Prepare for life
+ wealth + security
Issue 8 | 2012

MAKING THE BEST OF REDUNDANCY

Have you been made redundant or suspect it may happen? You could be faced with new emotional and financial issues that you need to make informed decisions about. It's not an easy thing to sort through but the following information provides a quick overview of some things to consider.

COMING TO TERMS WITH REDUNDANCY

Being 'retrenched' is a shock. You could be in a state of disbelief, acceptance or happy at the thought of a payout.

It may sound ridiculous, but redundancy could provide you with the money and the opportunity to change direction.

The key is to emotionally and financially handle the transition. Generally, a redundancy payment is where:

- You are required to leave your job because your role is no longer needed or no longer required in a certain location
- You are under age 65 at the time of receipt of the payment
- There is no arrangement for future employment made on your behalf or by your employer
- The amount paid must not exceed an amount for a dismissal that is reasonable on an arm's length basis

If the conditions above are satisfied, then you may be entitled to a tax free amount.

In the 2012–13 financial year, the tax-free amount of a genuine redundancy payout is defined as the first $8,806 received plus $4,404 for every year of completed service. Any redundancy payments exceeding this are described as an 'employment termination payment' (ETP) and are subject to different tax rates when cashed out. You can only take your ETP amount in cash.

CHECK YOUR PAYMENT AMOUNT

It's important to have someone check your employer's calculations to ensure that you are being paid the correct amount. Make sure all your relevant years of service have been included and that the payment is consistent with your company's stated redundancy policy or your contract. You should speak to your financial adviser as early as possible to make sure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH YOUR MONEY?

It's tempting to view a redundancy payout as an opportunity to have a holiday or pay off some debts. Before doing that you need to make sure that you can cover your living expenses for the next few months until you find a new job. If you have large debts, and you do want to reduce them, make sure you pay off the most costly ones first.

SOME OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

If your home loan provider offers a mortgage offset account, this can be an excellent way of reducing your loan interest payments while still being able to access the money. Even if you are an aggressive investor by nature, using the proceeds to have a flutter on the share market can be a risky move.

Before making any changes, you should speak to your financial adviser to ensure you get the best outcome for you.

Source | Colonial First State

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All I want for Christmas

..is to survive it debt free!

With the holiday season fast approaching, it's tempting to throw out the year's careful planning and budgeting to splurge in the name of Christmas. But getting into the Christmas spirit doesn't mean you have to get into debt.

Follow these tips to emerge in the new year debt free.

Set a budget

First take some time out to review your current finances. Determine how much you can realistically afford to spend without getting into the red. Remember to include gifts and entertainment as well as all the small things that come with the season like cards, stamps, decorations, food and travel. Next make a list of everyone you plan on giving a gift to and decide how much you want to spend on each person. Finally check that the total figure you want to spend is not beyond your budget.

You may need to reduce the amount you are able to spend on each person or reassess the number of people on your list.

Start early

Before you know it, Christmas will be upon us. In fact, the department stores have already started spruiking their Christmas wares. By shopping early, you can look out for sales and great deals for later in the year. You also have time to comparison shop rather than last-minute shop; where your panic to pick up something (anything) will usually mean spending more.

Look for savings and incentives

If you choose to use your credit card, look for any rewards or discounts that may be available through your credit provider.

Also try to shop online first as you are less likely to impulse shop and can easily compare prices across various websites.

There are plenty of online retailers that offer savings across a number of product categories such as fashion, skincare, make up, fragrances, books and electrical appliances. You can also find discounts through online community classifieds, auctions and daily deal sites.

Remember who you're shopping for

When you're shopping for family and friends, it's very easy to find things which will be just perfect for you. This is a very common mistake which is sure to break your budget. Christmas shopping isn't a 'one for you, one for me' deal. Don't buy it. If you really need to have it, wait until after the holidays when it's more likely to be on sale.

Stick to your budget

Remember that a deal is not a deal if you can't afford it. Once you reach your budget limit, stop.

Save early

Get off the overspending merry-go-round by saving early for next year. As soon as the holiday season is over, determine next year's Christmas budget and set up automatic direct debits into a dedicated Christmas savings account. You'll be all set by the time the department stores bring out their tinsel again.

If you would like more information on how to manage debt and build a savings plan, contact your financial adviser today.

Source | IOOF

Overcoming the desire to follow the herd

Conforming to group or societal norms is a critical part of what it means to be human. But in investment there is a danger in conformity because herding in financial markets can boost the values of certain securities to extreme levels, causing bubbles that invariably pop.

The urge to conform is powerful. Psychology pioneer Solomon Asch carried out conformity experiments in the 1950s that showed that people are willing to make basic cognitive errors to go with the crowd. Fortunately, Asch also revealed it doesn't take much to snap them out of it.

While the crowd is often right in momentum-driven markets, there are countless examples of the herd being wrong-footed at market-turning points. The widespread dash into technology stocks in the late 1990s was a classic case of herding. Investors made a collective cognitive error in their overly optimistic assessment of prospects for dot.coms, many of which had achieved little.

Identifying bubbles is straightforward in retrospect, but it's more challenging when investing emotions are running high. Economic historian Charles Kindleberger helpfully identified five phases of a bubble.

