



## MARK'S MEMO

### 2008 RESOLUTIONS FOR YOUR FINANCIAL WELLBEING

#### Make a Written Plan

**P**ut it on paper if you want to exponentially increase your chances of succeeding. Money is a tool. Having feelings about money either positive or negative isn't necessarily productive. Writing down your goals, needs, and anticipated cash inflows however takes emotion out of the equation and helps you use money as the tool it really is.

Start with short term goals. For instance, "I will have a better understanding of where every dollar is spent by the end of March 2008." Next, identify and write medium term goals. "I will have \$5,000 saved to use on a down-payment for a new car by January 2009. I will save \$417 per month, \$96 per week to meet this goal.

Better yet, use a comprehensive system of goal planning and journaling. Great systems are already available to help you write your plan. Many of them are free. For instance Google and Yahoo have free calendar programs online with built-in productivity applications. Stephen Covey and others like him have entire systems dedicated to helping you identify and prioritize your life goals. I highly recommend this to everyone but for anyone starting a career, it is essential. Here is a list of online resources that I will be happy to email (it will make researching them a bit more efficient):

On personal productivity:

<http://scrappyuntechie.blogspot.com/2006/12/planning-and-to-do-lists-gtd-covey-43f.html>

<http://www.google.com/intl/en/googlecalendar/tour.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time\\_management](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_management)

Microsoft Office Templates

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/default.aspx>

[http://www.score.org/template\\_gallery.html](http://www.score.org/template_gallery.html)

### SPENDING JOURNAL

The most difficult financial planning activity for the vast majority of people is to KNOW where their money went. Why did I put that in all capitals? It is because the process of KNOWING is more than just having a good idea where the money went. When you record and track every dollar you spend for an extended period of time your brain makes an incredible change. After a period of time (it differs by individual) you barely need the paper (or computer) record. Your recall of your money flow becomes an internal process you can follow in your head. Over the last few years, with the help of several clients we have created an

Excel cash flow journal to track spending on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis. We can email it to you or send it on a disc.

### CREDIT SPENDING

The easy answer, don't do it. OK, that wasn't so easy. Sometimes it just can't be avoided. However; please never underestimate the cost to your long-term life planning goals. Credit Card spending, even if you pay off the balance every month, costs the majority of people more. Studies have shown that when you use plastic you just plain spend more.

Credit Debt is expensive. The most expensive cards are usually those issued through retail stores. Interest rates are often 2 percent PER MONTH or more. Carrying a balance of \$5,000 can cost you \$100 per month! If you do get in over your head, make a spending journal immediately. Find ways to spend less and pay off the debt. Look for offers of low interest rate cards, read the fine print switch to help reduce the drag of high interest.

There is no shame in getting caught in this situation. Many of us have ended up there. Get help and get better.

### BARGAIN SHOP

First, consider cooking more at home and brown bagging it at the office. Make a plan. Start with a given number of meals per week that you don't eat out. Shop smart. Next, spend a little time and effort on saving money when you buy. Look for deals, look for shops that consistently under-price their competitors. Use coupons. And finally stop the impulse buying. Write down your shopping needs and have a special list for those non-essentials you feel you just got to have.

### MANAGE DISCRETIONARY AND FIXED SPENDING

There is something in every budget that can be trimmed without pain. Look at your cable bill. Do you really use all those channels? Can you trim down from deluxe to basic plus? Have you called your telephone, internet or cell phone company lately to make sure they have you are on the most efficient plan? They will be glad to analyze your usage and work with you to keep your business. Consider looking at your home and auto energy use. Is there anything you can do to lower your consumption? Could you invest in windows and insulation in your home? Put plastic film up during the winter to reduce heat loss out your windows? Car pool or drive a more energy efficient car? Is the Jones's next door happier with their Lexus SUV or the Smith's with their Ford Escape?

### SAVE AND INVEST

Once your spending is in control, save enough money to have an Emergency fund. Emergency funds should be large enough to take care of all your fixed bills for six months. The next priority is savings for future Opportunities and Investing. Opportunity funds should cover big ticket items like new cars, extravagant vacations, weddings and more. They cover short to medium term needs that is immediate to 5 years out. Investments are made for long term goals like College Education funding and Retirement. Start as soon as possible. Never give up on the idea; it's never too late to start. Consider making extra payments towards the principal on your mortgage.

### MAKE MORE MONEY

Is there a way you can increase your value on the job or change jobs to make more? Invest in yourself. Improve your skills. Find ways to work in activities that you love and make more for your entire lifetime.

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# ANNOUNCEMENT

## MUTUAL FUNDS TO MOVE

IT'S TIME. WE HAVE NEVER MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT LIKE THIS IN OUR NEWSLETTER BUT WE NEED TO MAKE A BOLD STATEMENT. THERE ARE FUNDS IN YOUR PORTFOLIO THAT NEED TO BE SOLD. IT'S TIME TO CLEAN HOUSE. IF YOU STILL OWN ANY OF THE FUNDS LISTED AT THE END OF THIS NOTE, PLEASE CALL TO DISCUSS MOVING THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE FUNDS HAS SUFFERED. THEIR MANAGEMENT HAS CHANGED ENOUGH TO WARRANT MOVING. THE CURRENT INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT REQUIRES A MAJOR RESTRUCTURING OF SECTOR WEIGHTING. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE TALK SOON.

