet time. I have the world to myself. I find it's probably when I'm at my most productive. And how do I make up for that early start? I have a pretty early bedtime as well. So I suppose that the social life gets sacrificed. But that's when I am at my most productive, most energetic. So that's where the time comes from.

Robert Morier: So are you doing the editing yourself then for the podcast?

Aoifinn Devitt: Only the write-up of the editing. The editing I send to a professional editor. I don't have the material, the great equipment that you have over there at Dakota Live! And I found that that's just not my highest and best use to be what to be looking at the audio file. So I do the editing. I, kind of, have it down to a pretty well oiled machine at this point because it's very much a repeatable process the compiling and the production side.

Robert Morier: Well, it sounds wonderful. Well, your podcast is all about highlighting the richness and diversity in our industry. So I'm just curious, you're waking up early,

you must have woken up early one morning and said, I want to start interviewing people. What was the genesis of that decision and the podcast?

Aoifinn Devitt: Really, the inspiration came from a friend of mine in the industry, Angela Miller-May. She's now CIO at the IMRF in Illinois, and she has a very compelling life story of her own. She was the first of her generation to go to college. She's an African-American woman. She is instilling principles of diversity, inclusion in every organization that she's worked in. And she really worked her way to the top through sheer grit. And I came across stories like that and I thought, these are stories that need to be told. They really should be amplified. So I thought about ways of doing that. I thought about ways of going official through official channels or asking for permission. And eventually, during COVID, I had the equipment at home and it was the classic question of getting forgiveness and not permission. I just started recording them. I set out to do 50. I set that down as a commitment. I, of course, naturally circled around friends and family first for my first few episodes. Angela was actually one of the first five, and then the stories just kept coming. And what I realized was that everybody has a fascinating story to tell. And I just became so intrigued by the asking of questions by the listening. And I really do think that the more you listen, the more there is to listen to. And it really took on a life of its own at that stage.

Chris O'Grady: Yeah, I think what's interesting is in this industry, let's say the investment industry, there's the outcome. I've got an investment idea, you've got a pool of capital. Let's do a transaction. And I think what gets lost is if you're going to do this for 25 years, there's a lot of really interesting things you can learn about the people that you talk to over the course of a career, and that sometimes gets dismissed. It might be too strong of a word because of the transaction. I think if you take it from I want to get to know you as a person and then all the transactional stuff will either happen or it won't because you really do find-- I mean, just reading your bio, there are extremely bright, well-rounded people that are more than an email and a phone number and an asset class. And that's why your podcasts have been inspiring, that's why this is so much fun. And by the way, if you ever are in Philadelphia, Aoifinn, you have access to the studio if you want to do one of your podcasts. We've got a very full professional team with Jamie here and Roberto, so that's a standing offer.

Aoifinn Devitt: I'd love to take you up on that. Thank you.

Chris O'Grady: Absolutely.

Robert Morier: But one of the series actually talking about that either, the industry is filled with people with these diverse backgrounds and experiences. And sometimes people come into the industry earlier in life and sometimes later in life. And I love,

Aoifinn, one of the series or, kind of, the side series that you've created called Next Chapter, where you discuss evolving careers of the people in our industry, particularly in the later innings. I know that's how it started, but change at any level can be quite challenging, whether it's a change in an mass allocation model or it's a change in career. And being a person who's seen quite a bit of change in your own career, going from law, to finance, from Chicago to London back to Chicago, what have you heard from your guests that has resonated with you as they've managed through their respective next chapters?

