March 2018

"The Key" Member

Beaver County Chamber of Commerce

Education Mediation Solution

The ACP is funded in part by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development. Material support is provided by the Beaver County Board of Commissioners

BEAVER COUNTY

Alliance for Consumer Protection

How to Save for Retirement When You're Self-Employed

By Emilie BurkeFebruary 22nd, 2018Budgeting and Saving Money– The Clear point Blog

The following is presented for informational purposes only. Please consult with a qualified financial planner for assistance specific to your situation.

Being self-employed comes with some perks. You can set your own schedule, decide what your time is worth, and set your own pay rate. Plus, chances are good you'll really like your boss. But there are challenges, too. Like figuring out how to save for retirement when you don't work for a company that offers a pension plan or 401(k).But that doesn't mean you don't have options for retirement savings. Here are some of the best ways to save for retirement as an entrepreneur. (Cont. Pg 2)

How Does Bankruptcy Impact Your Credit Score?

Declaring bankruptcy may be a path forward if your bills are piling up faster than you can pay them, or life events leave you without an income. You may be worried about the ramifications on your credit, and rightly so. Regardless of the type of bankruptcy you declare, it will likely have a considerably negative impact on your credit. (Cont. Pg 3)

Inside this issue:

(How to save for retirement continued)

1. Solo 401(k)

If you're a high earner, a Solo 401(k) might be a good option for you. You can contribute 25% of your earnings or up to $54,000 per year. You can make an annual salary deferral of up to $18,000. There is a big downside to this though. If you have employees other than your spouse, you can't use this plan. Plus, there is significantly more paperwork involved than other retirement plan options.

2. SEP IRA

Contributing to a SEP IRA will not only decrease your tax burden, it will also allow your deposits to be tax-deferred until you retire. You are allowed to contribute up to 25% of your compensation or $54,000, whichever is less. With lots of flexibility with your investment options, a SEP IRA is a good choice. You can open one at most banks, mutual fund companies or brokerage firms.

3. Traditional/Roth IRA

A traditional or Roth IRA are great supplemental options, but shouldn't be considered as your main retirement account because the contribution limits are much lower. Traditional and Roth IRAs are taxed differently so you need to choose the option that's best for you. Your contributions to a traditional IRA are tax-deductible as long as you meet the income requirements. Your money grows on a tax-deferred basis until retirement, at which point you will need to pay income taxes on your distributions.

With Roth IRAs, it works in the opposite manner; contributions are made with after-tax dollars. Your money grows without being taxed and, since you paid taxes before depositing, you don't pay income taxes on retirement distributions. However, if you make more than $185,000 you can't use this type of retirement savings account.

For both types of accounts your contribution limits are low. You can only contribute up to $5,500 per year. If your 50 or older you can invest an extra $1,000 per year.

4. Tax-deferred Annuities

With tax-deferred annuities you can delay your taxes on compound interest. Tax-deferred annuities are a good supplemental option to consider if you have other retirement savings accounts and have maxed out your annual contributions. You can contribute additional funds to the plan for tax-deferred growth.

Be prepared to do your homework though. Finding an annuity that's tax-deferred and has low fees will take some effort. There is a downside too; your contributions aren't tax-deductible so you can't use them to decrease your tax burden. You are also unable to touch this money for emergencies and you can't leave it to your heirs.

There are plenty of options available to save for retirement when you're self-employed, it just may take a little time and effort to find the one that works best for you.

If you're concerned about your ability to build an adequate savings fund before retirement, you may benefit from speaking with a credit counselor to discuss your savings plan. Counseling is free and can help you understand the steps you need to take to reach your goals – including a comfortable, debt-free retirement.

ALLIANCE FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION

Phone: 724- 770-2078
Fax: 724 770 2079
E-mail: phuggins@acp-beaver.org

We are on the web!
Www.acp-beaver.org

469 Constitution Blvd
New Brighton, PA 15066

Beaver County, PA

(How Does Bankruptcy Impact Your Credit Score Cont.)

