

How to Develop an Estate Plan

When considering your estate and the preparation of Wills and Powers of Attorney, the first step is to put your team together. You may need the advice of your banker, investment advisor, insurance agent, accountant and lawyer. Each brings a unique and significant aspect to the preparation of your Estate Plan.

Your next step should be the completion of an inventory of your assets and debts. You need to calculate what you really have and need to protect your loved ones. You must ask yourself whether or not there will be enough to pay your funeral expenses and debts and yet leave your loved ones sufficient assets to carry on. This is also a good time to review the status of your Life Insurance policies.

It is also important to maximize the benefit of the assets that you have now. You should review your accounts and investments with your banker, investment advisor or broker. Try not to keep large amounts of cash in savings accounts that pay next to no interest. While you may need to keep cash handy for daily needs and unexpected expenses, consider longer term and varied investments for the balance of your assets.

You may also at this time wish to review your financial circumstances with your accountant. The last thing you want to do is make the tax man richer upon your demise. You need to insure that you are avoiding unnecessary tax while you are alive in order to maximize the availability of dollars for you to enjoy. Your accountant can also help you structure your assets in order to avoid unnecessary taxes affecting your ultimate estate. Just think of how hard you have worked to accumulate what you have. You want to be able to enjoy life now and leave something for your loved ones or favorite charity, not the tax-man.

Finally, you need to sit down with your lawyer. They will help coordinate your team of experts and professionals. They will help you draft a Will and Power of Attorney and other documents necessary in order to reflect your special circumstances and incorporate all of the advice that you have received from your team of professionals.

Your Estate is worthy of your time and effort now. Seek the advice of your team of professionals and maximize your enjoyment of life now and what you are able to leave as a legacy for your loved ones.

The opinions expressed are for information purposes only and readers should consult with a lawyer in relation to specific cases.