Aoifinn Devitt: Well, the Next Chapter series originated because I saw many people at a certain stage of their career looking to shift into portfolio careers and to have a roster of board roles, maybe some chair roles and ready to do a little bit of different stuff. And I didn't think there was really a playbook there as to what makes a good director a good chair. And what I thought I'd do is ask some of the people I know who've done this successfully what it takes, what they bring to the table, what they've seen in their experience and collate those experiences so that we can learn from them and maybe have a little bit of a playbook or an instruction book for those skills. I also think it's important to focus that people have a tremendous amount of wisdom to impart when they're in those later innings as you mentioned. They've had highs and lows. They've had lessons they've learned from them. And why should we write those people off when they get to a certain age that they're retiring maybe from the full-time role? I think it's key to actually draw them in, listen to their wisdom, learn from it, reflect on it, individualize it. And what I found then was to gather that was tremendous. And even in the recent series just this year, we've spoken about ageism and the suggestion that age perhaps is the last acceptable form of discrimination. It's never something we speak about. But actually, there's more wisdom in older workers, people in their 50s and above, but we tend to hold them to much higher standards than to younger workers. So I think that's an important issue that needs to be amplified. Just like disability, ageism is an area of discrimination that we're not doing well enough in combating. So as far as what I've learned from change, for the most part, what I hear is to not fear it, to push outside one's comfort zone, to embrace it, to always say yes to a challenge and not turn it down, and essentially, not be afraid of failure. Because I think in our education system and our careers perhaps we're taught to be afraid of failure. We're not taught to embrace it and to see it as an opportunity for transformation, and for learning, and for building on that into the next challenge, which may be a success. So I'd say that's what I've learned. I've never personally resisted change. I've always embraced it. I've always moved quickly through it. And that may, in fact, be intimidating for some people because not everybody is comfortable with that level of change. But what I wanted people to see through these podcasts is that change is normal and that change is something that if you have experienced it in your career, it's not something you have to apologize for. But you should actually-- sometimes change might be forced upon you, for example, through a downsizing or redundancy. But that can be converted

into an opportunity. So it's really about just airing the very different ways that change will come to us in our careers and seeing that it's all very much the normal course of the human condition.

Chris O'Grady: I was talking to some friends over the weekend, and we're all in our mid 50s and the template to gosh, let's retire early. First of all, I can't retire, but why would you even consider retiring at the peak of your career, and your relationships, and your wisdom? I was watching a nice interview with Keith McCullough from Hedgeye and David Salem at TIFF, who founded TIFF. And David's in his early 60s and a very bright mind. And he goes, I can't believe people let me manage money 20 years ago. I knew nothing. I know everything right now. So as we grow, our wisdom just is exponential. And I think all these, hopefully, the employment community wants to keep older folks around because of the relationships, the wisdom, and the energy. I think you've run 50 marathons. You clearly have energy. We all stay fit mentally, physically, and hopefully work until we choose to stop. But great insight because yeah, transition can be fearful, but it also can be super exciting.

Robert Morier: Absolutely. Well, a lot of that experience comes with good stories. And one of the things I found with your podcast in particular, Aoifinn is how well you tell the stories of your guests. So can you share with us why storytelling is so important to you in your career and specifically the podcast?

Aoifinn Devitt: Yeah, definitely. So one of the common responses I get when I ask somebody to be on the podcast is they say, well, I'm not sure that my story is particularly interesting. I'm not sure anybody would want to hear my story. My response to them is always, well, I'll be the judge of that because what I've discovered is that every single person on the podcast has a fascinating back story. I think it's fascinating because it may be something like they grew up and their parents owned a restaurant. So they grew up learning the hustle factor about being an entrepreneur, that the pain and the glory that goes with that. Or you may find someone that's maybe grown up in a different country and had the experience of moving country and maybe the culture shock that came from that. So the reason I think stories are important is they fill in the gaps as to who we are and what influences us. And to what I find is fascinating is just how alike our experiences actually are. They may take on a different form. They may have a different texture, but ultimately, we are all humans experiencing very much the same. And particularly, around 2020 when this podcast was started, we were in the middle of a lot of political polarization. And just simply, we found we were focusing on our differences more than what connects us. So I find storytelling is an essential way to connect us. It's also there have been so many studies shown about how as humans we certainly-- I'm Irish and the Irish historical folklore was all passed down through the oral tradition. Everything was expressed in stories. Maybe there was some exaggeration in there. Maybe there was filling in of the gaps with some fiction. But certainly,

stories were how ideas were expressed and how they were passed on. So I find when I hear these stories from my guests about maybe how they came to finance or how they were once actors and then found that that showed that their communication skills were very much improved and that lend themselves to a business development role, that to me then becomes part of that person's DNA when I think of that individual, and it really does fill in that person's personality for me. And I think it's just clear that we need this in our industry in order to humanize it.

