

Managing Money Your Way



No longer are financial firms built one-size-fits-all, because taking financial security into your own hands means different things to different people. While some individuals desire total control over their investments and financial planning (a DIY style), others sleep better knowing their financial matters are being handled by a trusted advisor. Then, there's the breed somewhere in between who enjoy developing their financial plan, but look to an advisor for professional investment management. Each of these investors requires something different from a financial advisor, but might not understand what is available to them (and at what price).

Determining Your Needs

Are you looking to delegate your entire investment and financial planning strategy to an advisor? Chances are, you've found this level of service comes with luxuriant price tags that don't fit your budget or needs. It is easy to be frightened into cutting corners in your financial strategy because you don't feel there is an affordable solution for you.

When you find yourself in this position, we recommend working with an investment management firm to handle all aspects of your investment strategy. By delegating your investment management to a proactive, professional investment manager, you can rely on their expertise to make the decisions you might not understand, don't enjoy, or for which you don't have enough time to dedicate. For the planning related side, some investment management firms can also provide you with access to a Certified Financial Planner™ (for about the cost of a latte each month!) that will be available to answer your planning related questions such as strategies for paying off debt, life insurance needs and determining how much you need to save for retirement.

For those of you in the middle who only have an occasional question about financial planning, the strategy above might work great for you as well. You can still delegate 100 percent of your invest-

ment management to an investment professional, and can rest easier knowing there are tools and a Certified Financial Planner™ available to answer planning-related questions if they do arise. Your desire to control your financial plan can be aided by the web-based package available that walks you through goal-based financial planning, let's you work with scenario planning, and provides a budget tool so you can see the entire picture of your finances.

For the do-it-yourself investors, financial literacy can be an important and time consuming task. There are excellent websites and programs available to keep you up-to-date on financial education and "free" software available to track your plans. Be forewarned that "free" usually means they collect your information and you get bombarded by salespeople. While some are reputable, like Mint.com, they may not solve all of your planning needs. For a more comprehensive approach, you could choose to purchase web-based services (check out RJ20.com) which give you access to their tools for creating items like budgets and financial projections and a Certified Financial Planner™ to answer your questions related to your financial goals. Most investors can't be experts in all areas of finance, and you don't want the things you're less familiar with to cause setbacks in the areas you're great at. With these options, you get to handle all the details, but have peace of mind in knowing someone is available (if and when you desire) to verify you're on the right track.

Did you know there are firms that will be there for you based on the level of service you desire? The all-or-nothing advisory firm is evolving to fit your needs and help you with the items that matter most to you. Whether you're just starting to develop a strategy or you're ready for a second opinion on your diligent work, it's time to find a team who is ready to fit your needs. ☺

Jessica A. Maldonado is Chief Compliance Officer for Allos Investment Advisors, a registered investment advisory firm located in Overland Park, offering fee-only investment management services with no account minimums. For additional information, visit AllosAdvisors.com.