A Guide to Benefits When Changing Jobs

If you're changing jobs, you probably have a lot on your mind. As you wrap up work with your previous employer and prepare for your new role, it can be easy to let important benefits-related decisions fall by the wayside. If that happens, you could miss a limited opportunity to sign up for new benefits or miss out on making wise changes to your plans. To stay on track financially during a career transition, be sure to review the status of your retirement accounts and other valuable employee benefits.

Qualified Retirement Plans

Many employers offer qualified retirement plans, such as 401(k) and 403(b) accounts. ("Qualified" means that these plans qualify for tax advantages per IRS rules.) When transitioning to a new job, you're entitled to keep the vested balance in your qualified retirement plan, including contributions and earnings. You're also entitled to keep any employer contributions that have vested according to your employer's schedule.

What can you do with the money? You have several options:

- Leave the funds in your current employer's plan if your vested balance exceeds $5,000. If the balance is less than $5,000, the plan could require that you roll over or distribute your assets.
- Roll over the funds to an individual IRA or, if allowed, to your new employer's plan.
- Withdraw the funds and pay any taxes due along with any applicable penalties. (It's wise to carefully consider any decision to withdraw and spend your retirement savings.)

Accumulation rights. If you wish to roll over the funds, consider the accumulation rights you may be giving up by switching to a different plan. Accumulation rights offer shareholders the potential for reduced commissions when purchasing additional fund shares. If you have such rights with your current plan, they could become important if you plan to purchase a sizable amount of shares.

Potential penalties and fees. It's also important to consider the possibility of premature distribution penalties, as well as any fees and expenses a new plan may impose. If you've separated from service in the year you turn 55, or at any later age, any assets distributed from your old employer's plan aren't subject to the standard 10 percent penalty. Once funds are rolled into an IRA or a new plan, however, the 10 percent penalty may apply to subsequent distributions if you're younger than 59½ at the time, unless you can claim an exception.

Rolling funds over to an IRA. Factors to consider before taking this action include:

Advantages

- IRAs may provide more investment choices than employer plans.
- IRA assets can be allocated to different IRAs. There is no limit on how many direct transfers you can make from one of your IRAs to another IRA in a year. This means you can easily move money between IRAs if you're dissatisfied with an account's performance or administration.
- Although 401(k) distribution options depend on the plan terms, IRAs offer more flexibility.
- IRAs have more premature penalty exceptions than 401(k) plans.

Disadvantages

- When you turn 72, you must start taking required minimum distributions (RMDs) from pretax IRAs, whereas you may be able to defer them in a 401(k) until the year you retire if your employer allows for it. (There are no RMDs from Roth IRAs during the account owner's lifetime.)
- IRA account expenses, such as trading charges or annual fees, may be higher than qualified retirement plans.
- When you roll funds over from a 401(k) to a Roth IRA, taxes will need to be paid on the pretax contributions; however, any future distributions from the Roth IRA may be tax free if IRS requirements are met.

Rolling funds over to your new employer's plan. Employer plans offer the following advantages:

- If you intend to work beyond age 72, participation in the employer's qualified plan means you can typically delay the first RMD until the year you retire if the plan allows. (An exception applies if you own 5 percent or more of the business offering the plan.)
- Employer 401(k) plans may receive greater creditor protection than IRAs. Typically, employer plan funds cannot be used to satisfy most creditors, while the federal protection for IRA funds is more limited.

Stock Options and Nonqualified Deferred Compensation Plans

Prepare a list of any stock options you've received from your employer. Often, vested options expire within a specified time frame when you leave a job. Deciding whether to exercise your options depends on your financial situation and whether your options are "in the money" (i.e., the exercise price is lower than the market value).

Nonqualified deferred compensation plans allow executives to defer a portion of their compensation and the associated taxes until the deferred income is paid. With these plans, leaving your employment may trigger the need to take distributions in lump-sum or installment payments. You should be aware that any distributions will affect your taxable income.

Life Insurance and Disability Insurance

Employer-provided life insurance remains active only while you are employed. Ask if you have the option to convert the policy to an individual policy offered by the same insurance provider. If you do switch to an individual policy, however, the premium will likely increase. In some cases, it may be time to evaluate policy options from other companies. If you're in between jobs, for instance, you may want to consider an individual policy that won't be affected by employment changes.

