

speaking out

by Marc Freedman



Keeping Our Identity Safe

This past week I came ever so close to opening myself up to identity theft. Had it not been for some personal curiosity and heightened awareness, I may never have realized I was part of a “possible” scam.

Last week I received an e-mail from American Express indicating that they needed to verify my last 10 transactions in a routine service check of credit card activity. The American Express Logo appeared in the e-mail and it included a return address that was similar to the one where I would mail my check. In addition, the AMEX colors were vibrant throughout the e-mail, and they included my name and address as it appeared on the statement. Furthermore it listed my credit card number with the last four digits “X’d out”.

Before clicking on the link to verify my information and sign into my American Express Account, I elected to click on the “Contact Us” button, located faintly in the upper-right hand corner of the web-page. I thought by communicating directly with American Express, I could at least verify that the request was legitimate. That’s when I realized we had a problem. When I clicked on “Contact Us”

an error message appeared and I was unable to “Go Back.” I concluded that what appeared to be a genuine e-mail from American Express was a sneaky method for gaining access to my username, password and credit card number.

So if we’ve been conditioned to be on heightened alert to identify theft schemes, and warned by the government to be ever so suspicious, what is one to do when a mailing comes from “United States Department of Commerce” with a note on the outside of the envelope indicating “YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW”?

The American Community Survey issued by the US Department of Commerce appears legitimate and authentic, but when questions in the survey ask;

“How many months a year to members of this household stay at this address?”

“What time did this person usually leave for home to go to work LAST WEEK?”

“How many minutes did it usually take this person to get from home to work LAST WEEK?”

“Have you been looking for work during the last four weeks?”

“What have been your sources of income over the past 12 months?”

“What is the value of your Property?”

and so on, it is a little off-putting.

Clearly these are very personal and private questions, and put in the wrong hands could lead to an array of misadventures. But what is one to do, when the envelope says “YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW” and the cover letter indicates that this survey is a SECOND NOTICE?

Legitimate or not, I am not sure I’d want to provide that comprehensive information unless I was absolutely certain the data was held secure and private.

The brochure that accompanies the survey states “The American Community Survey provides up-to-date information for the nation, states, cities, counties, metropolitan areas and communities. By responding to the ...questionnaire, you are helping your community to establish goals, identify problems and solutions and measure the performance of programs.” Sounds compelling—but if only those who “trust everything they receive in the mail”, is this survey a true reflection of a community? Is it a “real characterization” of the state, nation, etc. at large?

In this world of heightened skepticism and a desire to maintain some semblance of privacy, who should we trust and to what entities, if any, should there be a “legal obligation” to share your personal data?

Just thinking.

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Marc’s Flying South

Marc will be in Florida to visit clients in December and January. If you’ll be in Florida during that time and would like to arrange an appointment, have Marc take you to lunch or dinner, or schedule a “Power Years” workshop for your organization or club, please give us a call.

OUR CORE VALUES & BELIEFS

At Freedman Financial we believe

- **Planning** is the critical first step to a secure financial future.
- **Integrity** is essential—our words must match our deeds.
- **Competence** can only be achieved through constant learning and skill assessment.
- the **Relationships** we build with our clients are for life.
- **Innovation** is the key to our success—we are dedicated to improvement, creativity, and value.
- the **Personal** touch matters because the best relationships are built face-to-face.

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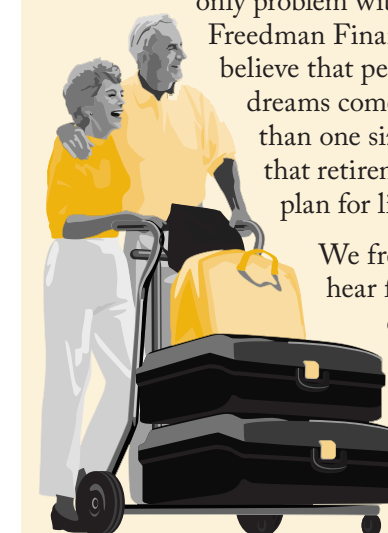
Managing EXPECTATIONS

guidance through genuine financial planning

Retirement—Permission to Celebrate Your Way

If you’ve retired, or are close to retirement, it’s likely you have a picture in your mind of what the “perfect” retirement looks like. If it follows the typical brochures, your mental image probably includes plenty of leisure time, lots of golf, and regular trips to a sunnier climate. Throw in time spent with grandchildren, maybe a cruise or two, and the picture is complete.

It’s a one-size-fits-all approach to life after work. And it sounds pretty good, on the surface. The only problem with it? At Freedman Financial, we believe that people’s dreams come in more than one size, and that retirement is a plan for life.



We frequently hear from clients who thought that

retirement meant pursuing the life described above. Within a few months of living it, though, they’re often in our office, asking “Is that all there is?”