Robert Morier: Today's episode is sponsored by Fuse for Salesforce. Do you struggle with outdated information in your Salesforce accounts and contacts? Fuse for Salesforce is here to solve that problem. Fuse is the innovative platform that updates your Salesforce data in real-time. With Fuse, you can sync your Salesforce accounts and contacts with Dakota marketplace data so you never have to worry about stale information again. Say goodbye to manual data entry and hello to a more efficient and streamlined work experience. With Fuse for Salesforce, you'll receive real-time updates, saving you time and increase in your productivity. You'll be able to focus on what really matters, closing deals and building relationships with your clients. Don't miss out on the opportunity to elevate your sales game. Try Fuse for Salesforce today and experience the difference it can make in your work life. Speaking of fascinating backstories, you are one with a fascinating backstory. You have a background in neuroscience among many other things. And Dakota here as a business spends time advising salespeople in our industry on the importance of listening as we've been talking about and that active listening, being defined as really empathetic understanding, so really getting to know somebody. They're, kind of, a couple of questions on this, but did you have to become a better listener as you've progressed in your career, not just with the podcast? Obviously, you've listened to hundreds if not thousands of asset managers pitch you products. And now obviously, you're hearing a much more personal side of the industry through people's stories. But did you have to become a better listener or did it come naturally?

Aoifinn Devitt: I definitely think the podcast, I'd say, was a catalyst for me to really appreciate the benefit of listening, because every podcast I speak about 10% of the time, the guest speaks 90%. The more I listen, the more they talk, the more they open up, and the more they reveal about themselves in a very comfortable way because they know that someone's listening to them. Having someone listen to you is very soothing. It's almost like therapy. And I realized that our day-to-day interactions are so short, so transactional. We rarely have that chance to find out those deeper aspects about the person. I can find out a lot in 35 minutes. And that shows just how rarely we spend that 35 minutes with each other. I started my career as a lawyer, which is really the ultimate counselor role. And I worked with some companies that were in quite a bit of distress. This was in Asia in the late '90s. And what I very quickly realized was as a lawyer, as a counselor, I just had to be there to listen. Sometimes we couldn't solve the problems. We would paper over their issues

in terms of helping them to find financing solutions, for example. But a tremendous amount of listening was involved in that hand-holding. And I've seen that throughout my career, both as an investment consultant, and particular during '08-09 during the financial crisis there, working with clients who'd maybe been involved in a hedge fund fraud, coming in after the event-- we weren't the ones that put them there, but coming in after to help them dissect what happened, think about what happened, forensically go over it and make sure it didn't happen again, explaining concepts to boards and to trustees. That has involved, obviously, a tremendous amount of listening because you need to really meet those boards where they're at and be in tune with their concerns. So I'd say, definitely, one of my guests famously said, he quotes a classic phrase which said, you have two ears and one mouth. You should use them in that proportion. And I'd say that that has been something I've taken to heart because I learned just so much from my podcast guests.

Robert Morier: And do you think it's taught you to be a better leader in terms of your investment style? If you're thinking about allocating to managers now as CIO of Moneta Group, so not just thinking about the investment skills that the podcast might have enhanced because you're getting a different side of the investor's perspective, but also the leadership that's involved in making those decisions on behalf of your team and your organization.

Aoifinn Devitt: Definitely. As far as managing the team, I would try not to be top down and with mandates, et cetera and an agenda. What my preference is, is to bring out the strengths of the team. I listen to the team to determine what I call thanks to listen to another podcast, the red threads of their career in terms of what they really enjoy working on, what they'd like to do more of, how they'd like to grow professionally. I am zealously committed personally to growing professionally. And perhaps I project that and other people that I presume everybody else is too. So what I like to do is hear from them where they want to grow, where they want to develop, where they find they shine and direct the management of that team accordingly. So I would say I do spend more time listening. I definitely have learned to delegate well. I delegate a lot because I don't like being micromanaged. I don't like being a micromanager. And therefore, I like people to have an opportunity to shine.

Robert Morier: That makes sense. Actually, as you can-- it's probably starting to come to light. I did a lot of my pre-production work by speaking to Mark about you, Aoifinn. So one of the stories he actually shared was that when he first met you, I think it was over maybe lunch or at a restaurant, he was introduced to you through a mutual acquaintance, and he said that he would connect with you later on. You followed up with him persistently, which he admired. You ultimately were able to connect with him. And he remembers you saying something about being a person who is not easily managed. So you decided to be a leader. And after the meeting, he was thinking about that and said that it was impressive for him to hear someone

who's really found their voice. So where did you find that clarity of personal purpose?

