

Medical Economics

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150 BEST Financial Advisers for Doctors

[BY LESLIE KANE, MACC]

The financial turmoil that has gripped the world since mid-September has put Wall Street on a roller-coaster ride of record-high gains and record-low plunges. If there was ever a time when doctors needed financial advice, that time is now.

To help you get control of your financial picture, *Medical Economics* offers the 150 Best Financial Advisers for Doctors, an exclusive list newly updated for 2008. But more than just a list, the following pages include specific advice from the experts to help you achieve your financial goals. You'll find more of these "Survival Secrets" from our 150 Best Financial Advisers at www.memag.com/150secrets.

Since our last updated list in 2006, we've collected the names of excellent advisers who nominated themselves for consideration. We've also reevaluated each adviser from our previous list. A large number of our physician-readers have nominated advisers whom they would recommend to friends and colleagues. All in all, we wound up with hundreds of very strong candidates. To winnow down the contenders, here's what we looked for:

Knowledge and experience

Brainpower and wisdom are mandatory, and we looked for advisers with a depth of knowledge about a broad range of financial issues. Credentials count, because they show a background of knowledge. Additionally, retaining some certifications (CFP, for example) requires continuing education. This encourages the adviser to keep up-to-date with financial developments and products.

We also gave an extra nod to those who specialize in physician business or the medical field. Some advisers serve on hospital boards or health-care charitable boards, work extensively with local medical societies, or have a large proportion of physician-clients. Some are even physicians themselves who made career transitions into financial planning.

We also asked for a minimum of about 10 years of experience, although there are some exceptions. Life holds unexpected situations—from bear markets to mortgage meltdowns—and so it's beneficial to rely on someone who has already weathered similar storms.

Geography

We've tried to come up with a broad geographic range. No matter where you live, there is a top-notch adviser not far away with whom you can feel comfortable. In addition, many advisers operate across state lines or across long distances. Between e-mail and phone calls, it's possible to use an adviser who is not in your community, as long as you are available for occasional visits. We love technology, but there's no better way to build rapport than through face-to-face meetings.

Fee arrangements

Advisers charge for their services in various ways, including fee-only and commission. While there are some outstanding advisers who are fully commission-based, for this list we steered clear of commission-only advisers. Investors can expect more objective advice when there is no motivation to steer you toward one product over another. There are also several types of fee arrangements and many variants, so be sure to ask and understand.

Fee-only advisers earn a percentage of the money they manage for you for investment. (Fees typically range from .75 percent to 1.5 percent, depending on the amount invested.) Commission arrangements mean the adviser earns payment when you invest in mutual funds with a load (sales charge). Some advisers charge fee-only for investments, but if they also sell insurance products (which often are part of a comprehensive financial plan), they may earn a commission for insurance policies.

Additionally, you can pay a flat fee to have a financial plan developed. You then have the option of executing the plan yourself or having the adviser manage it for you.

Minimum portfolio

Many well-established advisers require that you put a minimum amount of money under their management. Others have no minimum investment, but do charge a minimum annual fee. The fee is covered if you keep a pre-set amount with them (say, \$1 million); if you don't have that much, the minimum annual fee applies. Some advisers are flexible about minimums, so if you're interested in an adviser but don't meet his investment level, you might want to inquire anyway. Our list is limited to advisers who require \$1 million or less as a minimum.

Good standing

We checked each adviser against the national databases of the Securities and Exchange Commission and National Association of Securities Dealers to confirm that they had not been found guilty of any wrongdoing on a national level.

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Minimum portfolio: No minimum