

Sharon Szmolyan, a catalyst, is the Founder and Managing Partner of the Alberta Media Investment Fund, the largest media and entertainment accelerator north of Hollywood. Its mission: to help make Calgary Canada's media and entertainment epicentre. Originally from Calgary, Sharon has an MBA. Her focus is risk management in the entertainment and energy industries. Her research focuses on systemic risk management, financial technologies that optimize cross-border structures to mitigate risk, and the creation of attractive investment structures with added value from tax or other efficiencies that build value.

Sharon is a tireless advocate for emerging industries and economic development focused on the long term. Her roots are in the entertainment industry having worked in project management internationally (Hollywood, Tokyo, Taipei and Tel Aviv). Projects include the production and worldwide broadcast of LIVE-AID with Michael Mitchell and Hal Uplinger – assistant to live event producer UDO in Japan and to Hollywood superstar agent-turned-producer Michael Levy. She has worked with Academy Award-winning director John Schlesinger, actors Kiefer Sutherland, Sally Field, Ed Harris, Joe Mantegna, Julia Stiles, Mikai Pfeifferm and with Hal Wilner produced an international line-up of A-list talent from film, music, theater and literature for the Allen Ginsberg Tributem including Johnny Depp, Kevin Spacey, Winona Ryder, William Burroughs, Hunter S. Thompson and George Condo among others. Her work with Larry Winokur of BWR/Ogilvy PR gained her a reputation as a skilled facilitator of business interaction with clients such as Banque Paribas and TrizecHahn. Sharon conceived and produced ABSOLUT Vodka's Cultural Collaboration events at Bergamot Station in Los Angeles and then leveraged her Asian connections to help bring Bjork, Robbie Williams and Alicia Keyes concerts into China each with audiences in excess of 60,000 people.

One thing she notes she isn't interested in is the business of being a celebrity. She is very down-to-earth, direct and low-key. She allows others to be 'the star,' whether it's her mother, her three sisters, the people she's worked with who trust her, her son ("my greatest production") or her partner, Michael Frondelli.

Why is she taking on creating Calgary as Canada's media epicentre? She refers to Walter Wriston who for 17 years reigned as chair and CEO of Citicorp/Citibank: "We're engaged in a huge revolution. We're moving into an information society. Revolutions are made by a shift in power which is taking place all over the world. Today, intellectual capital is at least as important as financial capital, probably more so. However, our accounting systems are based on hard assets; we're not book-keeping intellectual assets. But when you take the relative market caps of Apple and Exxon, Apple, which has no fixed assets except for a few buildings in Silicon Valley has a market cap of \$403.73 billion. Exxon, which has lots of assets, has a market cap of \$394billion. The marketplace is capitalizing on intellectual assets and in Calgary, Canada, we are endowed with matrix of these assets and we have yet to harvest most of them."