Health Insurance

Your health insurance will expire once you leave an employer. COBRA may be a good option if you need interim health insurance coverage. Keep in mind, however, that your premium payments will increase when you opt for COBRA coverage. Shopping for an individual health insurance policy that meets your needs could reduce your premiums.

New Benefits Review

Once you start your new job, take time to understand the new benefit options, including health insurance, disability insurance, and employer savings plans. It's important to review how the new employer retirement plan options fit into your overall savings plan, including any employer matches. Remember to fill out beneficiary designations for insurance policies and saving plans—and review those designations periodically. Finally, if your salary has changed, it's a good time to determine whether you should adjust your tax withholding and investment elections.

This material has been provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute either tax or legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a tax preparer, professional tax advisor, or lawyer.

If you are considering rolling over money from an employer-sponsored plan, such as a 401(k) or 403(b), you may have the option of leaving the money in your current employer-sponsored plan or moving it into a new employer-sponsored plan. Benefits of leaving money in an employer-sponsored plan may include access to lower-cost institutional class shares; access to investment planning tools and other educational materials; the potential for penalty-free withdrawals starting at age 55; broader protection from creditors and legal judgments; and the ability to postpone required minimum distributions beyond age 72, under certain circumstances. If your employer-sponsored plan account holds significantly appreciated employer stock, you should carefully consider the negative tax implications of transferring the stock to an IRA against the risk of being overly concentrated in employer stock. Your financial advisor may earn commissions or advisory fees as a result of a rollover that may not otherwise be earned if you leave your plan assets in your old or a new employer-sponsored plan and there may be account transfer, opening, and/or closing fees associated with a rollover. This list of considerations is not exhaustive. Your decision whether or not to roll over your assets from an employer-sponsored plan into an IRA should be discussed with your financial advisor and your tax professional.

The Value of Disability Insurance to Employers and their Employees

By Sherree Craig, CEBS

Sherree L. Craig, CEBS

Companies in Maine and across the country face the challenge of rewarding employees and this struggle rose to the surface significantly during the pandemic. Striking the balance between a workable company budget and the satisfaction of the company's human capital is critical.

One of the most affordable and valuable forms of financial protection for employees is disability insurance. Offering a disability plan emphasizes a company's commitment to the health and financial well-being of its workforce, providing employees with an income when recovering from an accident or an illness. An employee can recover peacefully without the burden of worrying where the next paycheck might be and allows them to place their focus on immediate medical needs.

In addition to being a deductible business expense, this offer could have an impact on the company’s workers’ compensation status. Once an employer sponsored disability plan is purchased, conversations with business insurance and accounting partners should take place.

Disability insurance is designed as short-term and/or long-term policies.

The short-term disability benefit is paid weekly. Pricing for the group plan is determined by the design of the contract and the group demographics (age, wages, industry). The following are some plan design considerations:

- How many days will the employee be disabled before the payments begin? One frequent plan design option is the first day following an accident and the eighth day following an illness. We see these go as high as two weeks, which would keep the costs exceptionally low, but could come at the expense of the employee’s satisfaction.
- How long will the payments last? Options typically are 13 weeks or 26 weeks.
- What percentage of earnings will be replaced? Disability insurance does not normally cover full replacement. Insurance theory dictates that full replacement might encourage malingering – an incentive to remain disabled and not return to active capacity as soon as they are able.

Like the short-term disability, long-term disability policies are priced on the demographics of the company and design of the plan. The long-term disability benefit is paid monthly rather than weekly, and the elimination period (the length of time from the start of the disability until payment begins) can be dovetailed to start at the end of the short-term disability benefit. The benefit period may depend on the company size but should be designed to last a minimum of five years or all the way to the normal social security retirement age.

A group disability package has the added advantages of group pricing and are free from medical underwriting, making the plan simple to establish and administer.

Curious to see how your benefits stack up against other employers in your industry and community? Principal insurance has a great benchmarking tool. https://www.principal.com/businesses/compare-benefits

Principal Benefit Design Tool | Principal

Building Partnerships for Workplace Safety

Safety in the workplace starts with good information, translated into good practice. Recently the management staff at the Belfast Co-Op joined Sally Miles of Allen Insurance and Financial and Maureen Anderson, an ergonomist from MEMIC, the workers' compensation insurance company, for a safety workshop designed especially for the Co-op workplace.