The following is presented for informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice or credit repair.

Declaring bankruptcy may be a path forward if your bills are piling up faster than you can pay them, or life events leave you without an income. You may be worried about the ramifications on your credit, and rightly so. Regardless of the type of bankruptcy you declare, it will likely have a considerably negative impact on your credit.

Consider that consumer credit scores are generally intended to help lenders determine the likelihood that you'll make a debt payment within 90 days. A bankruptcy tells lenders that not only did you go over 90 days, you weren't ever able to pay the entirety of what you owed.

According to FICO, the creator of the widely used FICO credit scores, if you currently have a FICO score in the mid-700s, you may see your score drop by over 100 points if you declare bankruptcy. That could move you from a "very good" to "fair" credit range.

If your score is already low, perhaps due to high credit card balances or late payments, it may not drop by as many points since the bankruptcy is just an additional derogatory mark on an already checkered credit report. In some cases, the bankruptcy might even increase your score if it discharges high balances on your accounts. However, your score may still be quite low, and the bankruptcy could affect your overall creditworthiness and ability to get credit regardless of your score.

Different Types of Bankruptcies May Fall Off Your Credit Reports at Different Times

If you decide to declare bankruptcy, you may have several options to choose from. You should likely consult a credit counselor or bankruptcy attorney to understand the pros and cons of each, and If you decide to move forward with a bankruptcy, you may need to sign up for bankruptcy counseling through a nonprofit credit counseling organization.

Two of the most common types of consumer bankruptcies are Chapter 7 and Chapter 13 bankruptcies. With a Chapter 13 bankruptcy, you will repay a portion of your debts with a repayment plan. A Chapter 7 could completely wipe out your unsecured debts. From a credit perspective, the primary difference between the type of bankruptcy you declare is how long it could take for the bankruptcy to get removed from your credit reports:

- Bankruptcy filings, including Chatper 7 bankruptcies, must be removed from your credit reports 10 years after the filing date.
- However, credit agencies generally remove a Chapter 13 bankruptcy filing seven years after the filing date if you complete the repayment plan or the debt is discharged. If you don't complete the plan and the debt isn't discharged, the Chapter 13 bankruptcy may remain for up to 10 years.

The credit reporting agencies may add new codes to the accounts that are affected by your bankruptcy to indicate that they were part of a bankruptcy, the type of bankruptcy, and what happened to the debt (e.g. it was discharged or dismissed).

The affected accounts may actually fall off your credit reports before the bankruptcy does. For example, a past-due account with a history of late payments has to be removed from your reports seven years after the first delinquency on the account, which could have been months or years before the bankruptcy. If you have an account in collections, the seven-year period starts with your first late payment, not when the account was sent or sold to the collection agency. Even if you close accounts that were otherwise in good standing as a result of the bankruptcy, they should be removed seven years after the closure.

Recovering from a Bankruptcy

You're likely dealing with a multitude of financial, and perhaps personal, problems immediately following a bankruptcy. You may want to start by focusing on those, and when you've got a little breathing room, you can start taking steps to improve your credit as well.

In fact, even if you somehow magically got your credit score to jump up to a perfect 850 in a month, the bankruptcy could still affect your creditworthiness. A credit score is just one factor that creditors consider when reviewing your application and underwriting a loan or credit account. In some cases, regardless of your credit score, you may be automatically rejected for a credit card application if you've had a bankruptcy within the last couple of years.

However, starting to rebuild your credit as soon as possible could help your credit recover from a bankruptcy more quickly. One of the most important things could be starting to add new on-time payments to your credit reports. To do so, you may need take out a loan or open a credit card that reports your payments to the credit bureaus.

Secured credit cards and credit-builder loans, the same financial products that some people turn to when trying to build credit for the first time, may be helpful options. In either case, you give the lender a refundable security deposit that it can keep if you default on the account (it's not intended to cover your monthly payments). A secured credit card's credit limit will be equal to your security deposit, and you could make a small purchase each month and then pay it off in full to start building a positive credit history. With a credit-builder loan, you receive a loan equal to your security deposit and make monthly payments — when you pay off the loan, you get your security deposit back.

