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Did you know over 80% of people who make New Year's resolutions or goals have either broken them or completely forgotten what they were within six weeks? With each year's inevitable tax changes and economic fluctuations, making it your goal to meet with us is a resolution worth keeping. We have the experience and resources you need to create a plan to benefit you and your family for years to come.

Call me to set your goals today.

You may have set your fitness goals for the New Year... but have you set your **Financial Goals?**

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financial REASON

GET YOUR YEAR OFF TO A SMART START

The New Year is off and running, and most likely, so are you. Most of us have made some form of New Year's goal that we'd like to achieve. But did you know that over 80% of people who make New Year's resolutions have broken or completely forgotten about them within six weeks? We're here to give you some tips on setting goals you'll actually achieve, largely because they're SMART.



No, we don't mean you need a PhD to set achievable goals. SMART is an acronym that you can use to guide your goal setting. Its criteria are generally attributed to Peter Drucker's Management by Objectives concept. To make sure your goals are clear and reachable, each one should stick to the following principles. Let's take a look!

SPECIFIC

Your goal should be specific and clear, otherwise, you might not find the motivation to achieve it. When you're looking at setting the goal, ask yourself these five "W" questions:

1. What do I want to achieve?

2. Why is this important to me?
3. Who else needs to be involved to achieve it?
4. Where is the goal located?
5. Which resources or limits are involved?

Example: If you have a goal of running a half marathon this year, a specific goal could be, "I want to train and gain the strength and stamina necessary to complete my first half marathon in November of this year."

MEASURABLE

It's important to pick a goal that allows you to measure your progress. Assessing how far along you are can help you stay

focused, meet deadlines and feel the excitement as you get closer to achieving your goal! Measurable goals should answer these "How" questions:

1. How much?
2. How many?
3. How will I know when it is accomplished?

Example: You might measure your goal of running your half marathon by how far you would like to be able to run by the 3, 6 and 9 month marks of the year.

ATTAINABLE

Your goal needs to be realistic in order to be successful. It should stretch your abilities, but still remain

We hope you enjoy the new layout of our quarterly newsletter!

IN THIS ISSUE



65 isn't the only age that impacts your financial life. We break down 5 ages worth paying attention to.



The start of a new year is a great time to take a look back and see if any changes may have occurred during the year to affect the financial plan you have in place. Our handy checklist can help you!



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GET YOUR YEAR OFF TO A SMART START CONTINUED

possible. An attainable goal will usually answer these questions:

1. How can I accomplish this goal?
2. How realistic is the goal, based on other constraints, such as financial or physical factors?

Example: Make sure your half marathon goals happen by setting up a training schedule of when you'll work in your runs and any other physical conditioning. Consider any physical or time limitations you might have that could prevent that training.

RELEVANT

This step is about ensuring your goals matter to you, and also align with other relevant goals in your life. A relevant goal should be able to answer "yes" to these questions:

1. Does this seem worthwhile?
2. Is this the right time to work on this goal?
3. Does this match our efforts/needs?
4. Am I the right person to reach this goal?

Example: As you consider your half marathon goal, determine



if this is the right year for you to undertake this particular achievement. Is this something that your spouse/family can support you in, and does it line up with any other goals they might be working toward?

TIME BASED

Every goal needs a deadline to focus on and something to work toward. This part of the goal criteria helps prevent everyday tasks from taking priority over your longer-term goals. A time-bound goal will usually answer these questions:

1. When will I complete this goal?
2. How much can I achieve in six months?
3. How much can I achieve in six weeks?
4. What can I do today to work toward the deadline date?

Example: Choosing a particular race that you are working toward gives you a solid time frame of how long you have to train, and allows you to set smaller mini-goals you'd like to achieve in the shorter time frames before then.

Setting SMART goals helps give you the clarity, focus and motivation you need to succeed. It also improves your ability to reach them by encouraging you to clearly define your objectives and giving you a definitive completion date you are working toward. As you set your goals for 2018, run them through these steps to make sure you are set up for success!

