

People@KPMG

A Week in the Life of Constance Hunter

8:13 AM ET, October 28, 2013

Constance Hunter learned the stock market at her father's knee. Today, she's interpreting it – along with other financial and economic data – as KPMG's chief economist for Alternative Investments.

The only person at KPMG to hold the title, Hunter joined the firm earlier this year to help our fast-moving Alternative Investments practice (which serves hedge, real estate, private equity and other funds with non-traditional asset classes) stay ahead of global trends. From her New York base, Hunter spends most weeks juggling speeches, TV interviews, panel discussions and global travel with client meetings and strategy sessions, while carving out time to look at the data and assess the economy.



Recommended 21 times



Media Financial Expert

Hunter is a regular contributor to CNBC-TV, FOX Business and Bloomberg TV, and has been quoted in the New York Times, Financial Times and other prominent publications. Known for her clear and 'data-agnostic' analysis, she brings a passion for the so-called 'dismal science' that began when she was barely seven years old.

"My father was an investment banker who taught me to read the stock pages back before there were computers. He'd explain how 'PE (price-earnings) ratio' and 'Price-to-Book' worked and he'd show me how to calculate them. I not only began to understand finance and economics, I thought they were interesting."

Hunter went on to earn a dual degree in sociology and economics at New York University and a master's in international affairs with a focus on international economics from Columbia University. Her skill – honed over the years - is in detecting 'inflection points'—paradigm shifts that indicate a change in financial behavior, economic data, policy or politics.

"The first time I realized that I could discern inflection points, I thought it was just luck. But as I studied economic patterns and more advanced analytical methods, I realized looking for structural data breaks came naturally to me. I applied what I knew about sociology, economics and markets to interpret the data." explains Hunter.

Finding the Future

Expecting to land at a think tank or work as a banker, Hunter interviewed at a bank – where her future found her.

"As I was waiting for my next interview, I happened to see an economics report sitting on a desk. It was about the Foreign Exchange market and it updated the overnight economic and political data. I was so excited by the research and the information I realized this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to be involved in this type of analyses," says Hunter.

Hunter tracked down the author, and got a job as an economist in the foreign exchange area of Chase Manhattan Bank working on the very same report she saw on the desk. Once she identified her skill at recognizing inflection points, she joined a Russia focused hedge fund and embarked on numerous trips to the former Soviet Union.

"I swam in Lake Baikal, went a mile and a half underground at the former Siberian gulag, Norilsk Nickel's main mine and landed on an oil rig in the Caspian Sea," she says. She also found herself on the receiving end of an unwelcome gift at a gala dinner – a sheep's eye.

"I gratefully told the hosts that I was not the most senior person present at the dinner, so I wouldn't want to offend anyone by eating something that was not rightfully mine," she laughs.

Partner and Manager

Hunter later became a portfolio manager at Firebird Management and then Salomon Smith Barney, a partner and portfolio manager at Quantarian, a hedge fund that invests in Asian markets, and a chief economist with Aladdin Capital and global macro hedge fund Galtere Ltd. In between, she also established Coronat Asset Management, serving at its managing member and chief investment officer.

Known as a clear and cogent interviewee who can handle tough and often indecipherable topics, Hunter credits her lifelong equestrian training for an ability to remain cool under pressure.

"When you compete at a high level, you go into that ring and have two minutes. That's it. It's the same when are doing a TV interview or speaking to a client. You have to be well prepared and then, when it's show time, you have to focus, remain in the moment and make sure you have your game on," says Hunter.

Hunter's 'game' is now 'on' enough to prompt numerous requests for television interviews and newspaper quotes.

"Our vision for having a chief economist dedicated to our AI practice is straightforward. We believe that we can differentiate ourselves in the crowded AI market by providing an informed point of view that demonstrates a broader understanding of our clients' and targets' businesses and the risks and opportunities that they face. In the brief time that Constance has been with KPMG, the value of this approach has been demonstrated time and again," says AI Fichera Audit partner and National Channel Leader.

Meanwhile, the Alternative Investments practice is blossoming, too.

Smiles Hunter, "I want my colleagues to say, yes, she's really adding value."



Approved By Bruce Pfau