A Trusted Advisor, Teacher, and Mentor

June Filingeri, one of the new NIRI Fellows, has enjoyed a wide-ranging career in IR consulting and teaching, contributing significantly to the IR profession.

BY AL RICKARD

June Filingeri, president of Comm-Partners LLC in New Canaan, CT, was one of three people honored as new NIRI Fellows at the 2018 NIRI Annual Conference.

She founded her investor relations consultancy in 1999 and has more than 30 years of investor relations experience representing a broad range of public companies. Before establishing her own practice, Filingeri was a partner of Morgen-Walke Associates, Inc., one of the largest IR agencies at the time. She began her career in IR with Georgeson.

Filingeri served as an assistant professor on the adjunct faculty of the New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies from 1993 to 2014, where she taught the core investor relations course. She also has been a member of the adjunct graduate faculty of Manhattanville College and coordinator and lecturer in the UConn IR Certificate Program.

She is a charter member of the NIRI Senior Roundtable and past president of the NIRI New York chapter and has served for many years as education chair of the NIRI Connecticut/Westchester chapter. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Boston University and a Master's degree from the School of Journalism (now the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism) at the University of Southern California.

What inspired you to enter the field of investor relations?

I was intrigued by investor relations when I first discovered it in graduate school because of its scope across several disciplines that were of interest to me. With my background in journalism and communications and undergraduate degree in political science, it seemed like a career that would tap my education and experience and I hoped I would be able to contribute to the field because of it. I also looked forward to developing an in-depth knowledge of finance, financial markets, and disclosure regulation. After more than 30 years, it has not disappointed.

As an IR consultant working independently (and working within an IR advisory firm before that), your experience and role is much different than in-house IR professionals. What professional benefits have you gained by taking this path and what would say to others considering becoming IR consultants?

An important and compelling advantage of investor relations consulting is the opportunity to develop a deep expertise in the practice of investor relations. Counseling a variety of clients facing a variety of IR challenges builds up experience and expertise more rapidly than is sometimes possible as a corporate practitioner. However, because I continue to design and implement IR programs on behalf of my clients, my experience is not that different from in-house IR professionals.

For someone entering the field, a position at an IR consultancy can help jump start their experi-

ence in IR and their career. Additionally, to be an effective consultant in the field, one must become a trusted adviser to clients. Being successful at that is highly rewarding from a career standpoint.

How did you get started in teaching investor relations?
Teaching has always been a deep interest of mine (I attained a teaching credential as part of my undergraduate studies at BU), so when a former colleague and principal from Georgeson asked me to take over his IR course at NYU I accepted right away. Interestingly, he had been co-teaching the course with his wife, who was also a professional in the field. As I too was married to an IR professional and colleague, I told him that I planned to carry on the wife/husband tradition. It seemed to work well as my husband Ed Nebb and I enjoyed teaching the course together for more than 20 years.

After many years of teaching investor relations, what are some of the key changes in content and emphasis during that time? How are students today different than they were 20 years ago?
Overall, I would characterize the changes in our NYU course content over the years as evolutionary. Our course was designed as an introductory course on the fundamentals, scope, and best practices of investor relations. While we fine-tuned content based on evolving disclosure regulations, changing accounting requirements, and emerging technology opportunities (and challenges), the basic content of our classes and our emphasis remained consistent.

As for our students, our course always attracted a diverse group ranging from individuals just beginning their careers in IR, sell-side analysts considering a career shift, corporate communications practitioners and others interested in learning about IR to broaden their career horizons, international students desiring a low-key introduction to the U.S. financial markets, and reporters wanting to develop insight into the corporate perspective.

You have served in NIRI chapter leadership roles for many years. How did these volunteer leadership experiences help your career and what does it mean to you to be part of the IR professional community?
I was pleased to be a board member of the New York Chapter for several years, including serving as president for the 1992-1993 term. I then became active on the Connecticut/Westchester NIRI Board when I moved to Connecticut and established my IR consulting practice there. Of course, being active in NIRI leadership is a great way to increase one's visibility in the profession and to meet other practitioners who are committed to IR. Ultimately, though, I wanted to give back to the profession and to the professional organization that have meant so much to me. As I have been quoted as saying, NIRI helped me "see around corners" throughout my career.

Who have been your mentors and what did you learn from them? Have you mentored people in your career and what do you try to impart to them?
At the risk of having this sound like a graduation speech, there are so many individuals that I have learned from during my career in IR—the faculty in my graduate program at USC, my partners and colleagues at Morgen-Walke, my clients who have taught me about their businesses and their (sometimes arcane) accounting, and the analysts and portfolio managers who engaged with me on my clients' behalf. I also want to acknowledge two of the principals at Georgeson, where I started my IR career – Bob Ferris and John Wilcox – who were generous in helping me develop my expertise in investor relations and my ability to effectively counsel the clients of our firm, in addition to my colleagues there who made entering a new field so interesting and fun.

I would say that a most rewarding part of my career has been mentoring members of my team at the agencies where I have worked, to help them develop their own expertise in IR and their ability to effectively service and counsel clients.

How do you define success in your career?
First, success to me is being engaged in a field that I am passionate about, which I have been since I started working in IR. Second, as a consultant, success is being valued and trusted by my clients, being relied on to develop effective IR strategies and enable them to negotiate difficult IR challenges, while maintaining long-term relationships with them – and friendships – along the way. I also define success as discovering that many of my former team members and students have gone on to establish their own rewarding careers in investor relations. Last but so importantly, success is being named a NIRI Fellow, an honor I am deeply gratified to have received.

Tell us something most NIRI members don't know about you.
While I generally think of myself as an open book, I enjoy gourmet cooking, classic mystery novels, photography/photojournalism (early in my career I photographed open heart surgery being performed by a famed West Coast surgeon), and my idea of great binge watching is a program like "Yukon Vet" on the Nat Geo Wild channel. IR

Al Rickard is president of Association Vision, the company that produces *IR Update* magazine for NIRI.