PROFIT PULSE: STAY INFORMED, INVEST INGELLIGENTLY

TRUST & WEALTH MANAGEMENT

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HOW TO MANAGE MONEY & MARRIAGE

Marriage can be hard. Finances can be hard. Put them together, and it can cause serious conflict. As we approach Valentine's Day, let's take a look at some tips to help manage money & relationships. Whether you are struggling to pay bills every month or have plenty when all are paid, these tips will help take your relationship to the next level!

Start talking about money early and talk about it often.
Every good relationship is built on communication. Money should not be the exception to that. The easiest way to keep finances from being the "subject that we tiptoe around" to as easy as discussing the grocery list is to simply talk. Find a time and day that works for both of you where you can dedicate some uninterrupted time to this discussion. If you have young kids like I do, this may be difficult but giving them some unlimited access to video games or TV for a bit won't hurt them and will make this conversation a lot easier! Make sure that when you both sit down, you are not already in a fight or upset about some outside circumstances. The first few of these conversations, which should happen monthly, are a little awkward especially if one is concerned about bills and the other is not. Don't worry, they will become easier and easier as long as you both stay calm and are willing to have an open discussion. Talk about upcoming bills, large expenses that are on the horizon, things you would like to save up for, and your emergency fund. Don't leave a topic until you are both satisfied with your next steps. If at any time the conversation gets too heated (don't worry, this happens), take a 15 minute break, eat a snack, and come back to the table.

Track your spending and investments.
Odds are one of you is a nerd (that's me!) and one of you would rather get teeth pulled than look at spreadsheets (that's my wife!). It doesn't matter. I don't like taking my kids down the cereal isle at Walmart, but I do it because it needs to be done. At the end of the month, review your spending for the month, where you over-spent and where you had extra budgeted that you didn't need. Adjust your budget as often as necessary! Keep an ongoing net worth document that shows all of your assets and your liabilities which needs updated monthly. If you have extra money, throw it into your emergency fund, pay down debt, or put some away in your investment accounts. If you are short, dig in to your spending and find places to make cuts. An easy way is to get into your subscriptions list and remove some old ones that you haven't used in a while. My wife and I seem to collect streaming subscriptions and have to revisit our list often! Discuss the budget emergency fund, net worth, and investments monthly. The more information you have, the better you will feel!

Set goals together.
You will never hit a goal that you don't set. The most important part of long-term planning is setting real, actionable goals. Figure out what you want to accomplish, whether it is paying off debt, sending a kid to college, hitting a specific net worth, etc. It doesn't matter what your goal is, you just need to have one! AND they must match each other's. This doesn't mean that you can't have goals that are more focused on one person than the other, just be on the same page with them. For example, my goal is to redo our shower. My wife's goal is to get a hot tub. These are very different goals, but we set aside money every month for each of these goals so that we can accomplish both. It will take a little longer funding both, but we will hit our goals together so they are not at odds with each other.

Reward yourself when you hit a goal.
It is essential to celebrate your wins! You have likely sat down several times by this point to discuss your goals and what steps you are taking to get there and you finally accomplished it! Congratulations! Give yourselves a little reward for all of your hard work. Go on a fancy date, have a coffee date at your favorite coffee shop, get a whole cheesecake for you to split, whatever you both enjoy. BUT keep it reasonable. Don't go on a 7 day cruise when you pay off a $500 credit card. Keep the reward in line with the difficulty of the goal that you accomplished. This will give you two things to look forward to: accomplishing the goal and your reward!

"Money can feed the body. Love will feed the soul."
Toni Payne

TIP OF THE MONTH:

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT WINE FOR YOUR MEAL

Selecting the wine to go with the meal can be intimidating, because while no dinner has ever been ruined with the "wrong" wine, the right wine can enhance a dish to perfection. There are no hard and fast rules on matching food and wine, because it's ultimately a matter of personal taste, but the best food and wine pairings create a balance between the components of a dish and the characteristics of a wine.

When it comes to wine and food pairings, the general rule of thumb is white wines for lighter dishes, like chicken and fish, and red wines for heavier dishes, like beef and lamb. Generally speaking, red wines are full of color and mouth-puckering tannins, allowing them to cut through fatty foods and hold up to bold flavors. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Malbec are a few that would fit the bill for a great steak, making it one of the best dinner wines.

With lighter meats though, it's important to pair the wine with the sauce, as it's most likely the primary flavor on the plate. For example, a pasta dish with lemon-cream sauce would pair well with a citrusy Sauvignon Blanc or a fruit-forward Pinot Grigios.
Some great red wine food pairings include:

- Cabernet Sauvignon with red meat or lamb
- Pinot Noir with seafood or salads
- Merlot with roasted chicken or turkey
- Malbec with tomato-based meat dishes, or spiced vegetarian soups and stews

Some great white wine food pairings include:

- Chardonnay and lobster or smoked salmon
- Chenin Blanc and roast pork

When wondering what goes well with wine to highlight your meal, you should consider the dish as a whole. Is it salty, bitter, spicy, sweet, acidic, or fatty? Once you determine the overall flavor profile, you can choose a wine that complements or contrasts with the dominant flavors.

The classic combination of a dry red wine with steak works because the wine has a similarly bold flavor, and the bitterness cuts through the fat, making it one of the best dinner wines. No matter what cut of steak you choose, a red wine is sure to compliment it nicely. But, when choosing dessert, the flavors in a rich fatty cheesecake generally perform better when contrasted against a more acidic wine, or one with higher alcohol content, like a liqueur or sherry.

As much as pairing food and wine is complex, the basics are simple to grasp: Drink and eat what you like, try to find a balance between flavors, and try to match the wine with the most prominent flavors of a dish. If you're just getting started, you'll find these methods useful to produce consistently great pairings. And as you get more familiar with different wines, you can confidently experiment with breaking the rules, finding your own best wine for dinner that suits your taste.

FINANCE 101: SIMPLIFYING THE COMPLEX

TARGET DATE FUNDS

Target date funds are often found inside of 401(k) or other work retirement plans. These are the standard investment for those who don't know what mutual funds to pick or don't want to allocate their investments themselves. Target date funds are mutual funds, similar to what you would see in any other investment account. They have a target date that you plan on retiring and will allocate a certain percentage to stocks and a certain percentage to bonds depending on how close or far you are from that target date. Every year, the fund will change the percentage to become heavier in bonds and lighter in stocks. This will reduce your retirement account's volatility the closer you get to retirement. For example, if your target date fund is 2027, you will be in a conservative allocation set to be less volatile and retain your account value for your upcoming retirement. If your target date fund is 2050, you will be in an aggressive allocation heavy in stocks with the purpose of growing your retirement account's balance. These funds are an easy way to invest in a plan without having to manage the investments yourself.