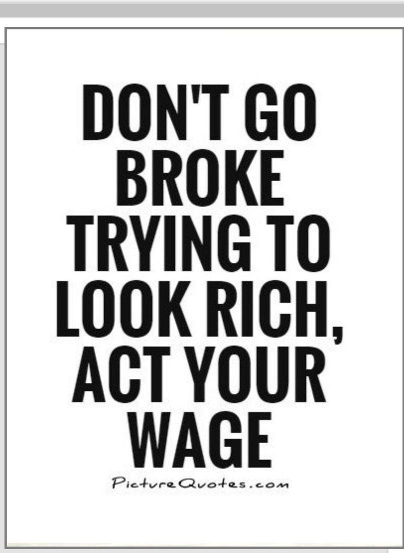
While a bankruptcy could hurt your credit more than any other type of derogatory mark, know that you can recover. Even though the bankruptcy could stay on you report for up to 10 years, the impact can decrease over time and taking steps to build positive credit could speed up your recovery.

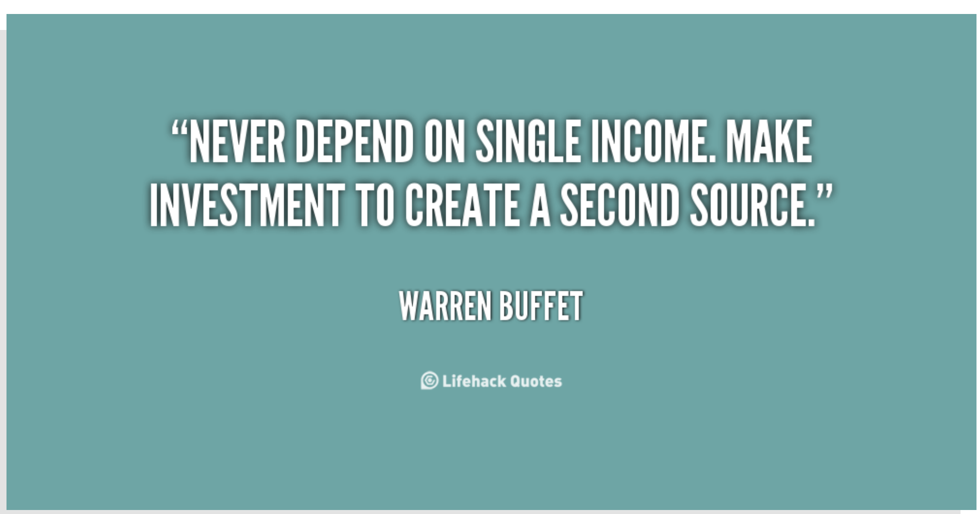
If you're considering bankruptcy, but aren't sure if there are better options available, consider speaking with a credit counselor first. Counseling if free and can help you understand the severity of your situation, while providing useful, concrete next steps on whichever path you choose.

Article written by Louis DeNicola. Louis is a personal finance writer with a passion for sharing advice on credit and how to save money.

Posted in: Bankruptcy, Credit Scores


The Financial Planning Process
1
Determine current financial situation
Develop your financial goals
2
Identify alternative courses of action
3
Evaluate alternatives
Consider
• life situation
• personal values
• economic factors
Assess
• risk
• time value of money (opportunity cost)
4
5
Create and implement your financial action plan
6
Review and revise the financial plan


DON'T GO BROKE TRYING TO LOOK RICH, ACT YOUR WAGE
PictureQuotes.com


"NEVER DEPEND ON SINGLE INCOME. MAKE INVESTMENT TO CREATE A SECOND SOURCE."
WARREN BUFFET
Lifehack Quotes

Hotline Chronicles: Out of pocket for out-of-network charges— Consumer Action Insider

Brutus* from North Carolina called our hotline to warn consumers to make sure they know where their doctors are sending lab tests because the laboratory might not be "in network" with the consumer's insurance provider. When this happens, the doctor has no liability, and the consumer is hit with an out-of-network provider charge—often accompanied by a deductible payment triggered by going out of network.