They discussed sitting, standing, lifting, carrying, material handling and posture. The main theme was the "Power Zone," which is close to the body, between mid-thigh and mid-chest height – where the arms and back can lift the most with the least amount of effort and with a lower risk of injury.

"Preventative measures such as regular safety meetings can make a real difference for our workers in the long run," said Doug Johnson, co-op general manager. "We're pleased Allen Insurance and MEMIC took the time to introduce us to this valuable resource."

Why Do You Need Cyber Insurance?

By Karen Reed
This is another in our series of blog posts for business owners.

WHAT IS CYBER INSURANCE?

A cyber insurance policy can help protect your business from the fallout from cyberattacks and hacking threats. Having a cyber insurance policy can help minimize business disruption during and after a cyber incident, as well as potentially covering the financial cost of some elements of dealing with the attack and your recovery from it.

WHO NEEDS CYBER INSURANCE?

If your business stores any form of digital data, you need cyber insurance. These days, this is nearly every business.

WHAT SORT OF ATTACKS RESULT IN CYBER INSURANCE CLAIMS?

Cyber insurance claims can be triggered by many different incidents. Most common are ransomware, fund-transfer fraud attacks and business email compromise scams.

HOW MUCH DOES CYBER INSURANCE COST?

The cost of a cyber insurance policy depends on a number of different factors including the size of your business and its annual revenue. Other factors can include the industry in which you operate, the type of data your business typically deals with and the overall security of your computer network.

Financial Planning Considerations for Single Women

For various reasons, the state of a woman's financial security often depends on her marital status. A study from the U.S. Government Accountability Office says that women's household income dropped by 41 percent after divorce, nearly double the size of the decline men experienced. In 2020, women earned just 82.3 cents on the dollar compared with men, according to the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, a gap that was more pronounced for women of color. And women earn less than their male counterparts in nearly every occupation. Whether you are newly divorced, widowed, or single by choice, the following tips could help you shore up your financial security.

Be involved in your finances. A Stanford Center on Longevity study found that women tend to be [as confident as men] in making routine financial decisions but much less confident—and usually less involved in—making major financial decisions such as saving for retirement or investing.

In many cases, a woman going through a divorce or the loss of a spouse may not be aware of their family's full financial situation. If you are currently married, you should be actively involved in major financial decisions and have access to all financial records.

Plan ahead at work. When you have confidence in your financial status—if you have a strong financial plan in place and you've built up savings and emergency funds—you may be more confident asking for what you deserve at salary-review time.

Back up your claims for a raise. Support your proposal by documenting any significant accomplishments you've made over the past year, particularly ways you've contributed to your company's financial success.

Explore your career options. Employees tend to earn salary increases when they switch jobs. Exploring job opportunities every few years could confirm whether your current salary is appropriate, give you a reason to negotiate for a raise at your current job, or inspire you to make a career leap.

Don't share your salary. Telling a recruiter your current salary or earning history can result in a lowball offer. When applying for jobs, you can see what comparable positions in your area pay by reviewing popular salary websites. Keep in mind that you can always ask for more after the initial salary offer.

Factor in the cost of caring for others. The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP 2020 report on caregiving in the U.S.

found that 61% of caregivers are female, and that female caregivers are less likely to work while providing care. When working on a financial plan with your advisor, incorporate the cost of childcare, including after-school support if your work hours require it. Consider long-term care and disability insurance coverage so that you won't have to leave the workforce to care for a spouse experiencing a health event.

Revisit your beneficiaries. A change in marital status triggers the need to see who will inherit your assets. At least 26 states have statutes that automatically revoke beneficiary designations naming a spouse in the event of a divorce—which may not be what you want. You may also need to revisit who you have designated to help with your estate, such as your attorney-in-fact, health care proxy, and executor.

Tips for New Divorcées and Widows

In addition to understanding your own retirement benefits, you should know about any spousal benefits you may be entitled to. If the marriage lasted for at least 10 years and you haven't remarried, you could be eligible for half of your ex-spouse's social security benefit amount at their full retirement age, even if they're not actively collecting it. The total amount you are owed and when you should start collecting will depend on your age, your personal earnings, your life expectancy, and whether you remarry.

For retirement benefits, you would need at least a 10-year work history to qualify for your own social security benefits. To maximize these benefits, you may want to delay when you start collecting until age 70, depending on your life expectancy.

