

## Thanksgiving also is a time to review

**Financial adviser Thomas J. O'Connell seven tips on how to spend a more financial secure holiday season**

Thomas J. O'Connell, Correspondent | November 9, 2016



The year is quickly coming to a close, and Thanksgiving will soon be upon us. We all have many things to be thankful for like, the election FINALLY being over (LOL), the stock market not crashing, inflation not running out of control, our families, our health and our overall good fortune.

With the last remaining weeks left to the year, now is the time to review your finances to make sure you are still on your path to success. A few things to check are:

**Your 401k contributions** – did you maximize your contribution to get the employer match?

**Your required minimum distributions** – I know some older folks are reading this article from the questions I get, so make sure your required minimum distributions for retirement accounts are

taken by Dec. 31. Taking a withdrawal late or for the wrong amount can result in a stiff penalty in addition to regular income tax on the amount that should've been withdrawn.

**Your 2016 taxes** – I like to suggest to my clients that they do a mock tax return based on the last 10 or 11 months so they'll have a good understanding of how much tax they'll owe in April 2017

**Review your portfolio** – do you need to rebalance, are your investments still in line with your objectives, how much risk are you taking, what tax effect has your portfolio created?

**Check your beneficiaries** – has there been a life event that may change these, like a marriage, divorce, birth, death?

**FAFSA application** – the new window to file for financial aid opened Oct. 1 for the freshman class of 2017-2018

**Benefits** – this is when most people renew their benefits at work, so make sure you are maximizing the ones that are important to you and that help advance your financial success.

I have no doubt that the coming year is going to bring many changes, opportunities and volatility. There are many well-known clichés, such as “people don’t plan to fail, they just fail to plan” or “if you don’t have your own plan, the government has a plan for you,” and so on. Sometimes we get tired of hearing them.

The one thing I do know though is that we’ve seen bad economies before, as well as market crashes, tax hikes, inflation, volatility and Black Swan events, and people have come out the other end of these periods more successful and better positioned for their future. Why? Not because they flew by the seat of their pants, but because they had a plan, executed that plan, and continually reviewed and adjusted that plan to make sure they stayed on course.

I know sometimes I sound like your dad, but I tell you these things because I truly want to see you and your families succeed. Indulge me and let me leave you with one last thought: “Knowledge is something you learn. Wisdom is the ability to apply that knowledge to your everyday life.” I’m trying to give you my 30-plus years of experience as an advisor and share with you the mistakes other people have made before you, so you don’t have to. That’s what wisdom is all about.

I wish all of you and your families the happiest of all Thanksgivings. Here’s to your financial success.

*A resident of Bedminster, Thomas J. O’Connell is the president of Parsippany-based International Financial Advisory Group, which offers a variety of retirement planning, wealth management and insurance services. He is also an investment advisor representative of Comprehensive Capital Management, a SEC-registered investment advisor, and a registered representative of Comprehensive Asset Management and Servicing, member FINRA/SIPC, both located in Parsippany. For more information, visit [www.internationalfinancial.com](http://www.internationalfinancial.com) or call 973-394-0623. All information contained herein is for informational purposes and should not be construed as investment advice. It does not constitute an offer, solicitation or recommendation to purchase any particular security.*