Rainmaker PODCAST

SEASON 6 EPISODE #2

ANGELA KAY

BASEPOINT ADVISORS

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Welcome to the Rainmaker Podcast with your host, Gui Costin. The goal of this podcast is to give listeners a unique look into sales strategies from top industry executives. We introduce you to the heads of sales and heads of distribution who will help you understand the inner workings of successful sales organizations, from philosophy to execution. This podcast is essential for sales professionals seeking wisdom from the best in the field. If you're not familiar with Dakota and their Dakota Rainmaker content, please check out dakota.com to learn more about their services.

Gui Costin: What is up, everybody? It's Gui Costin, founder and CEO of Dakota. Welcome to the latest episode of the Rainmaker Podcast. I am so excited to be joined by Angela Kay. Angela, welcome.

Angela Kay: Thank you so much, Gui. It's a pleasure to be here today.

Gui Costin: I'm thrilled to have you. So, Angela Kay, President of BasePoint Advisors and Global Head of Capital Markets. With over 20 years of experience in capital markets and asset management, Angela serves as President of BasePoint Advisors, the firm's registered investment advisory business launched in 2021, and leads BasePoint's global capital formation. In this role, she runs the day-to-day operations of BasePoint Advisors and directs business development, capital formation, product development, and client relations for the firm. Angela sits on BasePoint's senior management team and co-heads front office operations. Prior to joining BasePoint, she served as managing director of Ice Canyon, a joint venture of Canyon Partners, and earlier held roles as an emerging markets analyst at TCW and a geopolitical analyst at Logos Capital. She holds a BA with honors in political science from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's in public policy from UCLA. All right, let's get right into it. Take us back to the origin story — where you grew up, through college, and then your career, and how you made it to BasePoint.

Angela Kay: Sure. So I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California.

Gui Costin: Where in LA?

Angela Kay: Well, Santa Monica originally. And then when I came back to LA about 20-plus years ago, I lived in a variety of places, most recently Pacific Palisades, which sadly suffered some pretty terrible fires about a year and a half ago. But the community is coming back, so we're excited to kind of return home. I'm currently in Brentwood.

Gui Costin: Good. So my dad moved to Pacific Palisades on Amalfi Drive in 1984. Sadly, he died in '03 at the young age of 59. So I know it very, very well. I have a lot of friends who live in the Palisades, and we drove through it last year. Super tough. I know — my goodness.

Angela Kay: I've never seen it.

Gui Costin: I'm so sorry. But you're back — so you're in Brentwood.

Angela Kay: Yep, Brentwood right now. We're going to rebuild the house, so excited to kind of get the community back going. We'll be back there in probably another 18 months to 2 years. I haven't started the building yet, but hopefully any day now.

Gui Costin: Oh, that's great.

Angela Kay: Yeah. So anyway, I actually left California originally before coming back, for undergrad. I went to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, which I know—

Gui Costin: We're a 23rd and Chestnut. Let's go.

Angela Kay: I mean, I'm coming in May for sure for my reunion, but I love Philly — it's such a special place in my heart. I kind of call this business and finance my unintended career, because I was actually supposed to go work in Washington, D.C. straight out of college. I was a political science and public policy major, and I had worked in Washington during school. I actually worked in the Office of Political Affairs during the Clinton White House. I spent my junior year abroad living and working at the White House in D.C., and really liked the intersection of public policy and global markets. I was headed to D.C., but I graduated Penn in May of 2002 — six months after 9/11 — and there was a hiring freeze everywhere. So I graduated Penn without a job. My parents said, well, you have no job and no money, but you've got a bedroom in this house. I was just floored by that. But I ended up getting a job as a research assistant for a global macro hedge fund in New York. All my Penn friends were headed to New York. I knew I could do research, and it was kind of the hedge fund hotel era, right? Every brokerage firm — I was popping around hedge funds right and left. This global macro fund needed a research assistant. I didn't really know much about the markets at the time, but I had taken a few classes, and I knew I could do research. I've always been a really curious person. So it was there that I actually got my first taste of the financial markets, and I really started to realize that there were a lot of intersections between public policy and the financial markets. At the time, the markets had a big divide between the public sector and the private sector, and I realized it would be a lot easier to go from the private sector to the public sector than the other way around. So I thought maybe I should shift gears a bit and, instead of starting on the public side, start on the private side. I had applied to graduate school because that's what I thought I would do before I got the job at the hedge fund. I did want to come back to Los Angeles, so I left New York and came back to LA and got a master's in economic and public policy from UCLA. It was during those two years that I started working at Trust Company of the West in their emerging markets group. At the time it was—

Gui Costin: You have to tell me what role, because — you know, Mark Cohen's brother? Do you know the Cohen brothers? They're fundraisers. Yeah.