Aoifinn Devitt: I was looking at that anecdote. I'm trying to remember what exactly happened in my version of it. I'd say what I may have been trying to express-- I was already a CIO at the time I met Mark. I was CIO at Chicago Police, and he was another CIO. So reaching out to a fellow CIO was key to me to build that community of like-minded allocators particularly in the public fund arena. I think what I may have said is that in terms of being a consultant, I didn't like just really having that kind of 4 by 4 matrix or advising on the pros and cons. I wanted to move into a trigger puller role as an allocator as a CIO and actually make the decisions and take ownership for that. So that was something I definitely was keen to do and I loved doing in the CIO role. As far as being managed, I think I've actually become easier to manage as my career has moved on because I've become more realistic. And I think one knows themselves more and you learn to perhaps, I'd say, to quench some of those more fiery aspects of your personality. You become more humble, more modest, and ultimately, we all have to be managed in some way. I'm managed by my kids if nothing else. So I'd say that now I'm perhaps easier to manage even maybe than when I met Mark because I think I just know a little bit more about how the world works, how politics work within an organization, and you just know, I think, which pedals to press and when. So as far as clarity of purpose, I'd say I've found that most of all through my work on Fiftyfaces but also prior to that when I had my own firm, which was prior to being CIO. I learned that I was passionate about educating, particularly boards and other institutional investors. I took my role as gatekeeper very seriously. I felt I was there to really be a protector or almost to guard against a product that's being pushed to these institutional investors that were perhaps not suitable. I wanted to dismantle the jargon, demystify some of the complexity, and ultimately, give power to these important public servants the public funds I worked with in the form of knowledge and education. So that was really, I suppose, me finding my voice. And that was back in 2006 when I launch Clontarf Capital. Obviously, as a start up consultant, you can't always pay the bills in the way you'd like. And that was a difficult business where really fees were coming down. I'd say there was a bit of a race to 0 in that respect. So one to one has to adapt, and I found my voice again that through the podcast even though it's other people's voices I'm telling. But I'd like at least to continue that mission of education and sharing.

Robert Morier: Curious, as a gatekeeper, you've been on both sides of the wealth management and the public pension side of the business. It seems, as you mentioned it, politics and opinion have been somewhat shaping asset allocation decisions. From your seat as CIO, what developments do you believe are good for the industry based on some of the public opinion and, I guess, the personalities that get introduced into to what we do day-to-day? And what are some of the changes that you think are necessary?

Aoifinn Devitt: It's interesting. Having seen it from both an institutional and a high net worth standpoint, I had always preferred the approach taken to institutions. I felt there was more depth in many of the presentations, less dumbing down, less oversimplification of investment thesis. And I think that was key because often when investment thesis or propositions are overly simplified, they're reduced to something that is actually not representative of the complexity of that product. So I'm happy to see now that there is an extension of many high quality managers into the high net worth space, and they're basically treating them with a high level of respect and assuming them to be sophisticated. So now that there's a presumption that the high net worth investors are sophisticated, I find that the pitch is more appropriate and it's not overly dumbed down. That is key because we need to get on the same page, speak the same language, and really get to the crux of what each individual investment proposition is. So I say that's changing, and I respect that, and I like that. I think the product range is improving when it comes to smaller investors. As I mentioned, we're seeing more blue chip managers at products that are suitable. We're seeing liquidity that matches the underlying assets. We're not seeing promises being made that can't be delivered upon. We did see that with private assets for some time, it being say, dressed up in a liquid state for an asset that wasn't necessarily supposed to be liquid. So I'd say we've definitely seen a massive improvement in the product range now for high net worth investors. And overall, the dialogue is improving. We'll always see complexity rear its head. I think we saw that with digital assets and crypto. And we always had a stance that we will educate there, but we were not recommending investments, certainly not through last year because we simply didn't think that there was any proven ability to look at the investment characteristics of a digital asset at the time. How is it likely to behave in a portfolio? So we're getting there, but from time to time, we have to remind industry participants that education needs to be thorough and unbiased.

