

# WEALTH AND WELLNESS

Adrienne Iglehart urges talking openly about money to promote financial health.

By Pati Navalta Poblete  
Photography by Justin Buell

Here's something Silicon Valley's fairer sex can boast about: A fourth of the nation's wealthiest self-made women live in the Bay Area—many of them CEOs and founders of Valley tech companies, according to a recent *Forbes* report. But when it comes to the money they make, women are often silent, fearing it's impolite to talk about money or simply allow their spouses to handle the finances, some surveys have shown. Adrienne Iglehart, principal of The Iglehart Group at Merrill Lynch in San Francisco, advises just the opposite: Start talking.

Consequences of keeping quiet, she warns, range from not properly saving for retirement or emergencies to the inability to be an active decision-maker on major purchases. Divorce adds another layer of challenges for women: getting denied for loans due to lack of credit history, inheriting a debt they didn't know existed and walking away from assets of which they weren't aware. With a stint at Wilmington Trust that led to two decades of asset management for private clients ranging from multigenerational affluents to self-made billionaires, Iglehart has become an expert at helping clients navigate their unique financial needs. She's also witnessed a gender gap. "Often, loans can be hidden from women," she says. "Women often don't have a full view of the financial picture of assets and liabilities. Some women sign tax returns without reading or understanding them. If there's bad news, they find out only after things have gotten out of hand."

The Manhattan native said she was one of only five women among 100 traders on the trading floors of New York City in the 1990s, the era of frenzied trading-floor shouting. She learned the value of being heard and taking charge.

Iglehart's advice? Be present at meetings with investment managers, attorneys, accountants; don't sign tax or loan documents you don't understand; learn to read statements for all financial accounts, including credit cards, bank statements, investment accounts; and be aware of the value of large purchases.

"Money doesn't have to be your hobby any more than medical health is a hobby," she says, "It's self-care."