Angela Kay: Well, I actually — so I was a sovereign debt analyst.

Gui Costin: Yeah.

Angela Kay: Okay, yeah. So I started my career on the investment side. I was a sovereign debt analyst. I really loved — at the time, the emerging markets were very much reliant, obviously, on policy, as the markets are, and sovereign debt in particular. So I joined their emerging markets debt group. I was a sovereign debt analyst, and it was there that I really got to focus on how policy moves the markets. But I also started learning all about how you model portfolios. That group at TCW did a lot of corporate debt investing — we did CDOs at the time, collateralized debt obligations. So it was really a great way to continue to learn about the markets and investing. I was there from about 2004 to 2006. In 2006, the head of that group left to start a joint venture with Canyon Partners — a large multi-strat hedge fund in LA, a very successful firm — and we were going to start Ice Canyon, an emerging markets asset manager, a joint venture with Canyon Partners. So I went with the head of the group at TCW to form Ice Canyon. I was employee number one, and that was really my first experience with capital raising, because I knew our track record from TCW — I had been modeling our CDOs. We were going to launch the first emerging market collateralized loan obligation, a CLO. We were very fortunate that Canyon provided all of our infrastructure, middle and back office — but no money. So we needed to go out and raise all of our own money. I helped raise that business from zero AUM to a peak of $4.25 billion.

Gui Costin: Okay. So I have to ask you a question. You go from being an analyst, right?

Angela Kay: Yes.

Gui Costin: Now you end up in a fundraising role. And yes — this is because, remember, this whole show is about the individual fundraiser who works at a boutique.

Angela Kay: Mm-hmm.

Gui Costin: And now you've gone from being the wizard, as I refer to it — the PM, the analyst, what have you — to now having a fundraising role. What were the feelings, and the key takeaways you had when you moved from one role to the other? I don't want to preempt your answer, but I'm really curious — what were the feelings of, like, 'man, I was managing portfolios, now I have to be out telling the story'?

Angela Kay: Yeah, I never really looked at it as a have-to. I kind of looked at it as a get-to, because when I started going on the road to explain what our track record was, how we were building our portfolios, how our portfolios could provide a solution to that investor, I realized very quickly that in order to be successful at fundraising, you have to be — or it's helpful to be — a good investor first. But not all investors are good fundraisers. What I started to realize is you could have the best portfolio manager sitting in the room, and they're not able to connect with the person sitting across the table from them. They're focused on telling their story about their portfolio, their trade, their track record, and not necessarily listening to the needs of the person on the other end of the table. So being able to bridge that gap — understanding the investments from an investor standpoint, but also understanding the capital allocation needs of the person sitting within the LP — matters, because depending on where you are in the world, every region has very different investment needs and objectives. Somebody sitting at a pension fund in Tokyo is going to have a very different set of regulatory pressures than the analyst sitting within a Middle Eastern sovereign wealth fund, or a family office that just had a big liquidity event, or somebody sitting at an insurance company in the US or the UK. So I always found it fascinating to understand what was driving portfolio needs across the globe, and figuring out how whatever strategy I was working on at the time could help solve that portfolio hole.

Gui Costin: So fascinating. I've done probably 80 to 100 of these, and the way you just articulated that — what came into my brain immediately is you applied your portfolio management, analysis, and positioning skill set directly to understanding the needs of an LP, or an investor.

Angela Kay: Exactly.

Gui Costin: Right — it's pretty fascinating, because the reason I'm saying this, and I want this to come out on the podcast for anybody listening, is that being a fundraiser isn't a 'salesperson' thing — it's not that wrapped-up business-development, IR, salesperson stuff. What you really are is a professional, right?

Angela Kay: Absolutely. Yeah.

