

# WORKING WITH A FINANCIAL ADVISOR:



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### Six Steps to Help You Get the Most Out of the Relationship

Would you trust your medical diagnosis to a casual acquaintance? Do you cut your own hair or dry clean your own clothes? For some services, it makes more sense to pay a professional who has the expertise to deliver the appropriate results. A professional financial advisor can help you build a sound estate plan, designed to help you toward your long-term financial planning goals. These six steps can help you locate and get the most out of this important relationship.

**Choosing Your Financial Advisor.** One of the best ways to find a financial advisor is through a referral of a friend or relative. Your accountant or lawyer may also be able to provide you with a referral. Since they come with a recommendation from someone you trust, referrals can help you feel more confident about your choice of a financial advisor. You can also find a financial advisor by attending an investment seminar or reading the business section of your local newspaper.

**Set Up a Consultation.** Your first meeting is an opportunity to become acquainted with the advisor and find out if you feel comfortable working together. You should make sure a prospective advisor is a good match for your financial outlook and personality. Ask the advisor about the types of clients he or she is currently working with and try to evaluate if your financial objectives are well matched to their areas of expertise. Follow up with questions about education, experience, and qualifications. Before selecting an advisor, you should feel confident that a prospective advisor can accurately explain the financial arena and the benefits of different financial planning tools.

**Discuss Your Goals and Obligations.** In order to help you clarify your financial goals, your financial advisor will need detailed information about you and your financial situation, philosophy and risk tolerance. Be candid about your income, debts, future obligations, current assets and anything else that may impact your financial situation.

**Ask Plenty of Questions.** The more you know about financial planning, the more control you have over your financial future. Use your financial advisor as a resource. Financial advisors have access to current information that can help you better understand their recommendations and the performance of your plan. And if you don't understand something, make sure to ask.

**Meet or Speak Regularly.** Your financial advisor has the expertise and knowledge about financial planning, but won't be able to fully understand the details of your financial situation unless you share them. In order to keep your estate plan moving in the right direction your advisor needs up-to-date information on life changes that may have financial implications, including:

- Marriage or divorce
- The birth or adoption of a child
- The purchase of a home
- A change in your work status, or that of your spouse
- Additional current financial responsibilities, such as college payments or care for aging relatives
- An inheritance or other financial windfall

**Listen.** Professional advisors can draw from years of experience and help you maintain a long-term perspective on your investment plan through good markets and bad. You'll get more out of your relationship if you are open-minded about your advisor's recommendations. While you may not agree with every idea your advisor presents, being a good listener can help increase your investment knowledge.

Following these six steps can help you locate and have a successful relationship with a financial advisor.

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