

September
2017



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HARD WORK -

Productivity of the average American worker (output per worker per hour) over 10-year stretches of time increased the greatest (+34%) from 1957-1966.

Productivity had its weakest 10-year growth (+11%) from 1973-1982.

Productivity grew just +13% from 2007-2016 (source: Department of Labor).

GREAT FOR

BUYERS - The national average interest rate on a 30-year fixed rate mortgage fell to 3.86% last week, the lowest average recorded so far during calendar year 2017 (source: Freddie Mac).

The Six "W" Questions of Retirement

Do you remember learning the six "W" questions in grade school? They are as follows: *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, *Why*, and *How*. For decades, these questions have served as an excellent way to gather information, whether you're a journalist, a detective, or anything in between. But these questions can also apply to planning for retirement. For example, ask yourself:

Who do I want to spend time with in my retirement?

One of the greatest joys of retirement is that it can provide you with more time to spend with the people you love. So ask yourself, who are the people with whom you most want to spend your time with? Your spouse? Your grandchildren? Old friends? People in your golf club, acting class, or church group? Whatever you come up with will help you answer the next question:

What do I want to spend my retirement doing?

If the answer to the "Who" question is your grandkids, then the answer to the "What" question may be, "I want to spend my time teaching my grandchildren how to fish." If "who" equals your spouse, then "what" may be "re-living our honeymoon."

When do I want to retire?

A very important question. Have you always dreamed of retiring early, or are you someone who would rather work for as long as possible? The answer will determine how much you'll need to save for retirement, how to take your Social Security benefits, and so on.

Where do I want to retire?

Some people stay put after they retire; others move somewhere far away. Again, the answer to this question is largely affected by your answers to the first two. Maybe you'd rather live closer to your other family members. Maybe you're looking for a different climate. In the end, you should retire wherever will best allow you to accomplish the things you want to do, with the people you want to do them.

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CUT IN HALF - The percentage of home mortgage loans that are delinquent (defined as being at least 1 monthly payment late but not including those loans in the foreclosure process) was 8.44% at the end of the 2nd quarter 2011. That number has fallen to 4.24% as of the end of the 2nd quarter 2017 (source: MBA).

SENIORS STAYING PUT - 53% of the owner-occupied homes in the United States, i.e., 53% of 75.7 million or 40.1 million homes, are owned by Americans who are at least age 55. A decade ago, age 55+ homeowners owned just 43% of all homes (source: Census Bureau).

Why do I want to retire?

A surprisingly important question. You should never retire just because you're 65, or because you don't know what else to do. People who make that mistake often find retirement to be boring or unfulfilling. Instead, ask yourself *why* exactly you want to retire. If the answer is something like "because I want to broaden my horizons and grow as person," or "because I want to write that novel I've always had kicking around in my head," then you will probably be happier than if the answer is simply, "because I'm tired of waking up at eight in the morning every day."

How will I pay for my retirement?

This is key. As you know, you can't just pick a day to stop showing up to work and think that's enough. Retirement creates a massive lifestyle change, one that will be quite upsetting to your finances if you don't prepare for it.

Here's the good news: once you answer the first five questions, you'll be well on your way to figuring out the sixth. Let's take a hypothetical person and create a hypothetical situation for him.

Hypothetical retirement	
Who do I want to spend time with in my retirement?	My grandkids
What do I want to spend my retirement doing?	Teaching grandkids to fish, taking them to Disney World, helping them pay for college
When do I want to retire?	By age 62 if possible
Where do I want to retire?	In Phoenix, where my grandkids live
Why do I want to retire?	So I can spend time with my family while I'm healthy and active

Once you've determined that you want to spend time with your grandkids, taking them to fun destinations while simultaneously helping them save for college, and that you want to start by age 62 and will need to move to Phoenix, you can begin to calculate the approximate *cost* of retirement. Once you know the cost, you can start determining how much you will need to earn, save, and invest before your intended retirement date.

Asking yourself the six "W" questions is a great first step to planning for retirement. Once you have a vision for retirement in your head, you can start working towards actually achieving that vision.

So when the time comes for *you* to start thinking about retirement, remember to ask yourself ...

Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How!

You'll be glad you did.

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