

Women, Wealth, and Legacy Planning

Whether nurturing the values of children, fulfilling charitable goals, or making investment decisions that affect their own as well as their beneficiaries' financial security, women play a central role in establishing and preserving family wealth. Women need to be involved, informed, and comfortable with their role as guardians of family wealth. Active participation in wealth management can strengthen women's commitment to protect and grow their assets with the goal of leaving a legacy for their children, their community, and beyond.

Best Practices in Legacy Planning

The following strategies may help assure the smooth transfer of both your measurable wealth and your values surrounding wealth to the next generation.

Education leads to confidence.

Attaining financial security for you and your heirs typically requires you to accept responsibility for the management of significant investment assets. Whether you are single, married, or a surviving widow, it is in your best interest to receive as much education as possible about wealth planning, investments, successorship, and related matters. Even if you are not directly responsible for making important financial decisions, it is vital to have knowledge in these areas in order to communicate effectively with professional advisors charged with these duties.

Professionals offer objective, qualified services.

Relying on professional advice as opposed to family and friends is extremely important when making decisions affecting the accumulation, preservation, and distribution of wealth. What should you expect from a qualified professional? A good wealth advisor -- or a team with other professionals, such as attorneys and accountants -- should offer guidance and services in most areas of wealth management, including estate planning, retirement planning, insurance needs assessment, and college planning. On a more personal note, a wealth advisor should work closely with you to:

- Identify areas requiring special assistance, such as creating trusts.
- Minimize taxes and planning costs.
- Develop and implement a personalized wealth management plan.
- Review your plan periodically and suggest changes when needed.

Philanthropy is integral to family legacy planning.

Wealth holders have a greater opportunity -- if not responsibility -- to make charitable giving an integral part of the legacy planning process. Families that are charitably inclined may have clear goals in mind, but they may not know where to begin. In order to choose the best strategy, you should work with a trusted advisor to evaluate a number of factors, such as tax management objectives, types of assets to be gifted, and your specific strategic intent. Then choose from among a range of charitable giving vehicles, such as donor-advised funds, family foundations, gift annuities, and charitable remainder trusts/charitable lead trusts.

Children should learn about the responsibilities of wealth.

Wealth is a gift that opens doors of opportunity not only for you, but also for your children, their children, and generations to come. Yet wealth can be a weighty responsibility that takes time to manage, maintain, and preserve. If you are a parent, you are no doubt concerned about the effects of wealth on your children's values and how the "money" lessons you pass on to them will resonate as they mature to adulthood.

Family values should be held in the same high regard as family wealth.

Family values -- those traits, behavioral patterns, beliefs, goals, and morals that are shared by members of a family group -- define a family's character as much as dollar signs measure a family's wealth. By holding shared values in high regard and setting an example of commitment to financial responsibility, philanthropy, and volunteerism for the younger generation, you will enrich your family's legacy for generations to come.

A Woman's Worth

As stewards of the family legacy, women are in a unique and influential position. They are holders of great wealth as well as keepers of the family's moral and philanthropic vision. There are many financial, accounting, legal, and business tools to assist women in implementing a plan of action. Contact your financial advisor for guidance in mapping out a legacy planning strategy unique to your situation.

© 2012 S&P Capital IQ Financial Communications. All rights reserved.