INVESTMENT

The Smart Investor's Guide To Building And Preserving Wealth

Financial adviser representative Joanne Lai on building lasting fortunes, navigating market volatility, and ensuring wealth becomes a legacy rather than simply a number on a balance sheet.



No matter how smart, connected, and well-resourced you are, sometimes you simply need an expert—and not just any expert, but that rarefied insider other specialists call when they need help. Luckily, *Robb Report* has a roster of such world-class professionals on speed dial. This month, it's Joanne Lai, founder and CEO of Crownstreams Global Wealth Advisory, a financial advisory firm which provides wealth management, insurance, and investment solutions regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore. She has also been recognised among the top one per cent of financial adviser representatives worldwide through the Million Dollar Round Table's (MDRT) prestigious Top of the Table (TOT) qualification for 10 consecutive years. Lai has helped to generate S$65 million in client profits over the past two years, with portfolio performance reportedly delivering roughly twice the returns of the S&P 500 at half the volatility. Together with her investment team, she encourages philanthropic giving by helping clients channel a portion of their excess investment gains towards charitable causes.



The Expert

Name: Joanne Lai

Occupation: Founder and CEO of Crownstreams Global Wealth Advisory

Headquarters: Singapore

Specialty: Turning wealth into lasting legacy.

The Big Question

With today's economic uncertainty, shifting tax landscapes, and unprecedented intergenerational wealth transfer, what do affluent families need to rethink about financial planning today, and what distinguishes those who build lasting legacies from those who simply accumulate wealth?

Lasting wealth is not just about accumulating money; it is about transferring financial knowledge, values, and responsibility across generations. In the Rockefeller family, philanthropy is deliberately passed down through the generations, with younger family members encouraged to take an active role in giving and developing their own interests in the causes they supported. It was not simply about inheriting wealth, but understanding the responsibility that comes with it and learning how to use that wealth to create an impact. Families today can do something similar by setting aside a specific amount each year for their children or grandchildren to allocate to causes they care about.

From an investment perspective, I also encourage families to look at risk-adjusted returns rather than headline numbers. If an investment generates a 20 per cent return, for example, you cannot look at that 20 per cent in isolation. You need to consider the risk-free rate and the amount of risk taken to achieve that return. The excess return above the risk-free rate, relative to the risk assumed, gives you a much better understanding of whether you are actually being compensated adequately for that risk. The first principle of investing should be risk management, not simply chasing returns.

For affluent families, this becomes particularly important because the objective is not necessarily to maximise returns at all costs. It is about diversification, wealth preservation, and ensuring that the portfolio can continue to generate sustainable returns across different market cycles. When we bring three generations into the same conversation, we can start planning not just for the client's lifetime, but for their children, grandchildren, and even generations beyond them. That is how wealth becomes a legacy, rather than simply a number on a balance sheet.

