

## Rodger on Retirement

### *Develop a Team, Not Just a Group!*

As you look for someone *who has your back*, do not make the mistake of thinking that the folks at the Social Security office can provide you with all your needed advice. The Social Security rules can be complex, and must be considered in conjunction with your overall retirement planning goals. For example, many make misguided decisions on when to begin receiving retirement benefits. Rarely is it a wise decision to rely on advice from Social Security personnel as to when you should begin receiving retirement benefits. That is not their function. While the Social Security Administration does a tremendous job of providing income to tens of millions of Americans, I doubt that the job description of their claims specialists is to provide individualized personal financial planning advice. That is the job of a trained retirement professional and a *team*.

Note that I referenced a *team*, not a *group*. A group does not necessarily constitute a team. Teams normally have members with complementary skills and generate synergy through a coordinated effort which allows each member to maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses.

I believe you should assemble a small team to guide and assist you that includes the following:

- CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional
- A CPA or accountant
- An independent insurance agent
- A mentor

Your accountability buddy stands apart from the team we will talk about now. The relationship with your buddy will tend to be more intimate. This is a person who can, and will, call you out when you mess up. Now, let's spend some time to discuss who makes up your team.

First is your retirement planning professional. He or she is the quarterback of your team. This individual has completed a comprehensive curriculum of study that includes personal financial planning techniques and strategies, taxation, investments, retirement and estate planning. This is the individual who can help you plan your investment strategy.

Next is your CPA or Certified Public Accountant. He or she will be responsible for your tax planning as well as assisting you in filing your annual federal and state tax returns, assisting with quarterly tax payments, if necessary, and a wide variety of other tax issues. I have never met a dumb

accountant. Leverage your relationship with this person and turn to him or her for advice and referrals to other professionals. Many individuals opt for online services that allow them to submit their tax returns inexpensively. This should not take the place of competent personalized tax planning.

Your independent insurance professional will assist you in choosing the right type of insurance coverage for your particular situation. I strongly recommend that you only deal with an independent agent. We all know the story of the fellow who wanders onto a Ford lot and may be a perfect candidate for a Toyota. However, the odds are that he will be sold a Ford. An independent agent may be able to look at many products from different providers to determine which are best for you, your needs and your budget, and will not be limited to the products of one company.

Your mentor should be someone you know and trust who is very successful in his or her own career. This may be a family friend or a highly accomplished colleague in your industry, and someone who can give you trusted advice. It would not hurt if this person were someone who is comfortable with financial matters and possesses sound judgment.

So, remember that you should form a *team*, not just a group, to provide individualized personal financial planning advice, with your retirement planning professional as the team's quarterback.

\*Opinions expressed are those of Rodger Alan Friedman. All opinions are as of this date and are subject to change without notice.