AS OF 1 JANUARY 2008, THE IRS CODE ALLOWS SOME OF YOU TO SELL APPRECIATED ASSETS WITH LOWER TAX COSTS. THE TAX BREAK IS SCHEDULED TO LAST THROUGH DECEMBER 2009.

**FUNDS TO MOVE: PUTNAM, MFS, DELAWARE, RS (FORMERLY GUARDIAN), PHOENIX.**

## JIM'S JOURNAL

### DISCOVERING THE LAWS OF LIFE

As has been my custom for the last several years, my January *Money Monitor* article will offer an inspirational thought to begin the New Year. This year's reflective insight is from legendary investment icon, Sir John Templeton, and entitled, "Discovering the Laws of Life."

Sunlight travels ninety-three million miles in a little over eight minutes to reach the earth. It is tasteless, odorless, and unless a rainbow occurs, invisible. Prismatic droplets of mist make what was there all along suddenly visible. The rainbow is a powerful symbol reminding us that the unseen world holds many treasures for those with eyes to see.

As we live each day, our senses are bombarded with stimuli. As a result of coming in constant contact with objects, we attach special significance to them. We begin to believe that a slice of cake, for instance, can cheer us faster than a good word. We

count on sweets to sweeten our disposition because our senses tell us that the taste and sugar high are reality.

In fact, many material goods are designed to distract us from feeling sad when we should grieve a loss. They disguise our errors when we should admit a mistake. They stimulate happiness when our health and environment should warn us of disease. The moment our status quo is threatened, we rush to our nearest commodity center for a "fix" expecting money to buy for us what it cannot buy-spiritual happiness.

When we achieve success, we are no longer the possessors of wealth, we are the possessed. Eventually though, stabilizing forces can bring us back into balance-just as gravity acts on a pendulum's swing. These forces may come in the form of an economic recession, a job transfer, or a health crisis. These setbacks can become opportunities to grow spiritually.

Not that one cannot be materially wealthy and spiritually enriched at the same time. It is not gold or silver in themselves that are dangerous, but our attachments to them. We need to ask

ourselves:" With what consciousness and purpose do I dispatch them in the world?" Am I a slave of materialism, or a good trustee, acting selflessly and ethically in the handling of my worldly assets?"

Apart from its ability to serve the legitimate needs of humanity, money is meaningless. And spiritual belief, divorced from the tangible world, is naïve. True happiness comes from bringing a wonderfully creative idea from the world of spirit into the world of matter, enjoying the benefit it brings others, and then reclaiming it through gratitude. Furthermore, spiritual affluence operates under the same universal principles as material wealth.

The physical objects in our everyday world are merely the manifestations of their spiritual essence. Everything was envisioned in the creative mind as a vital idea before it was crafted in the material world. The adage "As above, so below," affirms that ideas in the spiritual world also can have partners in the physical. Unlimited imagination corresponds to finite action; spiritual wisdom to worldly knowledge: unconditional love to actual service; and the dreaming self to the conscious self. There is a flow between the spiritual and the material worlds that needs to be honored if we are to live fully with purpose.

Ultimately, money is a convenience for organizing and harmonizing human enterprise. Material wealth needs to be redeemed for this higher purpose. In fact, much of our fretting over what is and isn't adequate can be let go, if we remember, "The greatness is not in me; I am in the greatness." What a freeing notion this is! We are not the source of generosity and fruitful acts. We are

the vessels through which these virtues are poured out into humanity. We are not the owners of earthly resources, but rather the overseers.

When we begin to act out of this knowledge of the heart, the masks that conceal truth will fall away. When all is said and done, human beings are attracted to the lessons they learn on a spiritual level. Desiring a new car is often an awareness that the old car is no longer functioning satisfactorily. When this is recognized, the "newness" of the car becomes secondary. Moving from a larger home to a smaller place may be a need for simplification. Far more than a setback, it is a reordering of priorities. Glutting ourselves with the sights and sounds, taste and feel of the material world may be our unconscious way of seeking out the sacred in the profane, of convincing ourselves that we are alive, and of forcing the rainbow into visibility.

If we happen to be spellbound by materialism ourselves, all is not lost. Isn't the breaking of the spell the turning point of all great tales? We can think of our days of enchantment as the world initiating us in the lessons of abundance and the secrets of the rainbow.

THANK YOU SIR JOHN FOR THESE INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS. AND, ON A PERSONAL NOTE, AS WE LEAVE OUR TRANSITION YEAR AT HAAS FINANCIAL AND MOVE FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE, IT HAS BEEN MY PLEASURE TO HELP YOU, OUR VALUED CLIENTS, DEFINE AND ACHIEVE YOUR HIGHEST GOALS. I AM HONORED TO BE A PART OF YOUR SUCCESS AND WISH YOU A SPIRITUALLY FULFILLING AND MATERIALLY ABUNDANT 2008.

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## SECURITIES OFFERED THROUGH HAAS FINANCIAL PRODUCTS INCORPORATED

29600 NORTHWESTERN HWY SUITE 114  
SOUTHFIELD, MI 48034  
PH 248-213-0101  
Fax 248-213-4502

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**HERE'S TO YOUR FINANCIAL SUCCESS!**

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