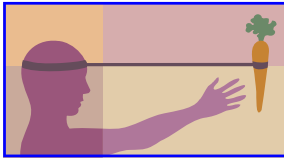


(Continued from page 1)

your motivation and commitment, as well as enable you to pinpoint your progress at each stage of your financial ladder.

A — Achievable. Goals should be realistic and reachable. Your objective should not be out of sight, but just out of reach—so you have to grow and stretch toward it. However, that doesn't mean you should not set your sights a little higher by having a practical, down to earth **BIG** goal. Big purposes and plans create excitement. There is not so much fun or fulfillment in the average or mediocre.

R — Realistic. Part of being realistic is to acknowledge the obstacles you must overcome to reach or obtain your goal. List items that may challenge or hinder the pursuit of your financial goal—be specific and honest. Anticipate potential problems by coming up with several scenarios along with creative ideas or solutions.



T — Time. One of the most powerful tools you have is time, the one thing that is equal for everyone. Use time in your financial goals. An example is a young couple renting an apartment who, with right money management, can save for the down payment on their first home by setting aside a set amount each month over the next five years.

E — Enthusiasm. Enthusiasm will lift your goal out of the ordinary and make it something special. Goals should be a source of excitement and passion. Disappointments and frustrated hopes will conspire to dull your long desired economic objective. Don't let any person or problem rob you of your lifetime aspiration.

R — Rewards. If there are no benefits to you, you probably will not even start. Rewarding yourself along the way will keep you from becoming discouraged.

"A person can succeed at anything for which they have enthusiasm." — Charles M. Schwab, first president of Bethlehem Steel Corporation

The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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SMARTER GOALS FOR 2010

By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES

Currently there is a television show entitled, "Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?" It covers subjects that the average fifth grader studies at school, such as mathematics, English, history, etc. Though a number of celebrities and others have tried to outwit the program's fifth graders, very few have succeeded and have been declared "smarter than a fifth grader".



If there were a similar TV program involving money management style, would you be able to win if you were competing against an elementary or high school student, or maybe against a bank manager, a Wall Street broker, or a financial guru on radio or television, such as Dave Ramsey or Suzy Orman? What should be the foundation of your goals for your own financial future? Using the acronym **SMARTER**, let's find the plans God has for your general well-being and financial health.

S — Specific. For your vision or goal to become a reality, it must be stated in definite, precise and distinct terms. A goal stated in vague terms gives little or no direction to your financial future. Two crucial reasons individuals fail to stay focused are that they set goals to please others or they have not thought through how to

attain their dreams.

M — Measurable. As you move toward that specific financial objective, assign target dates for accomplishing your goals and review your goals on a regular basis, such as monthly, quarterly or annually. This will increase

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Avoid These Seven Deadly Financial Flops



How often have you said at the beginning of a new year, “*This is the year I’m going to follow a budget and put something away in savings? No more procrastinating. This year, for sure, I’m resolved to put my finances in order.*” Sound familiar? Congratulations, you are not alone!

Make 2010 the year you resolve to avoid these expensive financial flops:

1. Paying high interest

The average credit card balance an American carries is approximately \$10,000. Over 70% of consumers do not pay off their credit card debt in full within the grace period. Save 12-26% interest by eliminating the balance as quickly as possible.

2. Failing to plan for emergencies

Life happens unexpectedly: your vehicle breaks down or your child is rushed to the emergency room. Such events can throw your finances into chaos. Begin saving immediately for an emergency fund, so you can take these emergencies in financial stride. For the average family, a good

starting figure is approximately \$1000. Begin this month to save \$25-50 per pay period until you have that \$1000.

3. Disregarding savings

Over the last decade, the amount of disposable income the average American has saved each year has been between zero and two percent. Compare this to other countries where the average is 10 to 20 percent. The most successful way to save is to set a yearly saving’s goal or save for a particular project. The best method to do this is to have your employer deduct a set amount per pay period and send it directly to your bank or credit union. Keep this slogan in mind: What you don’t see, you won’t miss (*and hopefully won’t spend*).

4. Omitting that extra principle

Owning a home is the ultimate American dream, but don’t turn it into a financial nightmare by paying thousands more in interest than you need too. Maybe you should take advantage of current low interest rates and refinance to lower your mortgage payments. Plus, if you pay an extra \$100 in principle per month on a \$100,000 home loan, you can save approximately \$90,000

in interest over the life of a 30-year mortgage and reduce the time to pay off your mortgage by about eight years.

5. Shunning retirement Plans

It is easy to ignore the need to save for retirement, particularly when you are early in your career. One of the best formulas is to set aside 10% of your income if you are in your 20-30s; 15-20% in your 40s; and if you have failed to save for your future needs, 30% in your 50-60s. Most retirement plans give you a tax break on the amount you contribute. For example, you can save \$280 per \$1000 invested if you are in the 28% tax bracket. Remember that in the 21st Century, Social Security will only provide for approximately 40 percent of your retirement income.



6. Neglecting your will

Over 70 percent of adults do not have a will or a trust. If you die without either of these, the state will dispose of your

property and assets and will decide whom your children will reside with—probably not the way you would choose. Call your local conference gift planning and trust services department (where wills are usually FREE) or your personal lawyer or do it yourself on a will preparation computer program.

7. Forgetting GOD

Some of you will say number seven should have been first rather than last on this list—and I agree. I made it number seven so it would be the last item for you to remember. Faithfully paying tithe reminds you that God is the owner and you are His manager. Neglecting local church budget puts all the burden on the other members of your congregation to pay for utilities, education subsidy, Sabbath School materials, etc. Join Apostle Paul’s admonition in 2 Corinthians 9 and be known as a cheerful Christian giver.

“In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.” — Proverbs 21:20 NIV