Stage 1 Stage 1 is displacement, where the introduction of a technology (such as railways or the internet) or growth dynamic takes hold. This is often when the "smart money" gets in.

Stage 2 Stage 2 is the boom, when a persuasive narrative takes hold (e.g. the thinking that internet will change everything). This phase is often accompanied by access to cheap credit.

Stage 3 Stage 3 is euphoria where the boom becomes over-extended; new investors are sucked in by the lure of easy gains. The rational behind the boom is now stretched.

Stage 4 Stage 4 is crisis where insiders sell and prices drop.

Stage 5 Stage 5 is revulsion where investors capitulate and prices overshoot on the way down. This phase is often accompanied by the political backlash and calls for regulatory reform that we have seen after the global credit crunch.

Investors can reduce their exposure to bubbles. For instance, there is some persuasive evidence that market capitalisation based indices tend to over-reflect the thinking of the herd. This is because their reliance on price means that they systematically give higher weight to glamorous, overvalued stocks.

Hot sectors take a higher weight in the index as they grow, making subsequent reversals in those sectors more painful. In 1996, for example, the IT sector accounted for around 10% of the overall market cap of the S&P 500 Index. By 2000, it had more than trebled to 33%, making an investment in the S&P 500 a bet on US technology.

The subsequent correction saw this figure fall back to 14% by the mid-2002. Investing to avoid such concentrations when risks begin to outweigh rewards is critical. It's one advantage that active investing has over passive investing.

Source | Fidelity

SMSF TRUSTEES MUST NOW SPECIFICALLY CONSIDER INSURANCE COVER FOR MEMBERS

The Government has amended the superannuation regulations to require that SMSF trustees now give consideration to whether an SMSF should hold life insurance cover for its members.

Previously, SMSF trustees were not specifically required to consider the insurance needs of members when formulating an investment strategy. In fact, during the recent Super System Review, it was noted that less than 13 per cent of SMSFs have insurance.

The new regulation will mean that trustees, who are also normally the members, must now consider insurance in order to discharge their obligations under the SIS Regulations. For newly established SMSFs, insurance should be considered when formulating the initial investment strategy. For existing SMSFs, this practice should form part of the regular investment strategy review.

What the legislation stipulates

Paragraph 4.09(2)(e) of the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Regulations 1994 now requires that a trustee of a superannuation fund must formulate, review regularly and give effect to an investment strategy that has regard to the whole of the circumstances of the fund, including, for an SMSF, whether the trustees of the fund should hold a contract of insurance that provides insurance cover for one or more members of the fund.

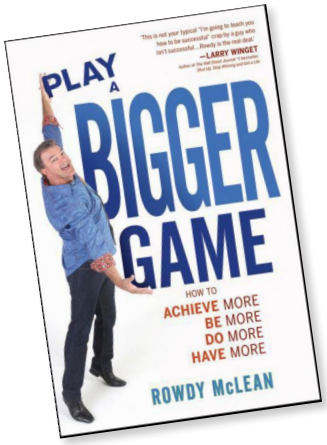
The level of cover is not prescribed in the Regulations; rather trustees are expected to be self-reliant in determining the type and level of insurance members might require. The Explanatory Memorandum to the new rule states that in meeting this requirement, trustees should have regard to the personal circumstances of their members. For example, if a member holds insurance cover outside of the SMSF, this should be considered in determining how much, if any, insurance the SMSF should hold.

Trustees may evidence this requirement by documenting decisions in the fund's investment strategy or minutes of trustee meetings that are held during the income year.

Source | BT

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SMSFS, CONTACT YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISER TODAY.

Good Read



Play A Bigger Game!

Achieve More! Be More! Do More! Have More!

Rowdy McLean

Everyone wants more of something: more fun, more money, more time, more love, more friends, more knowledge and Play A Bigger Game: Achieve More, Be More, Do More, Have More is the book you need to achieve and exceed these goals. A motivational resource and practical guide for helping individuals, companies and organisations to realise their full potential, this book breaks down the challenges that can get in the way of success into easy to implement ideas and action plans.

Written by one of Australia's most successful motivational speakers, Rowdy McLean, a man who has spent the last decade studying the key drivers of success and achievement, Play A Bigger Game: Achieve More, Be More, Do More, Have More contains more than just goal setting advice, it's a definitive guide to goal kicking, helping you not only define what you want but providing the tools and resources you need to turn those dreams into reality.

Filled with simple tools and strategies designed to help you get more out of life, Play A Bigger Game has everything you need to get where you want to go.

WIN One of 3 copies of "Play A Bigger Game!" by Rowdy McLean. To be in the running, visit www.profinvest.com.au/goodread and submit your contact details, including postal address and the name of your accountant or financial adviser. Terms and conditions apply.

Winners will be notified via email of their success!

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Professional Investment Services Pty Ltd | ABN 11 074 608 558 | AFSL 234951

www.profinvest.com.au

Contact your local office for further information:

Professional Investment Services Head Office

Level 14, 300 Adelaide Street, BRISBANE QLD 4000
T: 1300 557 598 | F: 07 3221 9000
E: info@profinvest.com.au | W: www.profinvest.com.au