Winter 2018

Insights

BUILDING AND PRESERVING YOUR WEALTH

REGIONS PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Technology and Your Wealth

Innovation is changing how we manage our finances, but there are some things that new tools can't replace.

Technology & Wealth

It doesn't seem all that long ago that when we talked about technology and its promises, we were talking about the future. Now, any examination of technological progress is firmly rooted in the present. Just about every activity of daily living, and every sector of the economy, is being transformed (or has already been transformed) by high-tech wizardry.

But how are these changes and advances affecting your financial life on a day-to-day basis, and what opportunities are they presenting? In this issue of *Insights*, we look at these very questions. "Technology and Your Wealth" (page 6) explores how rapid technological change might be affecting the way you invest and the way you interact with your finances. "Investing in Innovation" (page 4) examines where investors might look to capture growth in both the technology sector and other industries being influenced by technological advances. Meanwhile, "Optimizing Your Online Presence" (page 10) helps business owners navigate the many decisions about digital versus hands-on customer service and marketing.

Other articles come down to earth. "Sometimes It Does Grow on Trees" (page 2) shows how natural-resource-based assets—like timber or mineral rights—might fit into a diversified portfolio, while "All That Sparkles" (page 1) explores some of the pros and cons of investing in assets like art, jewelry and vintage cars.

Regardless of your collecting passion, our Wealth Advisors can help you find ways to keep your financial life on track and aligned with your goals.

Kate R. Danella

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ADAM VOORHES/GALLERY STOCK

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR YOUR MONEY, FAMILY AND LIFE.

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All That Sparkles

Before investing in fine wines, paintings and jewelry, first consider the risks.

Whether it's jewelry, art or antique cars, many people enjoy adding nontraditional assets to their portfolios. These collectible items differ from standard investments in many crucial ways—mainly because their acquisition is often motivated by passion rather than profit potential. Take the following steps before making a significant purchase.

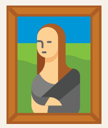
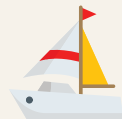
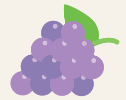
Educate yourself It's important to know exactly what you're buying before investing in a high-end watch or expensive painting. "Do your research and engage with experts in that industry," suggests Curtis Fessler, a Wealth Strategist at Regions Private Wealth Management in Houston. Being well informed can help you avoid purchasing fraudulent goods, which is a serious risk in some collectibles markets.

Be realistic about valuation It's easy to get overly optimistic about the upside potential of your collection. But high-value objects are generally only semi-liquid assets, Fessler notes. "If there's a need for capital, you could liquidate the assets, but you likely wouldn't achieve your ideal price," he says. Because there isn't a defined market for these objects, your collectible is only worth what someone else is willing to pay for it at the time of sale.

Insure your assets Having adequate insurance is one way to minimize the risk of owning nontraditional assets. Explore options for insuring your collection for theft, damage and loss of value. Look to industry-specific insurers to cover these specialized items.

Consider the big picture While it's easy to get carried away with the excitement of adding to your prized collection, you should always think about the role these investments play in your overall financial plan. "Make sure you're doing a prudent job of evaluating how an asset fits into your plan, and whether it ultimately helps you to further your goals," Fessler says. ▲

The Hidden Costs of Hard Assets

ARTWORK	BOAT	LUXURY WATCH	VACATION HOME	VINTAGE CAR	WINE COLLECTION
					
AUCTION FEES: Up to 25% or more of purchase price [1]	WINTER STORAGE: $2,000/year on average [2]	TUNE-UP: Up to $1,000 or more [3]	PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: 28% or more of rental income [4]	CLIMATE-CONTROLLED GARAGE: Up to $450/month or more [5]	INSURANCE: Typically 50 cents for $100 of annual coverage [6]

Sources: [1]*The Wall Street Journal;* [2]MintLife Blog; [3]Long's Jewelers Blog; [4]Rented.com; [5]Motorcar Classics; [6]*Wine Enthusiast* magazine

Sometimes It Does Grow on Trees

While on the surface they may seem out of date, investments in resources like minerals and timber could offer portfolio diversity, income and appreciation.