Brutus was billed about $650 dollars for a routine colon cancer screening test that patients take at home and mail to the lab. (Doctors routinely and widely prescribe the Cologuard test the doctor gave Brutus, which comes with a pre-addressed mailing package.) Ironically, the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) requires that colon-cancer screenings be covered at no additional cost because of their value as a preventative measure. However, most plans are not required to cover out-of-network preventive services.

"We've been hearing more and more such stories," said Linda Sherry of Consumer Action. "It is so unfair, because it puts an undue, and often impossible, burden on patients to question their doctors about the providers they use and whether they are in network."

Sherry mentioned three other cases she heard of recently:

- A patient sees his in-network dermatologist routinely twice a year and often has biopsies for suspicious moles and possible skin cancer. He received a bill for more than $500 for fees and a portion of his deductible because his doctor sent his sample to an out-of-network lab. The doctor had used the same lab on several previous occasions but the insurer's terms changed during the patient's most recent open enrollment period.
- A patient got a colonoscopy, a covered preventative service, during which the doctor found and removed a polyp. The fact that the doctor removed the polyp morphed the treatment from preventative to "clinical" and she was billed for most of her $1,000 deductible because her insurer determined the charge was outpatient surgery.
- A woman who went to the trouble to make sure her foot surgery was done at an in-network facility was, nonetheless, charged a very high fee by an out-of-network anesthesiologist on call that day.

Consumer Action strongly urges insured consumers to dispute surprise medical bills, especially if the mishap originated in the doctor's office. Check the explanation of benefits (EOB) form you received from your health insurer, as most list the procedure for filing a dispute. Typically, there are two opportunities to appeal: internally, with the insurance company, and an external review administered by an independent third party. If you received a surprise bill or have unresolved questions, call your state insurance department. It may be able to help find answers and determine whether there's been an error. Find your state insurance department at the National Association of Insurance Commissioners website.

Unfortunately, in today's healthcare environment, consumers have to know the ins and outs of their health insurance. It's difficult to find plans without deductibles—even managed care plans. Plans that allow you to visit the doctors of your choice may seem attractive, but when you visit an out-of-network doctor or facility you trigger higher out-of-pocket charges.

The Affordable Care Act requires group health plans to provide a Summary of Benefits and Coverage and a glossary of commonly used terms before consumers enroll in group or individual plans and at renewal time. Even with these prescribed formats, it can be very difficult to understand your responsibilities, so call or email the insurer with any questions. Also contact your plan before visiting specialists or having procedures—even if you believe they are preventative in nature. Most health plans allow you to search for in-network providers online, but it pays to call in advance just to be sure. Keep notes about what you are told and whom you spoke to.

Here are some articles with helpful information about surprise medical bills:

How to Beat a Surprise Medical Bill (Consumer Reports)
What To Do When You Receive A Surprise Medical Bill (Forbes)

As always, we love hearing from you. Submit your complaints online in English or Spanish. Or call 415-777-9635; we speak English, Spanish and Chinese. If you don't have a complaint but want to tell us something, email our Editor .

**Not this consumer's real name*

Did you know?
- Consumer Action Insider

What you do when pulled over by the police can be pivotal to the outcome and subsequent legal ramifications. It's natural to be nervous, but being hostile has led to many a problem with police officers. So, too, has saying more than necessary, so let the officer do the talking. Nolo.com, the legal website, offers tips in its article Police Stops: What to Do If You Are Pulled Over. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also provides tips for interacting with police and understanding your rights and responsibilities when stopped while walking or driving, or by an officer questioning your immigration status.

Manage your time and master your money
by Jesse Campbell on January 15, 2018

Managing your money and managing your time are very similar. Both leave you feeling like you don't have enough and leave you wondering "Where did it all go?" At the end of the day, you wonder where the time went and how you spent it. At the end of the month, you wonder the same thing about your money.

