



Spring Cleaning; There's money in that couch!

Spring is here! Finally! It's time to shake off those winter blues, swap out the cold-weather wardrobe, and roll up your sleeves for some cathartic spring cleaning! Your house? Sure, that too. But I'm talking about your finances! Have you heard of decluttering toward a minimalist lifestyle? Sure, we all have. So, why not take that approach with our spending?

As you know, I'm an advocate of creating savings and investment accounts to cover life goals and events. I detailed that approach in my November 2016 newsletter (email us if you need another copy). The best way to build those accounts is to run lean on your current spending and divert the savings into your nest egg for later. You'd be surprised at how quickly you can amass a small fortune! So let's take a look and see where we can improve.

Personal pocketbook

Where we can spend less:

- *Eating out:* Expensive and not as healthy as home cooked.
- *Ordering drinks or dessert when eating out:* Unnecessary and both packed full of sugar (and sugar is getting a very bad rep of late).
- *Buying excess groceries that end up being thrown out:* Wasteful and smelly!
- *The daily coffee routine:* Just one medium Tim's per day is \$650 per year! And don't even get me started on your **venti, quad, nonfat, one-pump, no-whip, mocha frappuccino with chocolate sprinkles!**
- *The seasonal clothing habit:* New designer clothes every season? Really?
- *The seasonal decorating habit:* If it looks good, leave it!
- *The cost of maintaining unused assets:* For the few times you actually use it, would renting make more sense?
- *Organizing and storing stuff we don't use:* A waste of time and space.
- *Monthly subscriptions:* Small amounts add up! Most renew automatically, and you forget even have the subscriptions or that you are paying money for them.
- *Gasoline:* Efficient travel saves \$\$. Plan your Saturday morning shopping route or stop on the way home from work to prevent repeated trips in the same direction.

Business coffers

Are you a business owner or responsible for the business finances? You can trim the excess as well! Look at:

- *Telephone and internet:* Do you *need* Ferrari speeds? Is there a cheaper plan that will work?
- *Office supplies:* Are you over-ordering and then storing the excess? Most supplies can be shipped within one day. I took stock of my office supply inventory and returned over \$600 in unused product! (Just like a pre-paid Christmas!)
- *Insurance plans:* When was the last time you verified that they were still competitively priced?
- *Advertising:* Does the benefit outweigh the cost? Is there a more cost-effective solution?
- *Unsold parts and supplies:* See if you can return the products. Some vendors may charge a restocking fee, but it may be worth the upfront cash over the cost of storing!

Mo' money

Now we've trimmed some savings, where we can make a little more money? How about:

- *Garage sales:* Have a friend come over and help for a little quality time or join a block sale and meet the neighbours you've been meaning to run into. Better yet, get your teen or (young adult) to organize and run it to give them life skill experience (or maybe just get them out of their room and off of their devices for a hot minute!)
- *List stuff for sale online:* Another teen recruitment opportunity! Hey, they're on their devices anyway, make it work for your benefit. If you can't beat 'em ...
- *Give it away for someone in need:* Charities will take the stuff you can't sell. It won't net you cash but it will save you storing it and will give you the bonus warm, fuzzies for helping out.

Or the best:

Call the kids who are no longer at home and tell them you are giving them their inheritance early! The benefit is two-fold:

- A.** You will see them. (As they make a beeline to your house!)
- B.** You get rid of some stuff. (And look magnanimous for your generosity!)

These are some quick and “clean” budget optimizers you can implement outside of the obvious ‘spend money to save money’ solutions like energy efficient appliances or home renovations! These spring cleaning suggestions relate to stuff that runs in the background of our lives but can add up to some real dollars that we can put to much better use down the road. Trim the pennies today so you can spend the dollars tomorrow!