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MONEY MANAGEMENT: ADDING IT UP IN

Simple measures can lead to welcome savings in the new year

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\$2,008.

It sounds like a lot of money. And, for many of us, it is.

But saving \$2,008 during 2008 could be a lot less painful than you might think. All it takes is not spending \$5.50 a day between now and Dec. 31.

To help you get started on your yearlong savings program, we asked three financial experts for some simple, painless ways to keep a few extra bucks in your pocket during the new year.

Steve Budin, president of The Budin Group, is a certified financial planner and financial commentator for KVBC-TV, Channel 3. **Deborah Danielson, a certified financial planner, is president of Danielson Financial Group.** And Humberto Cruz is a syndicated columnist who appears in the Sunday Review-Journal.

Here are a few of their suggestions for making you a bit wealthier during 2008.

EAT AND DRINK

Everyone eats, and daily dining habits offer ample opportunities to trim your expenditures.

* **For instance, Danielson says, "if you gave up just one Starbucks (latte) a week, at say \$5, that's \$260 (by year's end)."**

Another option, Budin notes, is simply to downgrade: Instead of a pricey espresso-based drink, opt for a regular cup of the coffee-of-the-day for about \$1.50 and pocket the difference.

One less latte a week at \$5 per latte: Year-end savings of \$260.

* It's tempting to grab a fast-food lunch when life gets busy. But replacing one fast-food lunch a week with a brown bag lunch from home will save \$5 to \$10 and, Cruz says, allow you to enjoy a tastier lunch to boot.

But if that doesn't work for you, try this: Don't supersize. That will save you about 50 cents to a dollar or so per meal.

One less fast-food meal per week at \$6.50 per meal: Year-end savings of \$338.

One less supersized meal per week, at 49 cents each: Year-end savings of \$25.48.

* When dining at a sit-down restaurant, skip dessert. A dessert at even family-friendly Applebee's will set you back about \$5.50. And, Danielson notes, most of us "don't need it anyway."

One less restaurant dessert per month at \$5.50 per dessert: Year-end savings of \$66.

* Snack purchases can add up quickly. That candy bar you impulsively purchase in the supermarket checkout line? Take a pass and end up with a few more bucks -- and a few less pounds -- on Dec. 31.

One less candy bar per week at 65 cents per candy bar: Year-end savings of \$33.80.

* "My biggest pet peeve is bottled water," Budin says. "People spend one, two, three dollars a day on bottled water when you can get it for free."

So, buy one less bottle of water per week -- just refill the empty from a drinking fountain or tap -- and the savings will add up.

One less bottle of water per week at \$1.75 per bottle: Year-end savings of \$91.

* Speaking of pricey beverages, skip that soft drink with your restaurant dinner. Instead, Danielson suggests, order water with lemon.

One less restaurant/fast-food soft drink per week at \$1.50 each: Year-end savings of \$78.

ENTERTAINMENT

* It's great to have hundreds of TV channels and all of the latest video services at your beck and call. But do you really need them all?

Cutting out a premium channel, losing that DVR or TiVO service or reducing the number of receivers in the home can cut cable and satellite bills.

Danielson has a cable box in her guest room. But, she says, at \$10 a month or \$120 a year, a guest could just as easily walk into the living room and watch TV with the family.

So, read your bill to see what you're paying for and decide what you might be able to live without. For instance, DVR service from Cox Communications cable costs \$9.99 per month. Break out your VCR to time-shift programs and you'll save a nice chunk of change by year's end.

Dropping DVR service, at \$9.99 a month: Year-end savings of \$119.88.

* It's hard for bookworms to pass up good deals on the remainder shelves or stifle the urge to buy the newest best-seller. But you'll probably be able to find all of the literature you need -- as well as DVDs, CDs and free Internet access -- at your local library.

"People do not realize the wealth of material there is to be found at the public library," says Cruz, who even was able to find library DVDs of 12 movies that had been shown the previous week on cable TV movie channels.

So treat yourself to a new book only every other month.

Six books a year at \$20 per book: Year-end savings of \$120.

* You know that magazine you impulsively purchase to occupy your mind at the coffee shop, restaurant or airport? They add up and, trust us, you'll be able to catch up on the latest antics of the Sisters Spears elsewhere.

Buy one less issue of People magazine per month at \$3.99 per issue: Year-end savings of \$47.88.

* If you prefer your movies on a big screen, consider buying a ticket for a matinee. Recently, you could have caught the 7:10 p.m. showing of "Enchanted" at Brenden Theatres at the Palms for \$10. But if you were able to make the 4:10 p.m. showing, you'd have paid \$7.50.

Substitute one movie matinee a month for an evening showing: Year-end savings of \$30.

SHOPPING

"A lot of people thumb their noses at clipping coupons," Cruz says. "I've never understood why."

Danielson says using coupons for groceries you'd buy anyway can result in nice cost savings during the year. The same goes, she adds, for entertainment books that, for \$25 or so, offer restaurant discounts: If you patronize, or want to patronize, the covered restaurants anyway, why not take advantage of the discount?

Using \$2 worth of supermarket coupons each month: Year-end savings of \$24.

SMOKING

Stop smoking and all sorts of health benefits will follow. More immediately, kicking the habit will save a considerable amount of money that would have gone to cigarette purchases.

But if you aren't ready to quit, at least cut back a pack a week. Seeing how much you save may even be the incentive you need to go all the way.

Cutting back one pack of cigarettes a week at \$4 a pack: Year-end savings of \$208.

UTILITIES

Read your utility bills to see what you're paying for. You may find some services or add-ons you can live without.

For example, you may still be paying for long distance for your home phone line even though you now make your long-distance calls via cell phone. For MCI, it'll cost you \$4.87 a month for a calling card, a paper bill, a "partial minimum usage fee" and various taxes and surcharges.

Dropping long-distance services at \$4.87 a month: Year-end savings of \$58.44.

Read through your local phone bill, too, to see if you need all that you're paying for. Embarq, for example, charges \$9 a month for "Caller ID with name."

Dropping Caller ID at \$9 a month: Year-end savings of \$108.

MEMBERSHIPS, CLUBS AND DUES

Club dues, gym memberships and other such extras are great, but only if you actually use them. Take a look at dues and memberships you have, and decide whether you're using them often enough to at least cover your costs.

Take a gym membership. Budin says: "You either, A, start using it, or B, cancel it. And if it's \$30 a month, that's \$360 a year, and that's another dollar (saved) a day."

Dropping an unused gym membership at \$30 a month: Year-end savings of \$360.

YOUR CAR

With gasoline prices hovering around \$3 a gallon, it makes sense to combine trips whenever you can to save as much as you can.

"A lot of times, we just jump in the car and drive across town to do something," Danielson says. "Just think about consolidating your errands."

Use one less gallon of gasoline each month by driving consolidated trips, at \$3 a gallon: Year-end savings of \$36.

PAPERWORK

Not paying your bills isn't a wise way to save money. But here's something that is: Pay bills online or through automatic deductions from your checking account.

"I don't write checks for anything," Cruz says. "I pay my electric bill, I pay my water bill, I pay my cable bill, I pay my homeowner's association fees, I pay everything through automatic transfer. In some cases, I even get a discount for doing so. You're saving money to the party that's receiving the bill as well."

And, you'll save on stamps, too. Go automatic with just one bill a month and, at 41 cents per stamp: Year-end savings of \$4.92.

That, by our count, takes us to a total of 2,009.40 saved by this time next year.

As for that extra buck-forty? Treat yourself to a Big Gulp and leave the clerk a nice tip. It'll surely be the first time that's ever happened.

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