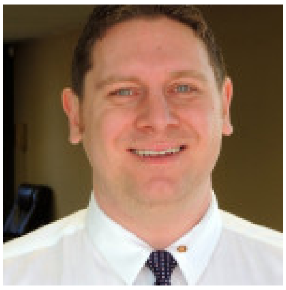
Money matters: Financial independence takes planning

By Nic Abelow

We are all faced with choices every day. Mostly those choices are related to what we should be doing, what we can purchase, or where are we going. Today it is more important than ever to control what you can control.



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Here are my five keys to financial independence:

1. **Have a plan** – Everybody has a unique set of circumstances that requires a unique perspective and understanding. Know your numbers and understand your strengths and weaknesses.

"Plan for the future because that is where you are going to spend the rest of your life." – Mark Twain

2. **Pay yourself first** – Savings are born from sacrifice. Target your income and savings to have purpose. Identify your values and make sure your money has your back. Remember spending has no upward limit.

"Don't save what is left after spending: spend what is left after saving." "Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." – Warren Buffet

3. **Balance experience and things** – Learning to live on everything is nothing while learning to live on nothing is everything.

"Wealth is the ability to fully experience life." – Henry David Thoreau

4. **Be prepared** – Build your short-term reserves as well as plan for your short-term goals. Remain focused on the objectives and keep at it. Discipline yourself or the world will do it for you.

"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans." – John Lennon

5. **Take action** – Financial success will not come by itself. Honesty is the best policy. It is hard to remain disciplined if you are not being honest with yourself. Fostering illusions of prosperity only further cripples our ability to make the necessary difficult decisions.

"When it is obvious that goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps." – Confucius

Take control today for tomorrow may never come. Set realistic expectations, open your mind to new possibilities, live in the here and now, but do not forget about the future.

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