Gui Costin: And you're balancing the needs of an LP across the board — all these different types of LPs and their different constraints, opinions, and thoughts. But it's the same basic skill set, which I try to encourage everybody to understand. I love being a salesperson, first and foremost, because it requires that mindset. A lot of people shun sales in the investment business, right? You just articulated so beautifully what it really means to be a sophisticated fundraiser, because at the end of the day, you're being a business person, right?

Angela Kay: Absolutely. And I've always viewed it that way. I've never really viewed myself as a salesperson — I like to build businesses, but really I like to help solve capital allocation problems. My favorite thing to do is to listen to the question. I think salespeople sometimes listen to the question being asked, but the real key is to understand the question beneath the question. What is this person really trying to solve for within their organization, but also for themselves personally? That's somebody's job who's sitting across the table from you, and you need to build that trust. So I've always thought about it as: be an investor first and a fundraiser second. Be curious — don't go into a meeting just wanting to get your point across. Be curious about who that person is. What region of the world are they sitting in? What investor type are you talking to? Who is this person within their organization? What are their different lines of decision-making? Invest in the relationship, right? It's such a long business, and it's actually so fun for me now, because you stick around long enough, and the person you met 20 years ago when you were both junior in your career is now the CIO of the Danish Pension Fund. We've known each other for 15-plus years.

Gui Costin: That's the whole magic of this business — it's not like software. We're in a data business, where it can be a little more transient, a little more transactional. If you meet someone today, there's a really good chance you'll be colleagues for 20, 25 years.

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: Such an amazing takeaway, because it's such an intense relationship-building business, and you end up growing together. I do want to bring up the point you just made 30 seconds ago, because I love this — I was on the phone with one of my good friends. I've invested in two of his venture funds. He's been a big winner, from Facebook to Twitter to SpaceX to Pinterest, everything. So I hung up the phone with him and texted him right after, because he's doing his third fund and wants me to invest. And, you know, I'm in. So I said, 'John, I don't know if I have more admiration for you as an investor or as a salesperson' — I said, 'or both.' And he texted back, 'both,' with a smiley face.

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: Right? But then the second or third derivative of the conversation is — he invests in venture, then he has to sell those venture funds to the next round, if you will. So he has to be a great salesperson there too — a great salesperson to get the venture firm to let him give them money. So it's not just selling investors — at the end of the day, it's all one conglomeration of a human being, right?

Angela Kay: Absolutely. Oh, definitely. You invest in those relationships and they build over time. I always thought about it as: your reputation compounds just like capital does. You have to build that trust, and you've got to protect your reputation, which is really also your firm's reputation. There will be market cycles, things won't always happen perfectly, but if you can build that trust — if the person across the table knows they can rely on you, that what you're telling them about your strategy and your view on the market is the truth, and that if something goes wrong you're going to pick up the phone and be transparent about it — it goes a long way.

Gui Costin: So, Angela, I want to move on to the next topic, but I do want to crystallize this. For everyone listening, especially if you're young in your career — there's a high probability you're not going to leave this career. Investing, fundraising, working in the investment business, either as the investor or simultaneously the fundraiser — it's this concept of relationships. You just mentioned your friend who's now head of the Danish Pension Fund. It's so critical to understand the long game here — we're in a consultative sale, an educational process, a trust-building exercise. We're not in a transactional world. There's a really good chance that if you stay in the business long enough and keep applying yourself, you're going to have these relationships for basically a lifetime, and they become much more like friendships over time, right?

Angela Kay: Very fun.

Gui Costin: Do you want to sum that up in maybe 30 seconds? Because I think if there was one takeaway, and we could end the podcast right now — to everyone listening — it's such a cool business in that you literally grow together and become friends, you know, family, the whole thing. Whereas in many businesses you get passed off — like I build a relationship with Angela, it's great, we make the sale, and then a customer success team takes over and handles the relationship from there. Do you know what I mean?

Angela Kay: Yeah, I know — that's a really good point. And that's also, you know, I don't really believe in that model. As firms get bigger, sometimes they have to kind of silo it off, but it is a relationship business. People want to talk to who they feel comfortable speaking with, and you develop those relationships over time. The idea that you have a coverage person who hands it off to a product specialist, or someone who always has to bring a PM into a meeting — I never wanted to be the person who could pick up the phone and get the meeting, and then have to go bring the PM in because he's the only one who knows any detail about the investment strategy. And frankly, the LP doesn't really want that either. I think the old days of the fun sales guy who takes people to dinner, and that's all they're expected to do, has never been my experience — at least in this business.

