

INDUSTRY

## Cop and Planner



By Grace L. Williams  
February 29, 2016

At age 17, some kids might have prom, graduation or college on their minds. Kenneth Morris had something a bit more unusual occupying his free time at that age: other people's taxes.

Growing up in Long Island, N.Y., Morris says he was never a stranger to hard work. His father is a two-time Olympian in bobsledding, who led his son by example. "He taught me about practice, dedication and striving," Morris says.

After a relative died, Morris was thrown into working for his family's local income tax firm and found himself knee-deep in tax-prep work for clients, including local police departments.

Morris says that, fairly early on, he knew finance was his calling, but hanging out in the background of the family business wasn't his ideal situation. "I'm more of a people person," he says. "I [ultimately] took my knowledge for investing and brought it to the other side -- made it more client facing."



NYPD auxiliary officer Kenneth Morris (left with other officers), on duty during Pope Francis' recent visit to New York, is also a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley.

At the age of 18, Morris decided to learn more about what made his clients tick. He went through the police academy to become an auxiliary police officer with the NYPD, a role he continues to fill to this day.

"I wanted to deepen my relationships by getting more involved in what my clients did," he explains. "It helped me understand the aspects of what they spend and how I could [better] prep their tax returns."

Eventually, Morris went on to study business at Hofstra. It was there he ran into a family friend who was advising at Oppenheimer; the friend groomed him for the firm's training program, which Morris started in November of 2000.

In February 2001 Morris was issued his own rep number. He was working at the World Financial Center a handful of months later during the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. Although he was not in one of the buildings that was hit, his offices suffered severe damage, and nothing could be retrieved.

Morris decided the best way he could fight back was by working through the aftermath and the market's slide. "The only way I could succeed was to put my head down and focus on the growth of the business," he says. "It was the only thing I could come up with at the time."

His focus ultimately paid off. In 2003 he moved to Smith Barney, which merged with Morgan Stanley, where he continues to work. Today, at 38, Morris serves as a senior vice president and private wealth advisor in the Private Wealth division. The private wealth advisory position is an invitation-only distinction that is earned. In this role, Morris, who lives in New York with his wife, daughter and son, has advised clients on everything from transferring their vast wealth to getting their children into good schools.

Despite his accolades and achievements, Morris often returns to the same principles that drove him as a 17-year-old doing taxes on Long Island. And he remains especially mindful about working extra hard to understand his client base.

"The family dynamic is just as important as the investments are, and I want to understand what concerns the client," he says. "Relationships with clients keep me ticking."