If you can learn how to manage one, you can transfer those skills to managing the other. Here are a few ways that managing money is like managing time and how you can master both:

When you manage it well, there's more of it.

Successfully managing your money requires a budget, one that you can work with weekly and monthly to stay on top of your spending and saving and track your income. Managing your time is similar. Using a calendar or task list to stay on top of what needs to be done and what you've accomplished will help you stay productive. Using a budget for your money and calendar for your time will help you successfully manage both.

There are limitations.

There are only so many hours in the day so you have to use them to the best benefit. Wasting them means you're not as productive. The same goes for money. While you do continually replenish your money with new earnings, there is a limit to how much you currently have. Wasting it on things you don't really need leaves less of it for the things you do.

Prioritizing helps stretch it further.

Prioritizing both your tasks and your spending allows you to accomplish more with what you have. Instead of just doing or spending without a purpose, prioritize what matters most so you feel better about how you spent both time and money.

Planning is a must.

If you've ever lost track of time or that $20 you withdrew from the ATM yesterday, you know that if you don't plan you'll end up wasting. Have a plan each day for how you will spend your time and your money so you don't find they slipped away.

Write it down.

Our brains are overloaded every day with tons of information to remember. Make sure you don't forget something important by writing it down. Keep a task list of things you need to accomplish each day and make a list of all bills you need to pay with your next paycheck. Make the things on your list a top priority and get them done first, before anything else.

Have focus.

Know your goals, both for your time and your money. Creating goals and staying focused on the end result you want to accomplish will make it easier to stay on track. This will also help you prioritize what matters most.

Review and adjust.

Continually reviewing how you spend your time and your money as necessary to make sure it's working for you. If it's not, you can make adjustments to your budget or your schedule until you find the plan that fits just right.

Managing your money and managing your time have a lot of similarities. If you're able to be successful at one, carry those habits over to the other for even greater success.

Article written by Emilie Burke. Emilie writes about overcoming debt, while balancing trying to eat healthy, stay fit, and have a little fun along the way. You can find more of her work at BurkeDoes.com.

Posted in: Budgeting Advice, Family

Our Business Members

Abbey Carpet

Heritage Place Gallery of Floors

105 Pleasant Drive

Aliquippa, PA 15001

724-378-1925 or

beavercountypa.abbeycarpet.com

Beaver Valley Sheet Metal
Heating—Air Conditioning—
Water Heaters
1215 Pennsylvania Avenue
Monaca, PA 15061
724-775-7300
www.beavervalleysheetmetal.com
"Keeping you warm - keeping you cool"
since 1956

George M Brobeck Co., Inc
3417 Brodhead Road
Aliquippa PA .15001
Phone: 724-775-8872
www.brobecksystems.com
Residential & Commercial Security
"Securing the Tri-State Area Since
1965."
PA HIC # 29466

The Concordia Visiting Nurses team includes nurses, medical social workers, physical, speech, and occupational therapists, IV and wound care nursing, home health aides, medical equipment technicians, respiratory therapists and more. All of these individuals work hard to provide the best service and products in your own home. Call us today at 1.866.869.8669 or visit online at www.concordiavn.org to see how at Concordia Visiting Nurses, we

Conrose Maintenance and Repair,LLC

303 Grove Street, New Brighton, PA 15066
Phone: 724 843-3546, Cell: 724 816-0976
www.conrose-repair-llc.com PA004463

Our business is dedicated to providing residences and businesses with professional repair and general construction of the highest quality at truly competitive prices. Grounds maintenance and repair, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, ramps, decks, installation, grab bars, toilets, tubs, etc. light construction

Electric Garage Door Sales
1128 Pennsylvania Avenue
Monaca, PA 15061
724-774-3200
www.electricgaragedoorsales.com

