



Retirement is Personal

Perspectives on Defined
Contribution Consulting



with
Hannah Schriener
Managing Principal/Consultant

In the defined contribution (DC) investment consulting space, leadership tends to not be just about managing assets or navigating regulatory complexity, but about shaping the retirement futures of millions of working Americans. As plan sponsors face mounting pressure to design smarter, more equitable retirement programs, the consultants who guide them may carry an outsized responsibility. They have a tall task: cutting through noise, challenging conflicts of interest, and championing the kind of thoughtful governance that has the potential to turn a good retirement plan into a great one.

Few embody that standard more fully than Hannah Schriener. As Chair of Meketa's Defined Contribution Practice Group and an active leader within the Defined Contribution Institutional Investment Association (DCIIA), Hannah has spent her career at the intersection of rigorous plan design and genuine client advocacy. Here's what she had to say about what drew her to DC, how the landscape has shifted, and what it really takes to lead and serve with purpose.

You've built an impressive career in DC consulting. Was this always the plan?



Honestly, I fell into it. I was working at a bank and originally had my eye on an investment banking role. When that didn't pan out, one of the bankers mentioned that his wife worked at Principal Financial Group and said, "Hey, they're hiring." He introduced us, the role sounded like a great opportunity, and I stepped into an industry I really hadn't known much about before.

From there, it was the people—their commitment to DC and the passion they brought to the work—that really drew me in. Meeting with clients became the best part of the job. It's ultimately about the relationships you build. Over time, my experience grew, and I developed into a subject-matter expert."

How do you think about the role consultants play in the DC ecosystem?



Our role is to deliver information, education, and unbiased guidance. We act as a filter for the overwhelming amount of available data—screening it, distilling it, and equipping our clients with what they need to make well-informed decisions that support their fiduciary responsibilities.

The DC ecosystem includes a wide range of service providers, each playing an important role. What tends to set independent consultants apart is the absence of proprietary products to promote. The guidance is shaped by what's in the best interest of the plan and its participants, and that objectivity is something to take seriously."

The DC landscape has changed a lot over the past decade. What stands out to you?



The industry has seen a significant expansion in available information, product sophistication, and overall awareness over the past decade. In many ways, that's a positive development. Participants are more engaged with their retirement savings than ever before, asking better questions and taking a more active role in their financial futures.

Greater access to information also means greater exposure to noise. With so much available, the challenge isn't awareness anymore but separating the signals from the noise. Plan sponsors are navigating an environment where filtering credible, actionable guidance from the broader information landscape has become a real operational consideration. And for participants, that complexity has made the relationship with their employer-sponsored plan more important than ever. Trust in the organization and the plan it offers carries significant weight in how people engage with their retirement savings.

For consultants, that dynamic represents an opportunity to add meaningful value by bringing clarity to complexity and helping plan sponsors build programs that participants can genuinely rely on."

What themes do you expect to dominate the conversation over the next several years?



Retirement income is going to be a big one. With Social Security potentially running short in the 2030s, participants are increasingly focused on maintaining their quality of life in retirement, and the savings gap is real. The products and solutions coming to market are still new and largely untested, but I expect the next several years will tell us a lot about what works and what needs to evolve. There's also a fiduciary dimension worth noting. Plan sponsors are challenged with designing a plan for current employees while balancing the needs of those who choose to remain in the plan after a separation of service. For assets that leave the plan and into individual retirement accounts (IRAs), participants often land in higher-cost retail products. Adding institutionally priced retirement income solutions to an employer sponsored plan can help bridge that gap.

On artificial intelligence (AI), the role is supportive, not replacement. It can be used to educate, inform, and streamline processes, but not provide investment advice. The opportunity is using it thoughtfully.

Programs have made progress, but gaps remain, and the societal implications of an under-saved population are significant.”

You're also deeply involved with DCIIA. What have you taken away from that leadership experience?



Leadership isn't static. It requires humility and a constant openness to learning. Even in a leadership role, I'm surrounded by peers with diverse experiences, clients, and perspectives. Taking the time to pause and truly listen is one of the most valuable things you can do. My involvement with DCIIA allows me to collaborate with the wider retirement community to drive greater consistency across the industry. It prevents consultants from working in silos and reinforces a collective framework of checks and balances. By aligning best practices, we help ensure that plan sponsors—regardless of which firm they partner with—receive reliable, high-quality guidance grounded in industry consensus.

When we come together at industry events, competition falls away. We have open, candid conversations about challenges, trends, retirement income, alternatives—everything that matters to our clients. These are my colleagues and friends, and the dialogue is a true sounding board. That collaboration ultimately strengthens participant outcomes. At the end of the day, we all share the same goal: helping our clients to ensure their participants can build meaningful retirement savings so they can retire with comfort and security.

To learn more about Meketa's defined contribution consulting services and how our team can support your organization's retirement plan objectives, visit meketa.com/contact-us.”

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