Tips for Women Who Are Single by Choice

If you don't have a spouse or a child, an estate plan can ensure that your wealth is effectively distributed. Generally, this means that assets would go to a parent or sibling if there's no surviving spouse or child and more remote family members if there are no surviving parents or siblings. If you have a large extended family, you may prefer that your wealth go to nieces, nephews, and charities.

Taking Charge

Whether it's by necessity because of a life change or you just want to become more involved in your finances, you can take charge of your financial security by staying fully informed of your options—and the many considerations that go into solidifying your current financial situation, maximizing retirement benefits, and properly planning your estate.

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Kellie Doolen has Earned a Maine Property and Casualty Insurance License

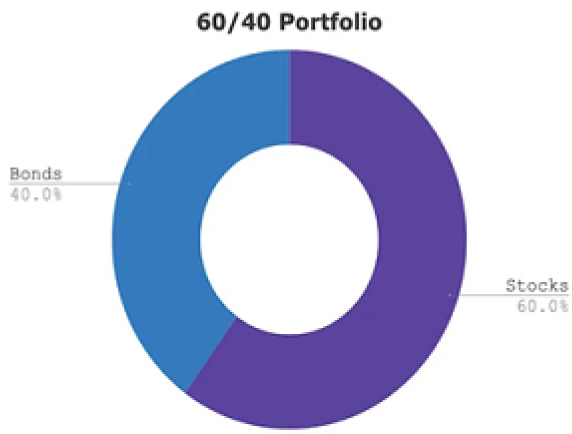
Allen Insurance and Financial is pleased to announce that Kellie Doolen has obtained her license to sell property and casualty insurance in the state of Maine.

Doolen joined the company in November 2019 as a scanning associate and receptionist, filling these key roles on the company's support staff. Kellie is a graduate of the University of Maine; her previous career was in retail management and customer support.

Your Portfolio Health: Wait. What? The Fixed Income Holdings in my Portfolio are Losing Value?

By Sarah Ruef-Lindquist
Originally Submitted to the Pen Bay Pilot Wave

Many investors have a chunk of their portfolio in a fixed income allocation; that could include domestic and international corporate bonds of varying grades of credit quality and domestic municipal or government issued bonds. Very often "balanced" allocation strategy will anticipate a lower level of volatility and a lower growth in value potential through bonds, while anticipating the yield bonds generate providing income to investors that may be higher than many dividend-producing stock.



An often-used allocation strategy is 60/40: 60% stock, 40% fixed income. Extolling the virtues of this approach on their website, Vanguard reminds us:

Portfolio outcomes are primarily determined by investors' strategic asset allocations. And this is good news because, with proper planning, investors with balanced portfolios should be well-positioned to stay on course to meet their goals, instead of swerving to avoid bumps in the road.

Since the Great Recession, in a low interest-rate environment, yields on US bonds have been more modest, reducing the amount of income investors can expect from them. However, they have tended to provide a cushion in overall value dips, because of their lower level of volatility in comparison to the holdings within the stock allocation.

But now rates are rising; the Federal Reserve is working to reduce the growth of inflation by making money more expensive to borrow than it has been in over a decade, curbing borrowing, and that's pushing rates higher.

Higher rates are great for new bonds and their investors…but it can depress the relative value of existing bonds with lower rates. In the current market downturn in the first quarter of 2022, what investors are seeing is not only a dip in the value of their stock portfolios after reaching historic high values, but a decline in the value of their bond portfolios as well. That's painful. Many are scratching their heads.

Two things to remember about bonds: their relative value may be lower, but they still have their yield, or income. Secondly, when a bond matures, it almost always pays the investor back the original value of the bond, even though it's value on paper has reflected a lower "market value" during the period of rising rates. The more patience an investor can exercise over their bond portfolio in these times, the greater the reward.

As you monitor the health of your investment portfolio with your financial and investment advisor, be sure your allocation strategy fits your own unique goals and risk tolerance.

Image source.

Business Owners: 5 Reasons to Call Your Insurance Agent

By Patrick Chamberlin

When the best or worst happens, we know your insurance agent is not one of the first people you think of first. Even so, whatever change you are facing, chances are it affects or involves your insurance – so when change happens, give your agent a call. We're here to help.

