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## Changing The face of investing

February 10, 2010

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Canadians who may not have given online investing a second look a few years ago are seeing the benefits of managing their own investments.

"Three or four years ago, it was mostly active traders, 30-something, males, type-A, looking to turn a quick profit. But today more and more of our investors are interested in setting up a long-term portfolio that meets their individual needs and investment objectives," said Jason Storsley, head of RBC Direct Investing

"Because that client profile has changed, we have responded by providing more information, educational tools and products for people who may not be that sophisticated but do want to take control of their investments and take a step into the world of online investing."

Likewise, the offerings from TD Waterhouse Discount Brokerage have evolved in recent years.

"We've changed enormously in terms of resources, ease of access, even pricing," said president John See.

"In terms of investors themselves, given what's happened in the market over the last 12 to 18 months their mentality for many Canadian investors."

Investors are keeping much closer track of their investments to see how their portfolios have been affected.

"We're seeing not only new investors but the use of our site by existing investors has gone up tremendously

More women are also joining the ranks of online investors, See said. At TD, and across the industry, women are becoming Internet brokerage clients.

For younger clients, the use of technology comes with relative ease.

"It's natural that they would gravitate to the internet for managing their money. They also realize that with an easy way to manage their overall finances and they can integrate online investing with online banking very

The percentage of accounts with less than \$100,000 is also on the rise.



Those under age 45 now make up about one-third of TD Waterhouse's clientele, up from about 25 per cent.

"In the past people would have talked about their investment goals in terms of saving for retirement or perhaps also talking about managing their day to day financial affairs and that's a significant change," See said.

Michael Wiener, who runs a blog called Michael James on Money, also sees a broad range of investors who are trading gold futures and I hear from people on the buy and index once and never thing about it once they believe strongly in asset allocation. They buy their stock fund and bond fund and when the mix is off, they buy more of one or the other. "There are camps, but I wouldn't say there's any one typical investor."

At RBC, beginning investors will find material on how to save for everything from a rainy day to a child's education. There is a full suite of product information. Clients can also sign up for tailored learning plans that refer them to specific links.

Practice accounts, which give clients \$100,000 in play money, can be suited to investors just learning how to trade stock, or sophisticated investors trying to get the hang of options, Storsley said.

"This is a great way to learn about that product, risk-free."

Just over 20 "Show-me" videos on the site also walk investors through very specific topics ranging from how to use a mutual fund screener to how to buy a call option.

For those looking for technical assistance, help is available from a call centre. Staff do not give investors access to online tools such as asset allocators or stock screeners to help them choose an investment.

More sophisticated investors can do their own charting and trade calls and puts, options that allow investors to buy at a specified price.

"To cater to an average client is difficult but we understand our clients have a diverse set of needs. Each client has a different investment experience," Storsley said.

But too much information can be a detriment to investors because it can encourage them to trade too often instead of building a long-term portfolio, said Mark Ryan, who runs IndependentInvestor.info.

"We're bombarded with information encouraging us to think we know the direction of the market generally, whether the Dow is going to be up or down in six months. It's very difficult, if not impossible, to predict stock prices. Lots of information encouraging us to believe in that," Ryan said. "The typical investor turns over their portfolio a long way from long-term investing."

Managing that extensive online research and educational material will also be a challenge for the brokerage.

"We have plethora of content there and the question becomes how do you organize it and make sense of it, but providing tools to manage that information."