Gui Costin: I don't think that's today. Yeah — and I think just feeling good about yourself, having a depth of knowledge on an investment strategy and being able to explain it, right, and talk—

Angela Kay: And understand the markets. You need to be able to pivot within a meeting. You should know your organization cold and what your investment strategy is, but not every client is the same, and the markets change. They might have a big blowup in a different part of their portfolio that you're now learning about, and you've got to pivot to explain how you can help them — maybe it has nothing to do with how your strategy in that moment is going to help them. But if you're a good investor and you understand the markets and market cycles, you're going to be able to help them come up with a solution for what their needs are. Next time around, it might be your fund, but it's always thinking about the whole.

Gui Costin: I love that.

Angela Kay: All right.

Gui Costin: I'm going to make one statement, right — you can comment or not, but then I want to move on, because I want to talk about your organizational structure, and everything that helps everyone understand how the great leaders of distribution and CEOs operate. So when you do cold outreach — you're going to a city, and it can be a global city, right, doesn't matter — the US, could be Boston, New York, London, the Middle East, the Nordic region — some people are reluctant to do cold outreach. What I always say to everyone is: you are one email away from a 20-year relationship.

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: That's the way our world works, because you're not going to be passed off if you email someone and say, 'Hey, I'm going to be in London on these dates — we've never met before, this is our strategy, I'd love to come in and introduce myself. Can you meet May 4th at 3 o'clock?' So if you don't do that because you're like, 'well, I only want referrals,' or 'I don't want to interrupt them,' or all that noise in your head — versus just doing it, and they say, 'you know what, yes' — next thing you know, you're at the meeting, you sit down, and you build a relationship. Next thing you know, 20 years later, that person is a great friendship. So I'd just encourage everybody — the investment business is an awesome business, because I think it's a gentlemanly business, right — there are other industries that can be a lot more transactional. But cold outreach, for the most part, if you're good at what you do and a good relationship builder and you stay in the business, you send those cold outreach emails, you get the response, you go meet with them, and there's a very good chance that's a 20-to-25-year relationship. And I think the best business people maintain those relationships for a very long period of time. My point is simply: don't shun cold outreach, because it really does work over time.

Angela Kay: Absolutely. Yeah, I think you have to have some focus with the cold outreach — we're not throwing spaghetti against the wall. You've got anchors in various cities, and then you build people around it. I always like to think about triangulating the process. If you have a good core of strong relationships across a lot of different investor bases, you can say, 'hey, I'm coming to London to meet you, but by the way, is there anyone else there I should meet with?' — because the power of referral is huge. Cold outreach definitely works. I wouldn't want it to be the core of my distribution strategy, but I wouldn't shun it either — it can work. I do like the power of referral, though; I think that works even better.

Gui Costin: I love it, I love that. Okay — could you give us a little BasePoint level-set, and the structure of your team?

Angela Kay: Sure. So BasePoint — we are a short-duration, private, asset-based finance manager. The unique story about BasePoint was really fun for me, because I got to put on an entrepreneurial hat for a second time when I joined BasePoint in 2020. When I joined, BasePoint was a specialty finance company — there was no asset manager, it was an originate-to-syndicate model. The firm had about $800 million outstanding and about 8 employees. I was specifically brought on to institutionalize the business and also to create our SEC-registered investment advisory business. So I had the benefit of joining a very senior team with a very strong track record, where we could really take the business to the next level. Today, we've got about 120 people at BasePoint. We've got $7 billion—

Gui Costin: Wow.

