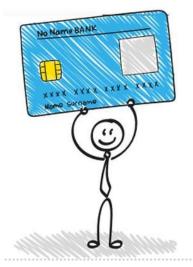


Date: 15 March 2016

How to handle your retirement planning

The StarbizWeek – Personal Finance (12 March 2016) The Star Online – Business News (12 March 2016)

By: Ismitz Matthew De Alwis



THEY say "Life is a marathon, not a sprint."

That saying actually applies to retirement planning as well. However, all too often we race through the nitty-gritty details of our finances and neglect to focus on crucial elements especially on saving for retirement long before those golden years approach.

Sure, we are overwhelmed by the idea of trying to save because of the multitude of financial commitments. It's no surprise that many a time people tell

me they can't afford to save. I tell them they can't afford not to save for retirement. Here's a decade-by-decade plan that will ensure you are on track for a more sustainable retirement.

20s: Now that you're out of school, the world is full of discovery, adventure and opportunities for you. With your new found freedom, don't get carried away and overstretch your paycheck on an expensive lifestyle. Trust me, there is no better time than now to lay a solid groundwork for a bright financial future and foundation for your golden years.

Retirement may seem a million years away but it is never too early to start saving. As time is on your side, even a small amount every month can add up to a big payoff at retirement. So don't miss the unique opportunity to maximise the power of compounding.

It may seem like a Herculean task to set aside even a small sum of money. With a small salary, paying for daily living expenses, car and student loans and rent can be a chore. Even with these commitments, there are ways to help you start saving for retirement. The key is in proper budgeting.

Establish good money habits – create a budget and track your expenses. Then test it out for several month to make sure it is realistic and adjusting it along the way. Also, don't spend beyond your means.



Tackle Credit Card Debt – Don't use credit card unnecessarily and try to pay off the full amount monthly. Most folks don't pay much attention to their credit card debt. By just making minimum payment monthly and letting the outstanding balance rollover on hefty interest, you lock yourself in perpetual debt.

Pay Student Loan – Under no circumstances should you fall behind on student loan payments. Be vigilant on monthly payment so you can clear your student loan as soon as possible and put it behind you.

Create Emergency Fund – While busy paring down your debt, don't forget you should be building up an emergency fund. Ideally, you should aim to have six months of take-home pay but if it seems too lofty, start with one month and build from there.

Set aside Retirement Fund – Contribute a small percentage of your paycheque that you feel is reasonable. You can start with 5% contribution monthly then add 1% bi-yearly. If you earn a salary of RM2,000, the 5% is only RM100 a month, that works out to about RM3 a day which is very reasonable. While the amount may seem small, the magic is in the compounding process when your savings or investments help you earn interests over time. The longer you save and invest, the more interests you earn. One secret to discipline retirement saving is to have your savings taken automatically from your paycheque, or known as "Pay Yourself First".

Meanwhile, don't forget to take advantage of the Private Retirement Scheme (PRS) Youth Incentive. With this scheme, contributors aged 20 to 30 stand to receive a RM500 boost from the government towards their retirement savings if they contribute a minimum RM1,000 a year.

30s: During this decade, you likely have more money coming in than you did in your 20s, but that's not a good reason to spend it. Your financial goals are likely to get a bit more complicated in your 30s. Many people are still paying off credit card debt and student loans, working on building emergency savings and kicking retirement savings into higher gear, while also saving for a house down payment and perhaps thinking about starting a family.

So how to juggle it all and still make your retirement plan work?

Here's the analogy: If you try to fill too many buckets, none of them are going to get very full. So, prioritise on your three biggest goals. If you haven't mastered the big three – paying off credit card debt, building an emergency fund and putting aside for your retirement savings – then those should automatically be your top priorities. Once you've addressed your basic financial security needs, you can start contributing to other goals like saving down payment for a house or kids' education fund.

Continue to Hack Away Debt – You may have outstanding student loan left and credit card debt you are paring down. Try to wipe out all debts as soon as possible. Tackle debt that is most expensive first, meaning the highest-interest debt. However, if you have low-interest debt (below 3%) there is no need to rush paying off everything as you can free up cash for other goals that are more important and give higher returns.

Reassess Insurance Needs – Big life events – getting married, having kids, buying a house – can be trigger points for examining whether your insurance needs are being appropriately met. If you have dependents, securing life insurance now will help them maintain financial security should anything happen





to you. Still being young and healthy, you should also look into getting medical insurance coverage now which will definitely come in handy during your retirement years.

Retirement Planning – If you have been setting aside about 5% of your salary for retirement savings in your 20s, in your 30s you should increase the percentage to about 10% or more. On top of that, consider adding some amount of your bonuses to your retirement savings as well. If you've been investing your retirement money in PRS, unit trusts, stocks, etc you can afford to choose more aggressive investments while you are young to bring bigger gains in the long run.

