

## The Value of Advice

Of those who received advice between 2001 and 2014, calculations have shown that the advice received added £2.5 billion to people's savings and investments.

With increased regulation around the illustration of fees and "worst case scenarios" it can be difficult to communicate the full value of taking advice on your investments. Taking advice not only brings financial rewards but it can also offer personal support and advice that outweigh any initial and ongoing fees of most reasonable advisors.

Some of the benefits of employing a great Financial Planner are:

**Rebalancing** - advisers can make impartial and fact-driven decisions on when and how to rearrange your investments to bank your gains or take advantage of any other opportunities to improve your growth.

**Avoid Behavioural Mistakes** - your adviser will be unbiased in their decision making and can avoid the mistakes often made unknowingly by individual investors.

**Additional Planning** - you may not need only investments to make your estate more effective but also other planning that will be vital for your future, and that you may not have known about.

**Tax Planning** - tax is a minefield! And because you don't know what you don't know, you should always employ people who know the best way to deal with tax to help you pay less.

**Personal and Financial Support** - when life gets difficult, a good planner will be there to support you, whether it be a personal issue or something financial.

There are a multitude of additional benefits that are impossible to cover in this one article but are invaluable to investors such as you - if you are an existing client, they are things you are already receiving.

If you are an Efficient Portfolio client and you know someone who would benefit from our advice, then please ask them to get in touch. As you have referred them their first meeting will be free of charge. Alternatively, please direct them to one of our free seminars where they can learn more about us.

## **Interest Rates Lower for Longer?**

Whilst the UK may avoid falling into recession this year, according to forecasters, Brexit and the associated worries are still weighing heavily on the economy and mean that we could see lower interest rates for longer - assuming we don't leave the EU without a deal.

The UK economy is fluctuating by a small margin of between 0.2% and 0.3% each quarter but spending seems to be on the up, with more families holidaying in the UK rather than abroad because of the position of the Pound.

This period of lower interest rates is good for borrowers but poor for savers. So, you may pay less on your loan or mortgage, but you will be making next to nothing on your money in the bank.

Whilst interest rates are expected to rise if we leave the EU smoothly - whatever that means - the increase will be gradual and therefore interest rates could be low for quite some time. You may need to think about what is best to do with all that money you may have in cash savings.

Saying that, the interest rates are really at the mercy of Brexit at the moment. Whether there is a "deal" or "no deal" outcome will dictate what happens with the UK economy, so watch this space (and read our Brexit article to find out what on Earth is going on!)

## **Put Peace of Mind First : Is Your LPA Up to Date?**

We cannot stress enough the importance of having a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) in place. It allows the people you trust to step in and make decisions for you and act on your behalf if you become unable to or simply no longer want to. As an LPA can greatly affect your quality of life, it must be kept up to date. The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) is the relevant governing body in England and Wales, and they help to ensure that your health and financial decisions are honoured.

If your nominated attorneys change their name or address, you must inform the OPG as soon as possible. This is also the case in the unfortunate circumstance of one of your attorneys passing away. Changes must be sent either in writing or by email. Look for your reference number, which will begin with PG, on any past correspondence from the OPG as it will help them to identify you.

If you need to update a name or address you must provide supporting documents, such as an original marriage certificate, showing the new details. If one of the attorneys has died, however, you must send the OPG a copy of the death certificate, the original LPA, all certified copies of the LPA as well as an up-to-date return address. Don't forget that only the OPG can change an LPA, otherwise it can invalidate the document!

Although we cannot update the LPA document, if you need further advice on updating your LPA or if you don't currently have one and would like some peace of mind over your health and financial affairs, then get in touch and we will be happy to help.

## **Limit Your Probate Delays**

If you are having problems getting your Probate application through, you are not alone. There have been delays since March this year, due to nationwide process changes, for anyone trying to receive a grant of probate. HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) predict it will take between 6 and 8 weeks for them to process the bulk of an application, but the reality is that some applications are taking up to 12 weeks. Although these delays can be frustrating, it is worth keeping in mind that HMCTS may not be the only ones whose process isn't quite up to scratch.

In some cases, to complete probate, the executors or administrators need to submit an IHT400 return to HMRC. HMRC then need to stamp the form and return it to the relevant probate office. However, HMRC is overlooking these forms amongst the rest of their workload; preventing probate from being completed.

To minimise disruption, HMCTS have requested that they are only chased for updates if 8 weeks have passed. However, if your case involves an IHT400 form, it may cut down your waiting time if you pre-emptively call HMRC to make sure they have received it and are processing it accordingly.