Angela Kay: Yeah, it's been a lot of growth — $7 billion outstanding, and about $3.75 billion of that sits in our fund advisory business, where we manage money for sovereign wealth funds, OCIOs, pension funds, family offices, endowments and foundations, wealth management firms — really across the board. Our distribution team — I like to divide people up according to investor type and geography. I think that lends itself nicely to knowing your customer really well. You need to understand various geographies and different client types — as I mentioned, they've got different needs — and really build a team atmosphere. I'm not interested in fiefdoms and silos. I think each individual should own the coverage of their LP and know them, but the information belongs to the firm, and it's a team sport. I always tell my team: this is a team sport. It's just as hard to go out and raise $5 million as it is $500 million. We have different people on our team with different backgrounds and skill sets. I do think it's important for the LP to have one relationship manager, but I might slot somebody in, or have people double-team an account, depending on their needs. So that's how I view our team and distribution. I also never ask anybody on my team how many meetings they had that week — I think that can create a trap of feeling busy without having any progress. Instead, think about a sales cycle in terms of: who are you talking to, what is their story both as an individual and as a firm, what does their portfolio look like, where can we fit in, and how are we going to earn the next meeting? You've got to earn the next meeting — there's got to be a reason for a follow-up, not just, 'hey, can we have another meeting?' What's the next point of that meeting, what's the purpose, and who's the decision-maker? Don't fall into the trap of sending emails just to feel busy.

Gui Costin: All right. I'm not going to ask a ton of questions on that, because the way you articulated it was so beautiful. The only comment I'll make is you're basically using extreme common sense, because at the end of the day, we're all calling on an allocator, and the goal isn't to sell them something — the goal is to understand their needs, but also make sure they really understand our strategy, that we're out there. I always say, it's like, 'hey, we're here — I just want to make sure you clearly understand who we are, what we do, and how it could benefit your portfolio.' And it may not be a fit, and that's okay.

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: A quick no is fine. As you said — if you have a bucket, and you keep putting in those leads, the people who sort of qualify for what you do, that bucket just builds over time. As I listen to you, that's exactly what I hear — working extremely smart. But at the same time, you didn't say this technically, but asking very tough questions to understand if there's a fit, and really understand where we stand.

Angela Kay: Absolutely. And, you know, I kind of think about it as: there's attention, prioritization, and patience. I'm always talking pipeline with my team, to make sure we're prioritizing properly. There's always a balance — we take money in monthly to our funds, so who's going to give us money next month, who's maybe next year, and who in three years down the road? This is something you learn over time — there's a feel to it. It's hard when you're younger to get a feel for who's probably not going to happen versus 'there's nothing to do here right now, but there will be at some point.' That's something you have to have a feel for and learn how to prioritize. People drop off for different reasons, but I always tell my team: it's very rare that a no is a no forever. It's usually — you want to stay in front, because I remember early in my career, it's easy to make the mistake of thinking, 'well, they said no,' only to find out 18 months later they allocated to somebody else, but you thought they told you no, and you'd stopped focusing on that. There's always a reason to stay involved.

Gui Costin: I love that. So business is all about prioritization. At Dakota, we call it 'focus on what matters most' — that's our core umbrella principle. You're saying the word prioritization — every minute of every day when I talk to the team, it's all about prioritization and focusing on what matters most. We always know there is that, but as a leader, obviously every great leader knows how to prioritize and how to coach the team to think about prioritization — but it doesn't come naturally.

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: As you know, it doesn't come naturally to everybody. People can think they're prioritizing when they're not, and establishing standards around prioritization — getting clean answers on exactly where you stand against certain accounts. Why are we calling this account? Where do we stand? So we always say, in our Salesforce, we have two fields at the opportunity level: current status and next step — just, where do we stand, and what's the next step? If we can't answer those questions, that means we didn't ask the proper questions during the meeting. As I always say, you never follow up after the meeting in a tactical sense — you follow up in the meeting, right?

Angela Kay: Absolutely.

Gui Costin: I want to know before you leave exactly where you stand, whether there's an opportunity or not. You're going to laugh, Angela — in 2011, I banned two words. I said the only thing we can't say at this company is 'great meeting.' If I ask you how the meeting was, I can't have you say, 'oh, great meeting, great meeting' — those aren't buying signals. It's amazing. I said, no, no, no, we're not doing it — just be honest, just tell me exactly where you stand. And I love nos — I can take a no for an answer.

Angela Kay: Absolutely. Well, I think I've developed a culture for my team where I want to hear the truth. I want to hear the bad — I can manage a bad outcome, I can manage a no, I can manage bad information. Bad information doesn't get better because I heard it three weeks late. I need to know it now, so we can change course.

