

Top Money Advisers

By Sherri Dalphonse

O N THE LISTS THAT FOLLOW ARE 376 OF THE AREA'S TOP financial advisers—estate attorneys, insurance specialists, accountants, and financial planners.

But do you even need a financial adviser? A lot of Americans don't seem to think so: According to a 2013 survey by the Consumer Federation of America, only 28 percent have created a financial plan using either a professional or online tools.

Many people assume they don't have enough assets to hire a professional—a perception not helped when some top advisers won't take on clients with less than \$1 million (or more) to invest.

A financial adviser doesn't handle just investments. A good planner looks at the overall picture: Do you have adequate insurance? Could you lower your taxes? Are you saving enough for retirement?

"That's financial planning," says Jon Yankee, a financial planner in Reston. "It's much more than money management; it's planning for the future—the hoped-for and the not-hoped-for future."

If you do want financial advice and you have a fairly simple life—say, you're single and you rent—it's usually enough to pay an adviser by the hour, once every year or two, to map out a plan. If your financial situation is more complex, it may make sense to pay an adviser a flat fee or a percentage of assets and be able to call with questions anytime.

For those who most want help with investing, the going rate for handling a portfolio is 1 percent of its assets, Yankee says. That's why most advisers set minimums on what they'll work with—a \$500,000 portfolio could cost you \$5,000 in fees for an adviser in a year. Is the cost worth it?

A study done this year by Aon Hewitt and Financial Engines found that the median annual return in the 401(k)s of 723,000 workers from 2006 through 2012 was 3.32 percent higher for those who got expert advice. According to the study, if two people invest \$10,000 at age 45, the person who gets advice would see that \$10,000 grow to \$58,700 by age 65, versus \$32,800 for the person who goes it alone.

Other experts say you're better off managing your own money—particularly if you stick to index funds, which consistently beat the average investor. Yet even in that scenario, you may be paying fees.

"A lot of people who have investments are paying fees they aren't aware of because the money is being taken out of their account," Yankee says. "And they're getting nothing in return. I might put you in funds with lower fees. When you do the math, the fees are comparable. So you might as well get some advice out of it."

Whether to manage your own money or let a professional do it is a personal decision. This list is for those who want expert advice.

How We Came Up With the List

To put together this list of top money advisers, we sent surveys to hundreds of financial professionals in the region, asking: Whom would you trust with your own money? We also did our own research, interviewing experts in the field and consulting industry publications. The people named here received the most recommendations from all sources. No list can be comprehensive, and omission from this one doesn't mean the adviser isn't good. Likewise, inclusion here doesn't necessarily mean the adviser is right for you. Unless otherwise noted, "minimum" is the minimum investment portfolio handled by an adviser—though some take smaller portfolios from, say, young professionals who have the promise of higher future earnings.

FEE-ONLY FINANCIAL PLANNERS

This category includes certified financial planners (CFPs)—who create detailed financial plans and often also manage money—as well as advisers who invest and manage portfolios. Fee-only advisers don't accept commissions or referral fees—a practice, they say, that keeps them unbiased. All of the advisers on this list offer comprehensive financial planning for any type of client, but we've noted any specialties.

Christopher N. Brown, CFP, Ivy League Financial Advisors, Rockville; 301-258-1300. Minimum: \$500,000. Specializes in retirees, small-business owners, and professionals



Left to Right: Kristin Bushong, Christopher N. Brown, MBA, CFP®, AIF®, and Lisa Crivella

CHRISTOPHER N. BROWN, MBA, CFP®, AIF® Ivy League Financial Advisors LLC

So tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

That's an important question we often ask our new clients. It gets to the heart of our mission at Ivy League Financial Advisors LLC—helping our clients achieve their life goals through the proper management of their financial resources.

At Ivy League, we provide a Higher Standard of Financial Advice® to our clients. We believe that great financial planning is about much more than just managing your investments. It's about pulling all the pieces together—retirement planning, estate planning, insurance needs, college funding, and charitable giving—along with investment management, to provide a personalized roadmap for achieving your objectives.

Our business model is based on the fiduciary standards of **loyalty, due care, full disclosure** and **utmost good faith** to our clients. We can fulfill these standards because we are Fee-Only financial advisors.

Being a Fee-Only financial advisor means that since our firm's inception in 1999, our clients have been our sole source of compensation. We've never accepted even one dollar from sales commissions or referral fees. This approach allows us to provide objective advice to all aspects of our clients' financial lives without the conflicts of interest inherent in the products and services provided by traditional, commission-based brokerage firms.

In the past 15 years, we have been serving people across the Washington, DC metro area who simply want to know that they are on the right track. We have helped people in every stage of life with objective financial planning solutions by offering strategies tailored to both their immediate needs and their long-term interests. Our typical clients include: Retirees, Pre-Retirees, Corporate Executives, Physicians, Attorneys, Small-Business Owners and Entrepreneurs, as well as Young Professionals and Families.

We recognize that each client is unique and deserves to have a solution customized to his or her individual needs. We invite you to call us to schedule a complimentary initial consultation to see if we are the right fit for you. We are conveniently located in Rockville Town Center, with easy access to I-270, Rockville Pike, and the Metro.

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