Chris O'Grady: A couple of thoughts there. The crypto blockchain world's fascinating. I always thought crypto was just basically trading sentiment. If you want to trade sentiment, trade crypto. And in your point of liquid, more private structures, more institutional structure, I always said, if you call on a high end endowment or you call on a wealth intermediary, the brainpower of the individual monitoring an idea is the same. But if Harvard wants to invest in gold, they might just go buy a gold mine in Romania, where a wealth firm might have to buy some securities, some gold miners, or the GLD. So it's just really-- it's nice to see the options for the wealth intermediaries are starting to rival a lot of the endowments because the academic conclusions say the brainpower, as I said, is the same. Can you just give us an overview of Moneta? Because at \$32 billion, and that might be, if not the biggest within the top five largest RIA firms in the country. Could you just give us a little overview on Moneta? Because I remember calling them a long time ago and they were sub-\$10 billion so incredible growth there.

Aoifinn Devitt: It is. It reflects the growth of the industry as a whole. We're seeing a massive desire. First of all, there are more high net worth individuals now. We have over 6,000 clients. We're also seeing a desire to grow and scale the heart of RIAs, and that's how we've grown our national footprint. I'm CIO, which is a centralized service there, so we offer our services to all. We've over 56 partners now. We have 95 advisors. All of those are divided into teams. They would be my internal clients. So for that, I will serve them in different ways. Some will have perhaps the clients that tend to cluster in the \$1 to \$3 million range. We have close to 200 clients over \$100 million. So we're obviously dealing with a lot different allocations in that respect. Perhaps we have an ability to take on higher minimums and invest more in the alternative arena. So we're seeing a very exciting growth in that area. And as I mentioned, as the product roster improves, we're seeing more and more exciting ingredients to include in our client mixes.

Chris O'Grady: You look at the world, and obviously, we all saw the movie last year. Everybody suffered together. It seems like when everybody suffers, they suffer together. And then when things turn, everybody, kind of, tries to brag about how they caught any sort of turnaround. But you look at the world-- you come from Europe. Obviously, we can have a discussion. Non-US assets have underperformed, but where do you even start? You take a \$20 million client and they've got their portfolio. But when do you figure out there's opportunities to add exposures? Is it the investment committee? Is it just sitting here saying, you know what, we know there's going to be a distress cycle. Let's start looking at drawdown vehicles. You can get lost in the information opportunity. So where does a CIO start with your 95 teams underneath you or your 95 advisors as you said? Make sense of it all for us that are calling on people like you.

Chris O'Grady: Well, it's interesting. We would probably approach all of those clients with a similar lens in the sense that we look at what a portfolio should look like, the classic investment consultant model of we have the conservative moderate and aggressive. We can now have a few tweaks on that. We can have maybe 5 on that spectrum along a scale of risk reward. So that approach is still the same. Obviously, if a client is \$3 million, we wouldn't see the basis for investing in many of the private funds, for example. They wouldn't meet the minimum requirements for that. But the overall, kind of, pie chart that we would think about for each client is going to look similar. We'd have that-- it was not going to be a 60/40 portfolio anymore. It will definitely have alternative assets mixed in there. We've had that for some time. We're long term, so we try not to be too tactical. We would have a long-term allocation to non-US assets. We increasingly have added over the last 18 months, particularly since I joined, an allocation to inflation protection in the portfolio. And that would be in the form of real assets. So real estate, infrastructure, and other real assets if they're available for that client size. So as far as other alternatives, that

would probably depend on the client size. And if they're able to get to the minimum that those other alternatives require, but we're a strong believer in including alternatives such as private credit, private equity, private real estate, prime infrastructure, and other in that portfolio. That other may be venture capital. It may be timberland, other real assets in that way because that's the true diversification. And as I said, we're getting higher quality diverse suppliers now available so that's key. We're obviously not going to put something in there just to have diversification if it's not of the quality that we expect. And then we continue to stick to our investment beliefs, which is around regular re-balancing, long-term investing, our belief in active management where it makes sense, passive management where it doesn't, and constantly scouring the investment landscape for interesting new opportunities. So what I was relieved to see, and I'll admit because when I shifted from institutional advice to the high net worth arena, I was wondering what kind of a culture shock I would experience. But I'm relieved to see that the principles are not that dissimilar. Obviously, we're not like Mark Steed and that we don't have this, I suppose, this box, the sandbox and that we will have a truly off, I don't know how he describes them, but truly non-correlated assets, sports teams, et cetera, some of the e-sports there. But we do have, I'd say, a much more interesting array of assets on offer now than we would have had maybe five years ago.