40s: You are approaching your peak earning years when it is essential to save money and make sure your investments are allocated properly. However, this decade can be challenging for people with families who must provide both aging parents and growing children. Whatever the challenges, make retirement savings a priority. With credit card debt and student loans paid off, that amount can be utilised to help build your children's education fund. And as you make more, don't forget to keep padding your emergency fund if possible.

Make Retirement Savings a Priority – If you have kids, you may feel compelled to put your retirement savings on hold in favour of saving for university tuition. But do remember this saying: "You can borrow for education but you can't borrow for retirement." With 10 to 20 years left to retirement, it is crucial to understand how much you should save for retirement. Sit down with a financial planner to go through your overall retirement goals and address the financial gaps. If there is shortfall, this is a great time to bump up your contributions and consider how you can pad your nest egg with freelance or consulting work on the side.

Focus Your Investments – 40s is typically your high-earning years, which makes it a good time to become more thoughtful about whether you are investing in the right way. It is important to invest with a purpose and goal, and invest with a time horizon and risk tolerance assigned to each goal. For example, if a portion of your portfolio is earmarked for kids' education fund and they are 10 years away from starting college, consider investing in investments that are more conservative due to the short time horizon.

50s: Retirement is drawing closer. Your kids are probably graduating from university, if not already. They should be independent and free from your financial responsibility. By now, the mortgage that you took up in your 30s should be paid off soon. If not, focus on that to be one of the goals in your 50s as you definitely don't want a big financial commitment to burden you in your retirement years. Your emergency fund is in place and debts all paid off. So, it is time to heave a big sigh of relief after decades and decades of planning. With most of your financial goals materialised, you can begin to cut yourself some slack to go on a dream vacation. But ensure that your retirement plan is still on track.

Turbo-charge Your Retirement Savings – If you have been setting aside about 10% of salary in your 20s and about 15% in your 40s for retirement, consider ramping up the percentage to 20%-25% or saving as aggressively as you can. This is to make up for years when you weren't able to save enough.

Reducing Expenses – You might consider downgrading your lifestyle and get into the habit of living on a fixed income and saving the extra money. This helps one to get ready for managing spending in retirement.

Evaluate Your Retirement Plan – Review and update your retirement plan to make sure you know how much you should be saving and ensure your investment and asset allocation strategy is aligned with your





goals. It's also good time to shift your investment portfolio from growth to a combination of growth and income to reduce taking too much risk as retirement approaches.

Bulk Up Emergency Savings – As you get closer to retirement, ensure your emergency funds equal to one to two years of cash. This way, if an economic downturn hits the time you retire, you can just spend cash without liquidating your investments at a low.

The secret to long-term retirement planning is really quite simple – learning to budget early in life, sticking with it, saving aggressively during your peak earning years and investing your money wisely and diversely. If you adopt a marathon approach to retirement planning, it allows you to take a holistic view on your overall financial picture and see how decisions made in your 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s can impact your golden years.

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Ismitz Matthew De Alwis is the Executive Director and CEO of Kenanga Investors Berhad, one of Malaysia's top investment management firms. Matthew is a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and holds a Capital Market Services Representative's Licence (CMSRL) from the Securities Commission for fund management and investment advice. He is a staunch believer that financial literacy will empower Malaysians to prepare adequately for their retirement.

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Kenanga Investors

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20 personal finance

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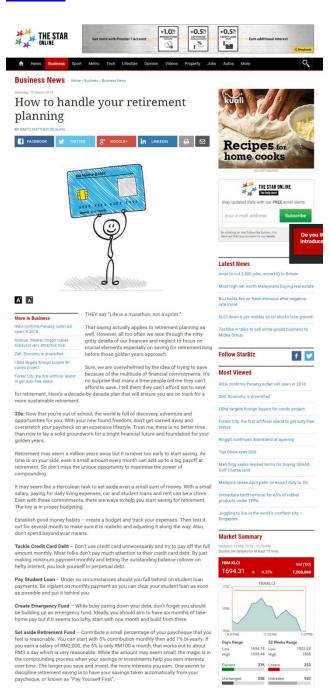
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Article Source: The Star Online - Business News

http://www.thestar.com.my/business/business-news/2016/03/12/how-to-handle-your-retirementplanning/



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Market Movers

Active	LUSC!	-	
Symbol	Last	Chg	Vol (0
AAX-WA	0.175	0.005	499,46
AIRASIA	1.780	0.070	408,46
AAX	0.305	0.010	397,56
SKH	0.080	0.000	351,17
PWORTH	0.115	0.005	199,65
			More

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