1. When you have a claim. Please, let your agent know ASAP.
2. You're contemplating operational changes. Changes in your business offerings may come with a cost (or savings) and may also open you up to other exposures which you are inadequately covered for.
3. Signing a contract? Call before, not after. It is important that your agent is not left out of the conversation. Aside from your attorney, we should be reviewing the insurance language in any and all contracts you sign.
4. If you are frustrated by your insurance costs, give your agent a call. Independent agents work with a range of insurance carriers. If you have pricing concerns, give us a call and let us know how you feel!
5. We are your advocate. Your insurance agent is your voice to your insurance company. Let us get to know you. Calling just to chat is A-OK.

Will 2021 Turn Out to be Another Record-Breaking Year for Philanthropy in the U.S.? What About 2022?

By [Sarah Ruef-Lindquist, JD, CTFA]

We still have a few months to wait before GivingUSA releases its report on charitable giving for 2021. That usually happens in mid-June. Anecdotally, many organizations are reporting that despite the significant continuing challenges of the pandemic for their operations and fundraising efforts, 2021 was actually a great year.

After record-breaking 2020 charitable giving statistics were reported in 2021, [Fidelity reported as of last fall] what they were learning and expected about giving trends in 2021. They reported 9 out of 10 surveyed in the summer of 2021 indicated they planned to give as much or more than they had given to charity in 2020.

The report is based on a study conducted in July and August 2021 by Artemis Strategy Group, an independent research firm, on behalf of Fidelity Charitable. The study examined the effect of COVID-19 on giving behavior among 701 adults in the U.S. who donated at least $1,000 to charity in 2020.

You may recall, GivingUSA had reported a record **$471 billion** in 2020, representing a more than 5% increase over 2019 giving.

In November 2021, A[FPGlobal.org reported] that giving was on pace in the first half of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. Through the work of the Fundraising Effectiveness Project, the report includes an increase in new donors as well as an increase in total gifts. “The estimated number of donors increased by 0.7% in the first half of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, while the total amount of money given has risen by a projected 1.7%.”

A growth trend in giving would seem to be continuing in 2022.

[In an article dated February 15, 2022, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reported] a 9% increase in giving for 2022 over 2021. This would represent the largest increase in giving since

2012. The report was produced by Blackbaud Institute, a division of Blackbaud, and surveyed roughly 9000 charitable organizations.

Did your organization have a good fundraising year in 2021? We hope so. And we hope 2022 is full of success, too. And to the extent you are having success raising funds for the long-term, through current gifts to endowment or deferred giving, we'd like to know and offer our services tailored to non-profits to support your board's fiduciary role stewarding those gifts. Learn more at AllenIF.com.

Building a Boat? You Need Hull Builder's Risk Insurance

By Chris Richmond
Originally Submitted to WorkBoat Magazine

Building boats can be the primary part of your business or just an occasional project. Regardless of how many or how often you do this, one thing is common: You will need a Hull Builders Risk insurance policy. And don't think that this applies only to a new build. A vessel undergoing a major refit can be covered under this as well. The policy can be extended to cover not only the hull but also material and equipment that has not yet been installed on the vessel.

For the occasional new hull build or the major refit, your policy can be written on single hull basis. For yards in the business of building boats, there is an open builders risk policy for multiple boats.

Valuation of the hull can be calculated two ways. It can be written on the completed value of vessel, or for larger vessels it can be a monthly reporting schedule of the unfinished project which gradually increases to the completed value.

Some policies offer buyback coverage for faulty workmanship. There is a condition to conduct inspections during the build and report any findings to the your underwriter. Keep in mind that claims due to faulty design are not covered. You will want to a professional liability policy for this.

Additional coverages which can be added to the policy includes:

- Delivery of bare hull to yard to be finished off
- Launching of vessel
- Sea trials of vessel
- Delivery of completed boat to end user

Protection and Indemnity limits are added to cover liability claims due to injury on or around the vessel during the construction process as well as after the vessel has been launched and is conducting sea trials or delivery. And if you are providing crew on board after the vessel has been launched, be sure to have the policy amended to reflect this additional risk.

Whether you are building the vessel for a client of having one built for your own use, the day of launching is always a memorable occasion and one to celebrate. Be sure to do your due diligence beforehand to properly cover potential risks involved with your project to help make this day a great one.