AGE: MORE THAN A NUMBER

As a new year begins, it's natural to think about your upcoming birthday, particularly if it's a milestone one. Most people consider decades as the major markers, but in the world of finance and retirement, there are other birthdays (or half birthdays) that can have significant meaning for your financial life as well.



50: The half-century mark! Once you reach this age, you are now eligible to make additional catch-up contributions to your retirement accounts, increasing your maximum annual limits. For 401(k)s, 403(b)s and 457 plans, the catch-up amount is \$6,000, making the maximum contribution \$24,000 per year. For Simple IRAs, the catch-up amount is \$3,000, making the maximum contribution \$15,500. For IRAs, both Traditional and Roth, the catch-up amount is \$1,000, making the maximum contribution \$6,500.

55: If you are looking to retire soon and you separate from service with your employer when you are 55 or older, you can take withdrawals from your employer-sponsored retirement plan, such as a 401(k) or 403(b), to help meet your needs without the early withdrawal penalty.

59½: Just before you reach the decade milestone of 60, age 59½ is an important point in your financial life, as this is the age at which you can withdraw money from your tax-qualified accounts – 401(k) 403(b), or IRA – without an early withdrawal penalty.

62: This may seem like an odd year, but it is the first year that you could be eligible for Social Security retirement benefits.

When to begin taking benefits is still a conversation we should have in the context of your specific situation, but as age 62 approaches, it's always a good time to discuss your options.

65: Many of you are aware that once you reach age 65, you are eligible for Medicare. This is just the beginning of the conversation. If this age is rapidly approaching, we can help you make some sense of the alphabet soup that is Medicare.

70½: The year in which you turn 70½ is the year for which Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) must begin. If you have qualified accounts, whether still with a former employer or have IRAs, you must start taking distributions when you reach 70½. The first year, you actually have until April 1st of the following year to take your distribution, but then all future RMDs must be taken by 12/31 of the applicable year. It's important to note that Roth IRAs do not have an RMD requirement, so we can discuss ways to reduce the RMD need as you approach this milestone age, as appropriate.

Have questions about your situation? Contact my office today!

Content in this material is for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

FAMILY MATTERS: PASS IT ON!

The New Year often can bring with it a desire to finally undertake some project or task that's been put off in the past, or to make some change to your behavior in order improve your life. Obviously personal finances and retirement are the primary areas I assist my clients with, but there's always a chance that something has changed in the last year OR that you may have family or friends that can use the help of a financial planning professional like me.

Please take a look at the topics and related questions listed below, and check off any changes that may have occurred during the year that may affect what we have in place for you. Hopefully these are questions we've answered for you OR that we have at least discussed before. If not, let's talk!

RETIREMENT

- Do I have enough saved for my retirement?
- Would it be a good idea to retire in a different state?
- Will I need to supplement my Social Security income in retirement?
- What should I do with my employer retirement plan?
- Should I have long-term care insurance?

MAJOR LIFE CHANGES

- How should my spouse and I manage our money after we get married?
- If I change jobs, what happens to my 401(k)?
- What options do I have if I am laid off?
- If I were to get divorced, what would happen to my assets?
- What should I do if a loved one recently passed away?

ESTATE PLANNING

- Is our will current?
- What is important to know about estate planning?
- Are our beneficiaries up-to-date?
- What information will my survivors need?
- Do we have enough life insurance?
- How can I keep my estate from being taxed?

Perhaps a family member, relative, or friend would benefit from a conversation with me? It's very likely that I have information or experience that can help them address the issues that are worrying them. Please feel free to pass this page or this issue to someone that might benefit from a consultation with me... I'm always happy to help the friends and family of my clients!

PERSONAL FINANCES

- How can I be budgeting better?
- Can I reduce my debt?
- Do we have enough in emergency funds?

HELPING MY CHILDREN

- When should I start & how much should I be saving for college?
- How should I teach my kids about money & savings?
- How do I help a young adult establish a savings plan or budget?

CARING FOR MY PARENTS & LOVED ONES

- How does Medicare work?
- How do I decide on a nursing home?
- What should I do if I end up caring for my parents?
- How do I deal with Alzheimer's disease?