Gui Costin: I want to move on to communication, because I can already tell we're going to get an amazing insight here from you. Communication — I always think of it as up and down. I'd love to hear how you have it structured, how you communicate with your team, and up to the executive committee at the company. How do you manage those two things, and how could anyone listening today learn from how you structure your communication style?

Angela Kay: Sure. So with my team, we're obviously in daily contact, but we definitely have our weekly meetings. I'm a big believer every meeting needs some sort of agenda — we can hop on a call, but if it's a standard weekly meeting, we need to know what we're going through. What are the priorities in our group? What are we working on in terms of public-facing outreach? Who are our top-priority clients, existing clients with different needs coming up, different portfolio reviews? And how are we building our pipeline, and continuing to optimize it, so I know exactly what everybody on my team is working on, who our priorities are, and where we need to be and when. And with the executive team at the firm — fortunately I'm on that committee, and I'm a senior leader at the firm, so that's helpful. But I really believe the best organizations succeed when information flow is a two-way street between the investment team and the distribution team. Really it's a three-way street in the market, because the distribution team isn't just there to put our product into the market — it's also to bring information back about what the market is telling us. The market's always right. You can be the most brilliant trader ever, but if the market doesn't want what you're delivering, good luck. At the same time, I need to make sure my team and I are armed with information from the investment team, so we can sit in a meeting and feel like we're speaking as an investor — it's the closest thing to having somebody from the investment side sitting right next to me. I think that lends a lot of skill and value to what you're bringing to the LP when you can really speak to the investments. Now, my team isn't expected to know every single detail about a company we're lending money to, but you do need to know the general gist — how it's performing, how we got into that trade, where it's being marked. I think the organizations that succeed are the ones with a valued emphasis on both distribution and portfolio management.

Gui Costin: If you don't know your holdings — as an individual salesperson — then you should just get another job. If you don't know your top 10 holdings in detail, the business case, the business model, how they're performing, why we own it, and in your case, loans — you said something I think is kind of ultra-special: we have intense structure on both sides of that communication. Intense structure — I call it the straitjacket model, where everyone on our team is in a straitjacket, forced to be accountable for their business plan and sales plan. We have to be very communicative in a very structured way — check-ins, the whole thing.

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: So no one can wiggle unaccountable for those accounts. But what you mentioned, which is very powerful for anyone listening from a leadership standpoint, is the constant one-off — if you're engaged with me, you're getting phone calls, me just checking in, hey, no agenda — how are you doing, how are you feeling about things, what's going on? I'm here, just—

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: And if the answer is nothing, the answer is nothing, right? But everyone ends up saying something. So everyone always knows that Gui's going to be calling at some point — maybe once a week, twice a week, three times a week. The best salespeople get a lot more communication, because there's a lot more going on, and I want to know what's going on. They love talking about what they're up to and how it's going. It's literally this process of constant communication. I'm always communicating with our CFO, our president, our head of product, our CTO, our head of data — always communicating, talking all the time. Slack's a great medium for that — doesn't require physical communication, or Teams, whatever you use. And back to the key takeaway of what we're talking about in communication — it's absolutely vital. And I always said, if we're talking to an individual salesperson, Angela, who literally works at a firm with six people — she's the only salesperson, he's the only salesperson, whatever it is — if you don't take the time weekly to communicate to your boss what you're up to, how things are going against the plan and everything—

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: You're gonna eventually die, right?

Angela Kay: Definitely, right? Absolutely. No, I mean, in this business, as you know, it's super fast-paced, it's intense. If I'm not being updated, the easy assumption is just to assume that nothing's happening, right?

Gui Costin: Yeah, as I say to the guys — they're going to assume you're playing golf.

Angela Kay: Yeah, like, I guess you're not doing anything — I guess nothing's happening in your coverage universe, because otherwise I think I would hear about it. So I think the information flow — it's a process, and it's a discipline. It's a discipline of how you're following up. I'm also very protective of how we use resources at the firm, because — same thing — I don't want to just be throwing spaghetti against the wall. I don't want the next step in a meeting to just be, 'oh, let me bring this person on, let me bring that person on.' Why? Why are we bringing that person from that team on? Did that client have a specific need? Are we answering a question? Are we going to be able to advance ourselves in that process? Are we getting stuck? Why are we getting stuck? Let's think about that. I don't want it to be haphazard.