Electric garage door openers
Residential & Commercial parts
& Service
PA042047

John W. Nelson, CLU, CFP
President

Greater Allegheny Financial Group, LLC

131 Pleasant Drive, Suite 2U
Aliquippa, PA 15001
www.gafgroup.com
john.nelson@gafgroup.com

724.375.5333 ext 16
724.375.8713 fax
724 624 0974 cell

SECURIAN
Affiliated with the Securian Financial Network

Lucci Kitchen & Bath Center, Inc.
3589 Brodhead Road
Monaca, PA 15061
724-774-6692 or visit us at
www.luccikitchens.com
A tradition of quality and service for over 65 years has made Lucci's a forerunner in kitchens and bathrooms
in the Beaver County. PAOAGH1C14192

Our Business Members—Continued

Homer Nine and Sons, Inc
415 Mulberry St., Beaver, PA 15009
724-774-4405
homer9@homer9.com
Established in 1943
furnaces, air conditioners, heat pumps, water heaters, boilers, humidifiers, etc.
PA5633

Housing Authority Of Beaver County
300 State Street, Beaver, PA 15009
724-775-1220 or
www.beavercountyhousing.org
Carl DeChellis, Executive Director
Affordable housing opportunities for income eligible families & seniors. Contact us for information about the Home Improvement Program & Weatherization Assistance.
EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY HACB

JORDAN HOME IMPROVEMENTS
2100 Sheffield Road
Aliquippa, PA 15001
PA007719

724-375-1149 or 800-822-3559

Repair and installation of roofs, siding, windows, soffit and fascia, gutters and downspouts

Wagner's Home Remodeling, Inc
828 Third Avenue, New Brighton, PA 15066 724-847-1433 or
www.wagnershomecenter.com
Family owned and operated, we pride ourselves on our quality products and services, offering free in-home estimates and professional installation by Wagner's highly trained technicians. And all Wagner's Home Center technicians are employees, which mean that we use ***no sub-contractors!*** *PA11419*

NOLL FUNERAL HOME INC.
More Service Than You Expect
Mark E. Noll
Owner
www.nollfuneral.com
333 Third Street · 600 Beaver Avenue
Beaver, PA 15009 Midland, PA 15059
(724) 728-5171 (724) 643-1630

SRSA, INC.
Snow Response Specialists
& Associates, Inc. - **srsainc.com**
2559 Darlington Road
Beaver Falls,PA 15010
724-847-2027
Commercial Snow Plowing
& Parking Lot Maintenance

SKERLEC CONTRACTING INC.
3578 BRODHEAD ROAD
MONACA, PA 15061
PHONE: 724-775-5611
RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL
FREE ESTIMATES/ CONSULTATIONS
skerlec_contracting@yahoo.com
PA 6338

Travel Junction
TRAVEL AGENCY
Alice Steel, CTC, MCC
192 OHIO RIVER BLVD.
AMBRIDGE, PA 15003
www.traveljunctioninc.com
OFFICE: 800-366-5715
OFFICE: 724-266-5715
FAX: 724-266-6035
E-mail: travel@traveljunctioninc.com

Santillán Law Firm, PC
Bankruptcy, Tax & Real Estate Law
Edgardo D. Santillán, Esquire
ed@santillanlaw.com
775 Fourth Street
Beaver, PA 15009
724.770.1040
412.774.2266 fax
Admitted in PA and N.D.Texas

Benefits of Membership

Individual ***$10 Annual donation***

Business ***$50 Annual donation***

- Receive quarterly newsletter with informative articles to educate and alert consumers of scams.
- Advertisements for companies that are respected members of ACP.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to assist consumers with complaint resolution/mediation and credit counseling/budgeting FREE OF CHARGE. Your membership and donations are greatly appreciated.

Business $50 ________ Individual $10 _________

Name: ____

Address: ____

____

Phone: ( ) ____

Email: ____

I would like to receive my Newsletters via USPS Mail ______ or Email ______

Please mail to: Alliance for Consumer Protection, 469 Constitution Blvd., Suite 3
New Brighton, PA 15066

469 Constitution Blvd, Ste 3
New Brighton, PA 15066
Phone 724-770-2078
Fax 724-770-2079
Email Info@acp-beaver.org

www.acp-beaver.org