

Retirement Planner

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Planning for retirement is something everyone should do; yet very few people start early enough. A retirement planner is a specialist financial consultant that helps people decide on retirement goals and plan the necessary steps that it will take to reach those goals. Anyone with strong financial literacy can learn the necessary skills to become a retirement planner. As with all financial services you will most likely face heavy competition, however the potential rewards justify the risk.

Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

No qualifications are required to become a retirement planner, just plenty of experience in either the financial services or retirement planning fields. That said, any qualifications in these fields will be greatly beneficial and help to establish your credibility. If you don't yet have experience it isn't recommended that you try gain it on your own. First take a job with a financial services company and learn the ropes before setting out on your own.

The Start-Up

Most retirement planners are mobile consultants. You'll rarely meet clients at your own home, so it isn't necessary to spend money on lavish office furniture and expensive paintings. To get started you'll need a basic office setup, including a workspace, desk, computer, Internet connection, phone, fax and printer. As you'll be mobile during much of your workday you should consider getting a mobile phone.

A large part of your success will be based on the image your business portrays. Invest in solid branding from the beginning. Elance.com has very affordable business stationary packages that include a logo, letterhead, business card and brochure design.

Finally consider getting a small business website developed. Along with a listing of your services and contact details, include testimonials from your best clients along with some free retirement advice. This will add an element of content to your website and help attract customers. Be sure to list your website with local directories such as MSN Local in the U.S.A. (if you live in the U.S.A make sure your web developer enters your address in the recommended format to assist local searches).

Making It Work

Your business will be competing with large established financial services companies. To compete you'll need to spend time creating something about your business that is different and sets it apart from the big competition; a sustainable differentiator. The most obvious differentiator is personalized service. It is this exact differentiator that makes people choose small law firms and small accounting firms, rather than their larger corporate counter parts.

Personalized service is a bit of cliché in the business world, so write down specific things you plan to do in your business plan. These might be little things like, always greeting every client by their name, taking the time to understand a client's history or even including ten minutes free investing advice in every retirement consultation. How you make your business different is up to you, the important thing is that you make it different.

Finally don't forget to create consulting packages to go along with your standard hourly rates. Typical fees range from \$150 - \$1,000 (USD) depending on this size and scope on the project.

Marketing

Word of mouth and referrals will account for the majority of new business, but only once you are successful. Before that you will need to spend time and money on marketing. Market your business by advertising in community newspapers and direct mailers. Join your local business organization and make an effort to network in the local financial services community. You might also consider learning to run a pay per click campaign like Google Adwords to drive traffic to your website. Most pay per click campaigns allow you to target ads to very small geographical areas, making them a very cost effective form of direct marketing. If you are interested in getting started in the world of pay per click, we recommend reading [Perry Marshall](#).

Don't Forget

The financial services industry is ever changing and often affected by new government legislation. You'll need to continually keep up date with changes in the industry and the laws that affect it. Continuing education is a cost people often forget to account for.