The answer is no—not if you don’t want it to be. For previous generations, retirement was a much shorter span of time. But today’s retirees are living longer and in better health than their parents, and can expect their retirement to stretch out over 30 years or more. With a timeframe like that, a life of leisure can quickly lead to days of boredom, bad habits, and discontent.

So what’s a modern retiree to do? Here are a few ideas.

Redefine retirement. Merriam Webster’s online dictionary defines retire as “to withdraw from action.” At Freedman, we think there’s a need for a better way to describe this vigorous, busy stage. Many retirees choose to step up their level of activity, starting new hobbies or returning to interests

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Secrets to Safe Online Shopping

There’s a chill in the air, and you know what that means — the holidays are just around the corner. This year, we’ve got a little gift for you—a list of our favorite online retailers. Whether you’re looking for that hard-to-find item, want an unusual present for a special friend or relative, or just want to avoid the crowds, these sites can help.

To make your online shopping experience a safe and enjoyable one, we’ve also put together a list of suggestions. Follow them, and help keep your holidays merry and bright.

*** Keep your guard up.** If you’re stalking that perfect gift, your search may take you into uncharted parts of the internet. Installing a good spyware program and updating it regularly can protect you from viruses and other unpleasant intruders. And a firewall can keep hackers from gaining control of your computer, manipulating your e-mail account, and accessing private information.

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Retirement

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they've had to shelve because of lack of time. Stop thinking of retirement as a time to slow down, and start thinking of it as a launching pad for the next phase of your life.

Explore new opportunities. If you've ever wanted to launch a second career, start your own business, or turn a hobby into a vocation, now's the time. A study released last year by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation shows that for the past decade, adults ages 55 to 64 have been the group most likely to start a new business.

Like muscles, business skills atrophy if you don't use them. Staying involved in the work world can help you retain critical thinking skills, keep you interested (and interesting) and give structure to your days in a way that 18 holes of

golf simply cannot.

Consider part-time employment. If you've enjoyed your career and place of business, consider returning to it—on your terms. Many companies are facing a “brain drain” as experienced baby boomers retire, and are willing to discuss part time, seasonal, or flexible hours of work.

Volunteer—if you want to do so. Volunteer for a cause because you're passionate about it, not because you think you should. If your face lights up when you talk about it, if you can't wait to get there in the morning, and if you spend your spare time thinking about it, you've found the right cause. (For help in discovering it, check out www.volunteermatch.org.)

Ask for a free copy of our Retirement Resource Booklet. It's loaded with ideas on how to maximize your retirement. If that

day is still years away, you can use it to jumpstart a conversation with your spouse and family—and your financial advisor.

Give yourself permission to celebrate—your way. Retirement should be a time of joy. Most of our clients have worked very hard all their lives in order to be able to retire comfortably. Yet they feel uncomfortable or guilty spending money on themselves—the same money they worked so hard to earn. So they put off buying that brand-new car, taking that trip to Europe, or signing up for the art or college classes they've always wanted.

At Freedman Financial, we want to help you enjoy your retirement, not just save for it. If there's something you've always dreamed of doing, give us a call. We'd be glad to help you figure out how to make it happen. After all, it's your retirement. You've earned it.

Marion's Corner

Long Term Goals Versus Short Term Noise

I never cease to be amazed by how quickly things change in the stock market. This year, like many others, has seen a large run-up in equities through the beginning of the summer, a sharp decline in August, and now a rebound through September. Does the value of the companies that these stocks represent change that quickly? Or do investors react too dramatically to the “headlines of the day?”

We recently had the opportunity to listen to the Chief Investment Officer of LPL Financial Services, Lincoln Anderson, and he provided some insight into this quandry as well as his view of current economic



conditions. Quoting from his thoughts: “Based on what we hear in the media, one would think the bottom is falling out. In my strongly held opinion, this is not the case.” He goes on to say that he sees solid fundamentals in the business sector and in the credit markets as well. The “subprime issue” is only a small fraction of the overall mortgage market and he doesn't expect the problems to spread throughout the debt markets. He also predicted on August 17th that he expected a return to rising equity markets, which has indeed proved prescient. Going forward, he

is looking at market conditions where inflation will continue to be benign and large cap growth stocks will perform well.

It is always important to stay focused on your individual goals over the long-term horizon rather than the short-term “market noise.” In the middle of August, as the market was experiencing significant daily declines and the news was focused on short-term economic gloom, this was easier said than done. Remember, we are just a phone call away if you have questions or concerns.

Safe Online Shopping

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*** Shop securely.** Avoid shopping online at places that provide free wireless connections, such as libraries, coffee shops, and restaurants. You never know who may be watching you—or your computer.

*** Trust your instincts.** If an online site seems suspicious or offers deals that just don't feel right, walk away—no matter how much money you might save.

*** Print copies of your transactions.** Most companies send you an e-mail confirmation of any purchases, but it doesn't hurt to print a copy of your transaction confirmation as well, just in case.

