



Investment Insights

Kevin Kennedy

Have a Productive Summer

Summertime is officially upon us, with the sounds of baseball games and the smell of barbeques filling the neighborhood. Although the business world doesn't stop moving entirely during these mellow months, things definitely take on a less urgent feel, and time is taken to go on vacation, play with the kids, and sneak in a round of golf. While the pace is a little slower, you may find time to work on some issues that have been on the back burner for the first half of the year (including replacing that darn broken screen door!). Here are a couple of recommendations from my world of personal finance that you should try to work into your summer.

Summer cleaning

Most of us have an idea of where all of our assets are, but that information is stored in the overworked filing cabinet known as our brain. Very few of us actually have a written inventory of what we own, where it is, and who the contact person is at that institution. Take half a day to go through all of your financial matters, including investment accounts, insurance policies (life, disability, home, auto), bank accounts, real property (home, art, jewelry, etc.), and safe deposit boxes. Make a simple binder with pages outlining what the asset is, who owns it, who the beneficiaries are, and who the contact person is at the financial institution. This is a great process as it not only organizes your information, but it also forces you to think through all of the various accounts and policies you have and may have forgotten about. It also often results in the discovery that, whoops, you forgot to change the beneficiary on your IRA account or life insurance when you got married or had children. Keep this binder in a safe but obvious place like a safe deposit box, and let your adult children, spouse, siblings know where it can be found in an emergency.

Summer reading

In addition to the Danielle Steel romance novel or Tom Clancy thriller, add one self-improvement book to your summer reading list. In the finance area, here are three books I recommend:

[The Millionaire Next Door](#), by Thomas J. Stanley. Best-selling study of American millionaires and how they got that way, an excellent read.

[Rich Dad, Poor Dad](#), by Robert T. Kiyosaki. Good fundamental ideas on how to get ahead financially.

Moneyball, by Michael Lewis. A hometown story about our own Oakland A's baseball team, and how smarts can outplay deep pockets.

Notice I am not suggesting getting books about how to pick stocks or analyze the markets. Start with the basics, and grow from there. I've been advising clients for almost 20 years, and each of the three books above taught me something useful. Understanding how to manage your finances and budget is the first step in building wealth, so focus your efforts on those areas first.

Summer relaxation

You probably thought I would skip this part! Have some fun, enjoy your family, and relax. Although we all get caught up in our day-to-day lives, and feel like time is always at a premium, summer gives us the opportunity to step out of the flow for a while. Take advantage of that, and schedule in a few breaks. I've found that when I take a few days or a week off, I always come back with a clearer head and better ability to make decisions and work productively.

Enjoy your summer!

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