Thankfully, there is light at the end of the tunnel, as assurances have been made that the backlog is gradually decreasing, with 45,000 grants of probate being issued since 25th March this year. Hopefully turnaround times will slowly decrease to a more reasonable level.

## **Thomas Cook Collapse Brings New Scammers Out in Force**

Hopefully you weren't affected by the Thomas Cook failure but, if you were, be aware that fraudsters are jumping at the opportunity to try to scam money out of those involved.

Individuals are being contacted by supposed companies offering to get their money back from Thomas Cook, providing the customer pays an upfront fee or gives them their bank details for the refund. They are then using the bank details to steal money from people's accounts or disappearing with the lump sum never to be seen again.

They seem to be using a blanket approach, calling people whether or not they know if those people even booked a holiday through Thomas Cook.

The scammers will either say they are working on behalf of Thomas Cook or are from the customer's bank. Be vigilant and don't hand over any personal sensitive information. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true then it probably is.

## **Notes on Brexit**

The High Court has ruled that Boris Johnson's advice to the Queen to prorogue Parliament for five weeks in the run up to the Brexit deadline was unlawful, so MPs are back at Westminster and it's as if they never left at all.

As for Brexit itself, before parliament was prorogued MPs passed a law that ruled if there is no deal agreed with the EU by 19th October the Prime Minister must request an extension of three months to the 31st October deadline. However, that does not mean the EU will accept another extension,

and Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has stated that the Prime Minister plans to follow the law but push to the limits what that law actually means.

If Boris were to refuse to request an extension, he could face legal action in the civil courts, which would certainly trigger a vote of no confidence and a general election. While he still insists that we will leave the EU on 31st October no matter what, MPs are desperately trying to stop him pushing through a No Deal scenario.

It seems that a general election is inevitable and, if that is the case, it is likely that Boris would campaign heavily for a No Deal Brexit and lose a lot of MPs in the process as they defect to the Lib Dems. Like Theresa May before him, Boris seems to forget that voters care about things other than Brexit.

## **Efficient Portfolio Team's Big Win**

On Friday 20th September, the whole team at Efficient Portfolio collectively crossed our fingers and held our breath. After months of anticipation, interviews and written accounts of our work, this was the day when we would discover if we had won an award in the Rutland and Stamford Mercury's Business Awards.

And I'm delighted to tell you that we won Team of the Year! With their constant innovation, dedication and growth mentality, our team make our business what it is today, so it's an incredible feeling to see their hard work rewarded.

Back in April, when we initially entered, we wanted to showcase the hard work of our team, and bring some recognition to the ongoing development, charity work and excellent service they all provide, and it fills us with pride to know that our efforts have been acknowledged.

We were up against some very stiff competition, which is great to see, as it means other, local businesses are striving to go above and beyond for their customers- a win for our county and our local economy.

I'd like to congratulate everyone who took part in the awards and thank the organisers of what was a great competition and awards ceremony. However, most of all I'd like to thank the team at Efficient Portfolio: without your determination, commitment and passionate drive, we wouldn't be where we are today.

## **Book of the Month**

This month's book recommendation is 'Small Change: Money Mishaps and How to Avoid Them' by Dan Ariely, the author of the previously featured and brilliant 'Predictably Irrational'.

In this book, Ariely focuses on our irrational behavior around money. It is an easy to read brilliant book about the bad decisions we make when it comes to our money, and why. Whether it be our credit cards, booking holidays or the pain associated with purchases, we are constantly making bad decisions with our hard-earned cash. Ariely helps the reader identify these stupid decisions and give them strategies to not make them again in the future. If you want to be smarter with your money, I suggest that you read 'Small Change' as it may just make a big difference!

## **Charlie's Mini Blog**

Just a quick note to say a massive thank you and to tell you that I am still alive. I managed to complete Ironman Italy in 11 hours and 1 minute, a good hour faster than I had dreamt of, which was totally unexpected. We have managed to raise over £4,000 for MNDA from people's generous sponsorship. When added to the money raised from our golf day, the up and coming ball and our corporate donation, we are well on track to raise over £20,000 for this deserving cause, which is brilliant. If you want to know more about how I got on, read the Ironman Italy post. It really was quite an experience, and one I will never forget.

There are a limited number of tickets left for our ball on 16th November, so if you would like to come along, it would be brilliant to see you there. If you do, contact [charlotte@efficientportfolio.co.uk](mailto:charlotte@efficientportfolio.co.uk).

MND is such a hideous disease that anything we can do to play a small part in beating it has to be time and money well spent.