*** Consider setting up an e-mail address that you use just for online purchases.** Some providers, such as AOL, allow you to have multiple addresses for no additional fee. This can help reduce the amount of spam that clogs up your main address.

*** Don't forget to read the fine print.** Before you commit to a purchase, check shipping charges, return policies, and handling fees. Doing so can help you avoid an unpleasant surprise.

Our Top Ten Sites

Here, in no particular order, are ten of our favorite online retailers.

www.oompa.com The recent rash of toy recalls have led many parents to question the safety of

their children's favorite playthings. Oompa Toys offers European wooden toys and colorful, attractive, long-lasting baby toys, all made with safety—and fun—in mind.

www.thewoodenwagon.com This family-run business offers high quality, traditional wooden toys, stuffed animals, games, puzzles, and holiday ornaments, all made to last for generations.

www.woot.com What's a woot? A one of a kind deal that's good for 24 hours—or until the item is sold out. Recent products for sale have included everything from media players to food storage containers to digital cameras. Great prices abound, but you

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Safe Online Shopping

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have to be quick—once an item's gone, it's gone for good.

www.newegg.com New Egg carries a wide range of computer, communications, and electronic products, and prides itself on its competitive pricing and customer service.

www.coolibar.com If you or someone you love is heading south for the winter, you may want to check out this website. Coolibar offers a full range of sun protective apparel, from hats to bathing suits to athletic wear, all offering an UltraViolet Protection Factor of 50. The company has received a seal of recommendation from the Skin Cancer Foundation.

www.ecost.com eCOST is an online superstore, with plenty of electronics, gizmos, and gadgets to please even the hard-to-buy for relative. They also stock unusual home and garden items.

www.streetprices.com A search engine that helps you find the best deal on electronics, by featuring products from hundreds of online merchants. You can also get feedback from other customers using the site's online forum.

www.zappos.com The perfect site for the shoe addict in your life. With free overnight shipping and fast, friendly-oriented service, it's a great place to shop. The site has also expanded to include bags and accessories.

www.bluenile.com For some people, only jewelry will do. Blue Nile sells diamond, silver, and gold baubles. You can choose from what's on the web site or create your own jewelry, and the company offers lots of educating literature on different stones and precious metals.

www.giftcertificates.com Finally, when you're shopping for the person who has everything, this site can come in handy. It sells gift certificates to hundreds of merchants, including bookshops, restaurants, and retail stores.

(Note: Freedman Financial does not endorse, and is not affiliated with, any of the above sites. We provide this list as a courtesy to our clients.)

Happenings

Dinner with Lincoln Anderson

Over 125 advisory clients joined us for a Chinese Feast at Su Chang's in Peabody on Wednesday, September 19. Lincoln Anderson, Chief Economist and Managing Director at LPL Financial delivered his



outlook on the economy and answered questions from those in attendance. Based on the smiling faces and empty platters, it was rather obvious that everyone left both stuffed and optimistic.

Congrats to Kim!

Kim passed her paraplanning exam earlier this year. In studying for it, she gained a greater understanding of the skills and terminology involved in the financial planning industry. We are proud of the work she put into her success and look forward to utilizing her new skills!

Have You Seen Us Recently?

Freedman Financial is popping up in some new places. We've recently run ads in North Shore Living magazine, and our spots will be running on television during the Celtics games. Finally, we're excited to be a part of the new Cheesecake Factory that will be opening at the North Shore Mall—you'll be able to read a little bit about us on their menu!



eMoney a Hit

We're pleased to announce that numerous clients have chosen to take advantage of the Wealth Management Solution service we now offer. This free resource allows clients a single access point to all of their financial information, including asset allocation, daily updates, and more. Clients can also choose to make use of the vault service, which allows the electronic storage of important documents such as wills, trusts, deeds, and passports. It's a wonderful tool for estate planning, and can help your spouse or other family members access critical information quickly and securely should the need arise. If you're interested in getting started, call our office and ask to speak with Cathy for more information.

Advisory Council Meeting a Success

We had very good intentions at our last meeting, but between the fabulous food at Georgie D's in Stoneham and the Red Sox versus the Yankees game that was on... well, let's just say not too much work got done. It was two and a half hours of fun, food, and friendly conversation, the perfect intro meeting for the four newest members of the Council.

Next Council Meeting is Monday, October 29 at Naked Fish in Saugus

Freedman Clients Show their Spirit at Client Event

The day was warm, the ice cream was cold, and the turnout was terrific at our annual client event at Fraser Field in Lynn. The North Shore Spirit played the Nashua Pride in a wild game that included the landing of a helicopter in the outfield, Marc singing the national anthem, and Pride manager Butch Hobson carrying off first base in protest of an umpire's call. (Really.) It was a great time for everyone that ended in a 6-3 win for the Spirit.