Chris O'Grady: Yeah, the advisory firms that we speak to, they need to compete for business for the high net worth clients. It's got to be more than just 60/40 because you'll lose to maybe passive ideas. You have to have really unique boutique ideas. And here's the downside of being a little bit older in our careers is probably somebody like you that's had your consulting firm, you've done a lot of different things. You've got your biases. You've got your relationships. You've got the managers you know. How does somebody break in to show a fresh idea to you and your team then you probably-- let's take private equity, you could rattle off 10 or 15 names of people you've probably allocated to. How do you become a new seat in that crowded auditorium?

Aoifinn Devitt: It's interesting. I'd say since my time at Chicago Police, I've always had an open door policy. Partly there was I'd say sheer professional loneliness and that I was a single person investment office. And I liked having managers come through the door. I used to see two or three managers even up to five or six managers a week. I'd have an open door. It didn't mean it had to be a long meeting necessarily. We could finish it up in a half an hour. But I'm always interested in hearing about new ideas. And I'd say that that has carried over to Moneta. We have an open door policy around new ideas. Some fascinating ideas have come across our transom recently, say, an area venture capital fund focused on fam health as an example. So we're definitely open. I'd say in terms of do we need to see a track record? Of course, because we have the fiduciary duty, an obligation to ensure that we've done our due diligence. So do we need to see certain minimum sizes? Not

strictly. I'd say that that always is very much a factor of whether somebody we've known them in the past, look at who the other investors are, look at what they're raising. And I'd say very much flexibility there. So we're not actually-- if anything, I am very suspicious sometimes of whether some of those older names, do they move with the times? Have they adapted? Have they evolved? Are they still hungry? Is a succession in place for perhaps the older talent to rotate out and newer talent to rise up through the ranks? I take nothing for granted when it comes to existing relationships.

Chris O'Grady: Yeah, it's one of those empirical points that I think I just spoke with a large endowment last week down in the state of North Carolina. The individual said, up to \$2 to \$3 billion that the managers incentivized that usually is the sweet spot where they're doing their best work. Stanley Druckenmiller always says, when you start a money management firm, you better get off to a good start. But there is the incentive, the alignment of the manager with the investors, kind of, almost earlier at the first few innings of one's career because the pressure is on as you mentioned, Aoifinn. Maybe XYZ fund 15 is it is interesting as fund two or three. And that tends to be where the rubber meets the road. I'm hogging the mic, so I'm going to turn it back over to you.

Robert Morier: It's OK. I always enjoy. I like the co-host, and I like the guest, so it's good for me. Today's episode is brought to you by Dakota Marketplace. Are you tired of constantly jumping between multiple databases and channels to find the right investment opportunities? Introducing Dakota Marketplace, the comprehensive institutional and intermediary database built by fund raisers for fund raisers. With Dakota Marketplace, you'll have access to all channels and asset classes in one place, saving you time and streamlining your fundraising process. Say goodbye to the frustration of searching through multiple databases and say hello to a seamless and efficient fundraising experience. Sign up now and see the difference Dakota Marketplace can make for you. Visit dakotamarketplace.com today. Well, speaking of that open door policy, Aoifinn, you're well known for being a strident supporter of emerging managers and women in minority-owned firms. Was it difficult for you to find firms that aligned with your own ethics and values? Or did you find that you had to affect change from within in order to bring on that type of exposure to the places that you've worked?

Aoifinn Devitt: Interestingly, as Chicago Police, we did have a state aspiration to invest 20% of our assets in emerging firms. The challenge was finding enough of those firms that could meet our criteria in terms of the minimum size that we invested. We were \$2.6 billion in the pension fund so not huge, but we still need-- we could write checks of reasonably size. So we needed to see funds of a reasonable size to get there. We needed to see the track record. We increasingly saw the

