

Eight Achievable Financial New Year's Resolutions

It's that time of year again when people vow to make positive changes in their lives. New Year, new you; an admirable goal. Diet to get thin. Exercise to get fit. Quit smoking to get healthy. But, as the yearly holiday magic fades into the



predictable January panic when all of the credit card bills begin to arrive, why not vow right now to set attainable financial goals to get your financial future into shape!



Consider the following list of eight financial New Year's resolutions which are

realistic and achievable because they resemble more of a "to do" list rather than a "wish" list. Each of the below resolutions, if accomplished, can improve your cash flow, protect your assets, and provide for the financial security of your family. Simply commit to taking control of your financial future and you can get started today down the right path for 2006 and beyond.



2006 Achievable Financial New Year's Resolutions



1. I will make informed financial decisions, understanding the difference between "wants" and "needs".
2. I will take care of my finances today by tracking expenses and creating a budget that is realistic and flexible.
3. I will take care of my finances tomorrow by saving for my future. A good place to start is to take advantage of my employer's retirement plan.
4. I will communicate with my family about money matters so we are all working towards the same goals.
5. I will continue my personal education about financial health, budgeting, credit and personal debt.

6. I will plan for seasonal expenses, including back-to-school, taxes, and next holiday season.
7. I will teach my children by good example the importance of budgeting, saving, and the wise use of credit.
8. If I become over-extended, I will take the necessary steps to seek assistance from my Credit Counselor.

Even with the best intentions, setting financial resolutions and sticking to them can be two different matters. Fact is, most Americans are still paying off their credit card bills from holiday 2004!

Don't get discouraged...

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To help keep this year's financial resolutions, follow these simple guidelines:

- ✓ **Make your goals realistic and flexible.** If your goals are too high, you'll only get frustrated and abandon them. Follow this rule: "Set no goal you can't control!"
- ✓ **Remind yourself of your goals regularly.** In fact, why not write them down and post them on your refrigerator, computer monitor, or bulletin board by your desk so you will see them every day.
- ✓ **Break down your goals into small steps.** Financial goals often require behavior changes and these can seem overwhelming. You need to break your big goal down into smaller "action steps" that you can accomplish bit by bit. This will boost your confidence and make you feel less discouraged because you'll be able to see yourself making progress toward the big goal.
- ✓ **Keep photos or magazine clippings of what you are striving for nearby.** Maybe you are saving for a new car or a Caribbean cruise, so clip photos of the car you want or cut cruise ship scenes from travel magazines and make a collage where the family can see it.
- ✓ **Seek the advice of a Certified Credit Counselor.** It's important to recognize when you can do it yourself and when you need the help and guidance of a professional. Clearly, you did not set out to fail to accomplish your financial resolutions, so don't fail to get the help you need to achieve what is important to you!

2006 Savings Strategies

Start 2006 on the right foot by taking a series of small actions around your house which, over time, are guaranteed to pay significant dividends in terms of your monthly expenditures and reward you with the bonus of a little "wobble room" in your budget. You will not see savings instantly, but in just a few months' time, you'll definitely see more dollars in your pocket.

Try these easy-as-pie savings strategies:

- ✱ Switch out your current showerhead to a new "low-flow" model. These showerheads can save the average family an estimated \$250 per year in water bills.
- ✱ Turn the temperature dial on your washing machine to the "cold" setting. Energy-efficiency experts estimate that nearly 90% of the cost of running your washing machine comes from using warm or hot water cycles instead of cold ones.
- ✱ If your air conditioning unit is located in the full sun, shade it by planting a tree nearby or building a trellis next to it. An exposed air conditioning unit in the summertime runs on overtime, which means more electricity cost to you.
- ✱ During the winter months, rather than open the drapes to let in the sunshine, keep your drapes closed. This helps to contain the heat in your home, and will help to lower your heating bills.
- ✱ Replace your current thermostat with an electric thermostat model that will automatically lower the heat or air conditioning (if you have central air conditioning) during the night when you're sleeping and raise it back each morning. This will save you big-time on your energy bills.
- ✱ Take charge of your utility bills by learning about utility choice. Learn the difference between your "ccfs" and your "mcfs", and keep track of the "kwh". Some savvy consumers are saving \$4 per mcf (thousand cubic feet of gas) this year because they took the time to learn about gas choices last year.
- ✱ Start banking online. In addition to helping you track your financial life, you'll save on checks, stamps, and envelopes. And, with the price of a postage stamp going up again this year, these savings can really add up.
- ✱ Keep a "family change jar" located near the place where everyone drops his or her keys when they enter your home. Now the family can empty the spare change out of their pockets at the same time they deposit their keys. You'll all be surprised at how these cents quickly add up to mega dollars. Use this "found" money for a special family treat like a night out at dinner and/or the movies.



This year, resolve to begin!

Don't stress out over your financial resolutions - just do them! These are promises to yourself that will repay you many times over in the years ahead.

As 2006 progresses and begins to approach the next year, you can reassure yourself that you have been budget-smart and taken definite measures that will have saved you significant amounts of money. You'll have more dollars in your pocket - just in time for next holiday season!

For more information on this topic, please consult with a Certified Credit Counselor at 1.800.556.1548 or visit our Learning Center at www.anewhorizon.org