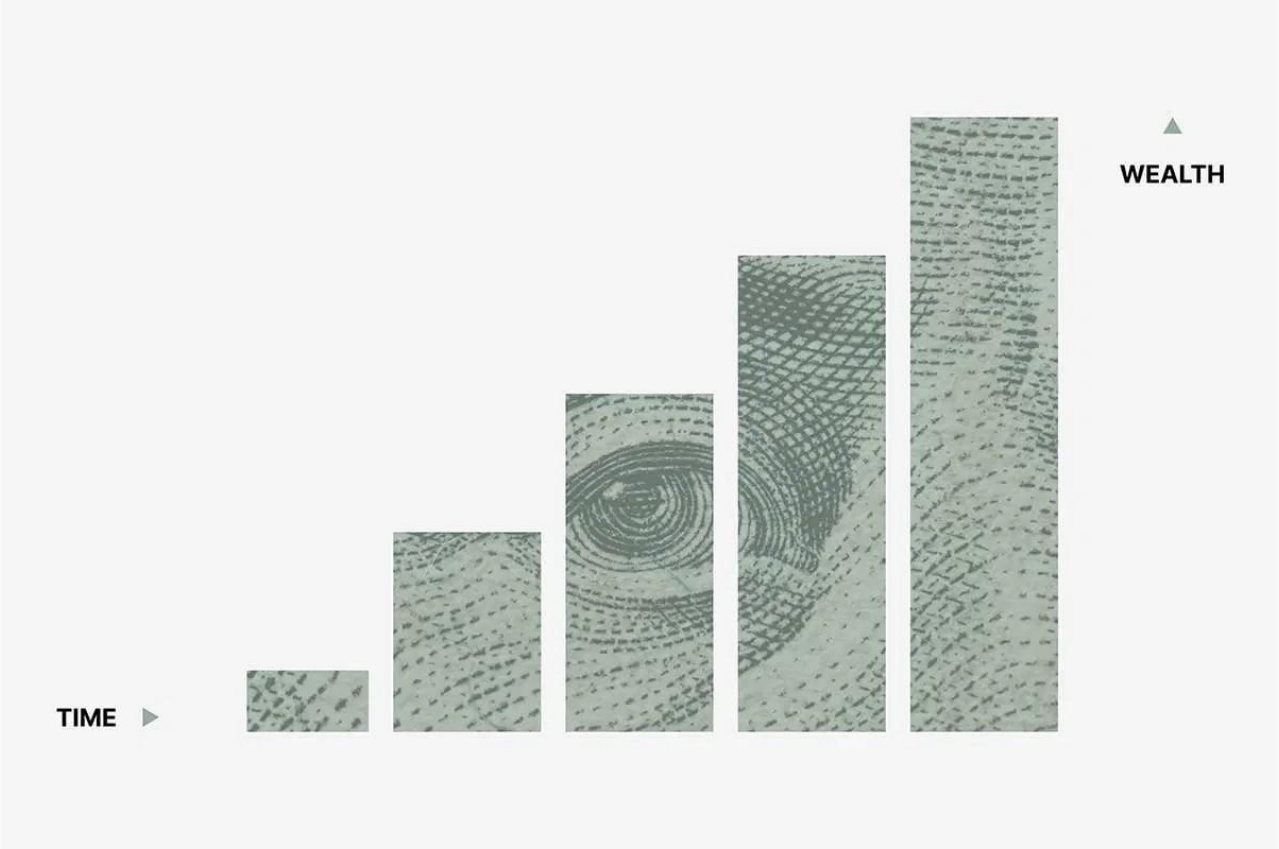


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Speed Round

What's the biggest myth about retirement planning?

"A lot of people think they cannot outperform the market, so they simply accept index returns and hope that, when the market falls, it will eventually recover. But there is actually skill involved in managing a portfolio. While perhaps only four to 10 per cent of people can consistently outperform the index, the key is finding the right people who can manage your portfolio effectively and potentially compound your wealth at a higher rate over time."

What is the biggest financial planning mistake even successful individuals tend to make?

"Fixating on low fees instead of net, risk-adjusted returns. I once had a client who wanted the cheapest fund on the table, until we worked through the math together and he saw that a fund charging more, but performing far better, left him with significantly more net of fees. That's also why I structure my own fees around performance, not just assets under advisory—it keeps my incentives aligned with my clients' outcomes."

What's one asset class you think is underrated today?

"Non-market-correlated assets are underrated because they can generate returns even when broader markets are falling, offering another layer of diversification and protection."

What is one financial planning document or strategy you believe everyone should have in place, regardless of their wealth?

“A multi-asset portfolio gives investors the flexibility to diversify across bonds, equities, gold, and real estate, while shifting allocations as market conditions change. Rather than being locked into one asset class, the strategy allows investments to evolve with opportunities, such as moving away from oil during geopolitical uncertainty or increasing exposure to equities when growth prospects improve.”

What should people look for before committing to a charity or philanthropic initiative?

“Proper due diligence on the charity itself, and clarity on which causes genuinely resonate with the family’s values. I actually go directly to the charities’ websites, download their financial statements, and review their investment documents.

Either/Or

Early retirement / **Financial freedom at any age**

“There is no way to fit into a specific age; the key is enjoying the journey while achieving financial freedom.”

Reinvesting profits /**Diversifying investments**

“Concentration builds wealth, but diversification preserves it. I’m currently ultra-diversified, which reduces volatility without compromising returns.”

Blue-chip stocks / Emerging market stocks

“I typically allocate 70 to 80 per cent to core blue-chip investments for stability, with 10 to 20 per cent in more tactical opportunities for growth, and the remainder in other asset classes. This balance allows you to pursue growth without losing sleep over market volatility.”

Cryptocurrency /**Gold**

“It is a less volatile physical asset, while crypto carries greater security risks and operates on a roughly four-year halving cycle. I’d actually choose both, but keep each below 10 per cent of the portfolio.”

Equities/Real Estate

“I prefer assets that can generate passive income rather than having too much wealth tied up in property.”

Crownstreams Global Wealth Advisory