barriers to entry to raising and sustaining a fund rising. So therefore, we had to be concerned about operational risk. And we did see, unfortunately, some of those emerging firms that we backed not survive because they couldn't keep going. They perhaps didn't have enough assets, and the barriers to entry, the regulatory burden was simply too high. So I'd say we were working hard to source opportunities. And fortunately, we had more capital to put to work than we could find opportunities. But we did our part. As far as finding ideas, I've been interviewing a number of female PMs for the podcast series. I've been fascinated by what is continuing to hold them back. And there is something holding them back. I'd say if we look at the amount of money raised by female portfolio managers, it's not on the same level as we see with male portfolio managers. We see this problem in the venture capital arena too. I'm not sure whether there is an issue of that what they call the female founder discount. We see this both at the founders stage as well as the portfolio manager stage. They find it more challenging to raise assets, which then becomes this vicious cycle that they don't raise as many assets and then they have to focus on some of these operational concerns that I mentioned before. So I'm certainly doing my part to amplify many of these extremely interesting names to ensure that their stories get out and that they don't discourage. The fact that there are so few of them doesn't discourage other women from taking this path. But we unfortunately still have a major pipeline problem and a major progression problem when it comes to female portfolio managers, not only in their own firms, but moving through their established firms. So what I'm trying to do with this podcast is to address some of that moving through the firm problem. The pipeline seems to be getting addressed at the hiring level. It's not great, but we're making major inroads there. But where we're not making inroads is on helping with that career coaching, career management, career advice, executive coaching, and really sharing stories of other people who've been in a similar boat. And that's what I'm trying to do with the podcast. We may not have enough mentors or role models who look like us ahead of us on the hierarchy. So if we can borrow stories from other firms or other role models, I'm hoping that can help to bridge the gap.

Chris O'Grady: Yeah, that's always been the challenge is the denominator of choice to really fill this out. So let me ask you a question back to the Chicago Police. I lived in Chicago for 15 years. The police force has a certain demographic of diversity officers, female officers, and you're running that pension fund. How did you reconcile investing the pension fund on behalf of managers that look like your pensioners, not all white gentlemen from Harvard running an investment strategy when you've got a different diverse group? That seed was planted in my mind by a consultant in Chicago that deals with a lot of Taft-Hartley plans. So how do you reconcile that reality that you want the people managing the money to look not too dissimilar from the folks that are celebrating the outcome of your performance?

Aoifinn Devitt: Yeah, that was our challenge, as I mentioned with our aspirational goal. And I suppose the good thing about that having that aspiration, which is set in the pension code, is that we were held accountable for that in front of the Illinois Senate every year and sometimes twice a year. So there was that holding force to be accountable, and to show the numbers, and to show progress in the numbers was a very important discipline to ensure that we were working. And sometimes we were explaining that we were trying and we couldn't make progress because we didn't have perhaps the-- we just didn't have the slot. We had the slot, but we couldn't find someone to fill that slot. We made progress, I'd say. Was it as fast as the Illinois Senate would have liked to see? Probably not. But I'd say that there was an absolute laser focus on that diversity in the portfolio throughout my time there.

Robert Morier: Well, that's wonderful. Well, the platform you have created has placed these important issues and discussions on stage. So we are very grateful for that. We've mentioned Mark Steed now two times. I'm going to do it one more time. I think it's appropriate to share one more thing he said about you, which is that you're a gift to our industry. So he was very kind in celebrating what you've been doing with this podcast, of course, the career that you've had over the last 20-plus years as a CIO and an investment allocator has also been equally wonderful. So we wish you all the best in the future. Congratulations on all your success, and we'll be sure to tune in to your podcast.

Chris O'Grady: Yeah, I know, Aoifinn and also just be aware that Clontarf did have a good name in the industry. A lot of sales professionals that I knew, Clontarf was on the top of the list to reach out to when in Chicago. And clearly, at the top of the call before we started recording this, I was saying I've reached out to you several times. Why wouldn't I? Just sitting here listening to you talking to you, this is the pursuit of wanting to meet interesting, intriguing people. So hopefully, we can cross paths someday. It was a joy to talk to you.

Aoifinn Devitt: Well, thank you so much. And I'd say right back at Mark, he's also a gift. He's someone I consider a true class act, and I was delighted to capture him. And thank you very much for having me here.

Robert Morier: Absolutely. Well, if you want to learn more about Aoifinn and her work at Moneta Group, please visit their website at www.monetagroup.com. We also highly encourage you to spend time with Aoifinn's podcast, The Fiftyfaces, which you can find on your favorite podcast platform or at their website at www.fiftyfaceshub.com. You can find this episode and past episodes on [Spotify](#), [Apple](#), Google, or your favorite podcast platform. We are also available on [YouTube](#) if you prefer to watch while you listen. And finally, if you would like to catch us on past episodes, take a look at our website at dakotalivepodcast.buzzsprout.com. So again, thank you, Aoifinn. Thank you, Chris. Good to see you both, and we'll see you soon.