Gui Costin: I love it. You just addressed the intellectual laziness concept.

Angela Kay: Exactly.

Gui Costin: I love it, I love it.

Angela Kay: Okay, let's—

Gui Costin: So one of my all-time favorite topics is the concept of a CRM. And we're speaking now to — again, back to him or her at a small boutique, $300 million under management — and this will extrapolate across everybody — acting big when you're small, acting institutional when you're small. I'd love to hear from you the importance of a CRM: what it means to you, what it means to your organization.

Angela Kay: Sure. Well, the CRM is really the institutional memory of the firm. People leave, coverage changes — maybe somebody met an allocator at a conference three years ago; they weren't at the time allocating to your investment strategy, but they mentioned that policy limits are changing in 2027. You're covering a vast world with a lot of different investor types as a boutique — you don't have this mass retail distribution channel, so you've got a lot of knowledge to store, and the CRM is the place where you should be storing that information. But the value, in my opinion, of the CRM isn't just the data you're putting into it — it's the decisions you can make because of that data. It all goes back to organization, the same way I need my team to be organized. I kind of demand organization from them — your CRM is only as good as the inputs, so make sure what you're putting in there is valuable information. I think the notes are critical. That's really how you build that historical database of who you're talking to and why.

Gui Costin: I love that. And just to accentuate what you're saying — we're a Slack-Salesforce organization.

Angela Kay: Mm-hmm.

Gui Costin: So we put everything into Slack, and we designed it so it all goes into Salesforce accurately. We capture so many channels and conversations now with the Slack bot — AI, whatever system you use. If you've decided for years and years to enter those conversations, now it's as easy as it's ever been to mine that information and draw insights. So, for instance, if we have a new salesperson who joins the company and replaces someone else, they can go into Slack, and within one prompt, get a full breakdown of every account—

Angela Kay: Yeah.

Gui Costin: Right — over the past five years, past seven years, how coverage has changed, assets raised, the conversations, everything, basically in one prompt. It's literally magic, as they call it. But if you don't enter the intellectual capital — if you don't enter that information—

Angela Kay: Yeah. Absolutely.

Gui Costin: Right.

Angela Kay: Oh, and yeah — I actually lived through this in real time at my former firm, back in '06 and '07. It was still sort of the earlier days of Salesforce, at least for us. When we had to go and start migrating over, it became this colossal amount of information you had to input. So do you start from the beginning? When you start from the beginning, don't save your notes for later — it will take you so much time to start inputting them. Just do it in real time. It really helps to hone in on your own mind: what happened in that meeting, what are the follow-ups, what are the tidbits — how old is that person's kid, did somebody just have a kid going off to college, oh right, he was a tennis player. There's people you'll always remember that information on — they're kind of your friends in the business that you talk to all the time. But there are people you aren't speaking to all the time, and especially as you become more senior in your organization — there was a time in my career where I knew every single thing about every single person, every single meeting; I could tell you the date, I could tell you everything. Now that I'm running the group and I have management responsibilities at the firm level, and I'm talking to so many people all the time — maybe it's age too — having that information in a database where we can pull it up is very helpful.

Gui Costin: Yeah, I laughed — we were walking out of a meeting in March in New York City, walked down to the lobby, pulled up my iPhone, pulled up the Slack bot. I did it through — I did Claude and the Slack bot together, meaning I did the same thing twice just to test it, and it was amazing. I just said, 'hey Slack, can you please write me call notes — I just walked out of this meeting, you're connected to my calendar, you know who all the attendees are, this is what we covered — and I just want you to write me very detailed call notes and put it into Salesforce.' So then I wrote a blog on it, and I said, look, I know salespeople — the bane of our existence is call notes. Well, now you can do it in under a minute.

Angela Kay: That's amazing.

Gui Costin: Right — and it'll write it for you. You know how many people have told me they don't like doing call notes and entering them in because they worry about their grammar, they worry about how they're going to be judged, they worry about everything? I'm like, well, it's over, because all the copywriting in the world is writing it for you — you're just giving Claude or ChatGPT what happened in the meeting, and they're doing it for you.

Angela Kay: Yeah, I mean, that's a huge game changer for this side of the business, and we've talked to my team about that as well — I still think that if I've seen what AI can write in terms of market letters and white papers, I can still tell it's written by AI. That doesn't mean it doesn't provide a good foundation, but for those types of tasks, or searches, the amount of ground you can cover now, so much faster, is really amazing.

