

# WORKING WITH A FINANCIAL PROFESSIONAL

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When it comes to choosing investments and navigating financial markets, the “Do-It-Yourself” approach is not always the most prudent course, particularly during times of economic and market uncertainty.

No doubt, for the financial do-it-yourselfer, there is an abundance of material on money matters in newspapers, online and on the street. But when it comes down to dollars and cents, those raw materials may be useless without the proper skills and tools for applying them. In many cases, a financial professional can mean the difference between a loosely constructed plan and a well-built financial foundation.

## Preparing for Your Financial Future

Despite the plethora of commentary on financial matters, not all of that information should be applied in the same way to each investor. An experienced financial professional can help you get your financial house in order—offering advice and guidance to assist you in building a financial plan and an investment portfolio suited to your particular situation.

## Tips for Identifying the Right Financial Professional for You:

- ▶ Seek out recommendations and references
- ▶ Check professional credentials and registrations
- ▶ Interview multiple candidates to find your perfect match
- ▶ Consider fees and commissions
- ▶ Consider your particular needs and the financial professional’s expertise in that area
- ▶ Ask about the types of products and services the financial professional can access

## STEP 1 THE BLUEPRINT

One of the key benefits of working with a financial professional is that he or she will partner with you to identify your individual financial goals, as well as your investment time horizon and tolerance for investment risk. One-size-fits-all does not apply when it comes to investing. Your neighbor’s “hot stock” may be far too risky for you. A financial professional can help you make a plan—a financial blueprint—that you can live with.

## STEP 2 CONSTRUCTION

Once you have identified your key financial goals, your financial professional can help you sift through the myriad of choices to build a well-diversified investment portfolio, customized to your needs. You must consider not only the type of assets in which to invest (stocks, bonds, cash), but also the proper allocation of those assets, the best vehicle for owning them (e.g., a mutual fund, separately managed account, direct shares) and an investment manager that is equipped to offer the solutions your financial plan requires.

## STEP 3 MAINTENANCE

Your thoughtfully constructed portfolio of securities is not static, as market dynamics can result in changes to your asset mix. In addition, your risk tolerance may change as your goals approach, or you decide to add new goals to the mix. It is common for priorities to shift over time, for example, college funding may take precedence over retirement savings. As your financial lifecycle evolves, your financial professional can help you to rebalance and adjust your portfolio to changing markets and your evolving needs.

## Finding the Right Financial Partner

Your financial professional should be a trusted person with whom you can partner. This is a very personal relationship considering that you are working closely with this individual in pursuit of your financial goals—whether a secure retirement, your children’s education, or even a long-dreamed-about vacation home. Your decision should not be made lightly.

### Following are some tips for identifying the right financial professional for you:

- ▶ **Seek out recommendations and references.** The phone book is probably not the best place to begin your search for a financial professional. Request recommendations from friends and family. If you are breaking new ground, consider some brokerage firms that you know by reputation and begin your search there. Ask the financial professional if he or she can provide references, perhaps clients with whom he or she has had a long-term partnership.
- ▶ **Check professional credentials and registrations.** This can be done through the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), your state securities division and any professional associations with which your prospective advisor may be affiliated.
- ▶ **Interview multiple candidates to find your perfect match.** You will be entrusting your financial professional not only with your money, but with your goals and dreams as well. Evaluate each candidate’s credentials, but also ensure that his or her philosophy is compatible with your needs. Ask questions; a good financial professional will be happy to answer them.

- ▶ **Consider fees and commissions.** Financial professionals earn income from the assets you invest with them. Ask about their fee and commission schedules. At all times, a good financial professional will make recommendations that are well-suited to your investment portfolio, not based on fees and commissions associated with the transactions executed on your behalf.
- ▶ **Consider your particular needs and the financial professional’s expertise in that area.** If you are focused specifically on retirement, for example, ask the financial professional about his or her experience with IRAs, annuities, estate planning, decumulation planning and other financial strategies and products associated with retirement planning.
- ▶ **Ask about the types of products and services the financial professional can access.** Brokerage firms have selling agreements with different mutual fund companies. If there is a fund family with which you wish to invest, ensure that the financial professional can offer you access.

## In Good Times and in Bad

Financial markets are notoriously unpredictable; investing comes with risks. Amid the demands of everyday life, the average investor does not have the time, or the expertise, to monitor and assess every market move. Your financial professional serves as your eyes and ears on the markets. A trusted financial professional is one who can alert you to opportunities that may be well suited to your investment portfolio. Amid times of volatility, your financial professional can help you stay focused on your goals and make adjustments to your portfolio, as necessary. One of the key advantages of working with a financial professional is that he or she can help you navigate the markets and maintain perspective ... in good times and in bad.

Contact our award-winning Service Center at 800-441-7762 for more information on brokerage firms and independent advisors who can offer you access to BlackRock funds.

## Want to know more?



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Lit. No. **WORK-FP-0515**

4305A-0E-0615 / USR-6163

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