Gui Costin: That's amazing. It just eliminates all the agita and the stress — the hotel room, going back and typing, all that stuff. It's just like, get it from your brain into an audio file, get it right, and then have a really good copywriter clean it up and put it in. And if you're describing what happened in the meeting — it happened in the meeting, right? Claude's not going to say — right? He's not going to say, right?

Angela Kay: He's not going to make it up. Okay, yeah.

Gui Costin: All right, this has been amazing. Two final questions — because I can already tell I'm going to love this one. We all are. Okay — can you please describe your leadership style in your own words? How would you describe your leadership style?

Angela Kay: Yeah, you know, I think it's autonomy with high expectations. So I do give my team—

Gui Costin: You have to unpack that one, because that's the best I've ever heard.

Angela Kay: Oh, thank you.

Gui Costin: Treating people like adults — because that's how you treat someone like an adult, right?

Angela Kay: Yeah, I mean, I kind of tell my team — I'm not a micromanager, but I'm also not hands-off either. I want to know everything that's happening. It starts with who you hire, which is not easy, right? But I'd always rather hire somebody who's curious, well organized, and has some drive, because those are three things that are really difficult to teach. I can teach somebody about this business, I can tell somebody how to go and learn about the markets — some of it comes over time. But really, having a team that starts with those characteristics, and then giving them some autonomy with checking back in — I think you can do that if, as a leader, you've set out very clear expectations of what you're expecting and what your goals are for the year. Every single year I lay out exactly what the goals are for our team, but also what my expectations are for the team. If you do that, and you have people who have at least enough of that drive, organization, and curiosity, then you can really mentor them to where you want them to be.

Gui Costin: All right — so, autonomy with high expectations. Number one, that has to be the title, or subline, of our podcast. It's absolutely brilliant — might even give you the annotation for a new Decodism: autonomy with high expectations. It's so beautifully said, and it's awesome, and I can tell — when Chris Krein from Artisan was on the podcast a couple of years ago, I think he got something like 150 resumes after we released the episode, because people wanted to come work there.

Angela Kay: Oh, wow.

Gui Costin: And I can imagine you're going to have a similar result. Okay — so, final question. There's a lot of young people getting into this industry today, or who want to get into it. I'm going to speak less about portfolio management, because this is rainmaking — though I also believe the greatest rainmakers understand their holdings and the investment strategy, and have a certain skill to simplify a very complex story, make it easy to understand and easy to retell. That's my mantra around being a master messenger. I'd love to hear from you — what advice would you give a young salesperson getting into our industry today?

Angela Kay: So I think it all comes back to: be an investor first, and understand the markets, understand portfolio construction, understand who your competitors are, understand what can go wrong. Be curious — don't go into a meeting trying to prove you're the smartest person in the world. Go into the meeting and try to leave it smarter, knowing that person better, knowing what their needs are. If you don't know the answer to something, just say you don't know, and you'll come back to them. I think the biggest mistakes are made when somebody young is trying to pretend they have the answer to something, because they're afraid to say they don't know — and then they may inadvertently say something that's very costly. Protect the reputation of yourself and your firm, because your reputation compounds just like capital does, and you really are in the business of building your own personal brand, but also the brand for your firm.

Gui Costin: As my great friend Stacy Havener said — we did a podcast together, and I didn't realize where it was going to go, but it was 100% about meeting with allocators — she had so many great insights, it was like a PhD. I thought I knew what I was talking about, but she said: if you can figure out how to get them to speak 70% of the time and you 30%, then you've won. And relationship building — Angela, I can't tell you how enjoyable this has been. I can see exactly why you've grown such an incredible career, just from how you think about things. Thank you — and it's so clear, your intuition as a leader just comes out. It was really a thrill.

Angela Kay: Thank you.

Gui Costin: I was thrilled to have you on. Thank you.

Angela Kay: Thank you. This was so fun. I love it — you're so good at this. It's very easy.

Gui Costin: All right, great, great. Well, everyone, that is another wrap of the Rainmaker Podcast. We're so thrilled to have you on, and we can't wait to see you on the next Rainmaker Podcast.

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