With all the attention—and dollars—being attracted by high-flying tech stocks, it's easy to overlook traditional investments that can still play an important role in some portfolios. Natural resources, for instance—like minerals, timberland and water—might offer investors an interesting complement to the broader market.

Consider, for example, the investment potential of timberland in the American South, a region that produces 60% of all forest products used in America, says Frank Walburn, Head of Regions Natural Resources & Real Estate. "There's a compelling story to consider here, because timber investments—trees and dirt—have a proven record of financial performance that is somewhat independent of financial markets. Trees keep growing, no matter what."

MORE ONLINE Find additional insights at **regions.com/insights**

Walburn is part of the team that manages Regions' timber funds, which are available to select investors. A trained forester, Walburn spent the first three decades of his career at a forest-products company, which taught him about the timberlands of the American South, and how best to tap their potential for investors.

When evaluating forestland investments, Walburn has a few principles he adheres to. One is to reduce the risk presented by a flood, fire or drought through geographic diversity. He's also careful to choose timberland near manufacturing facilities and markets. Because margins in the forest products industry can be thin, Walburn relies on his industry knowledge to look for the premiums that mills may offer when weather limits their supply of wood. "I understand the emergency prices mills will pay to keep from shutting down," he says. "We keep timber ready to cut on the side of a good gravel road, that we can sell when there's a shortage."

Expertise is essential to getting the most out of any resource-based investment, notes Walburn. But equally important is how well an investor's priorities and temperament fit the unique attributes of natural resources investments. Walburn advises investors not to keep more than 10% of their portfolio in timber, because Regions' timber funds can require as much as a 12-year commitment. "If investors want to do day trading with everything they own, they won't want this," he says.

But for investors with patience and a longer-term perspective, timber and other natural resources can generate value regardless of other market trends. "The fact that natural resource investments tend to come with a long time horizon means that they can offer investors comfort during tumultuous times," says Walburn. ▲

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Getting in the Driver's Seat of Giving

Five things you should know before joining a nonprofit board.

Serving on a nonprofit board is one of the most rewarding volunteer jobs you can do. It allows you to support a cause you believe in and develop new skills. The key is to make sure that you and the board you join are a good match. Here are five questions to answer before you decide.

1. Is this organization a good fit for my interests and skills? It's an honor to be invited to join a board, but you must have a true passion for the cause. Make sure you're comfortable with the role the board wants you to fill. For instance, the board may need someone with legal or accounting experience. If you are a CPA by day, would you mind offering those skills for a nonprofit?

2. What time and financial expectations are there? Find out how often the board meets, and make sure you can manage the commitment. Ask about the financial obligation too. "Some nonprofits seem to be upping the suggested contribution amount," says Ann Forney, Corporate Contributions Director for Regions Bank. "It's better to know what's expected from the start."

3. Will I learn from the other board members? Meet a few current board members and see if you would enjoy working with them. Also determine whether you'd consider them your professional peers—you don't want to have significantly more (or less) experience than the rest of the board.

4. Is the nonprofit financially strong? Ask for an annual report, financial statement, bylaws and strategic plan, and read them carefully to determine how well the organization is run. In addition, make sure that the nonprofit has director liability insurance. As a board member, you have a legal and fiduciary responsibility to act in the interests of the charitable organization. Insurance protects you if someone thinks you have not lived up to your role.

5. Are there term limits for board members? "The most effective boards keep things fresh," says Forney. Expect to serve from three to six years—a world of time for doing good. ▲

Investing in Innovation

The tech sector has been on a tear over the past several years. Here are some ideas for how investors might seek to capture some of that growth.

The current bull market, closing in on nine years now, has made for some happy investors. But those who bet on technology are among the most ecstatic. Technology stocks' rise has been nothing short of meteoric, up 30% year to date against the S&P 500's 15% surge. And tech has been a bellwether sector since the start of the bull market, up a remarkable 497%, compared with the S&P 500's 294% since March 2009.[1]

"The excitement over tech stocks has been well deserved," says Fran Allen Smitherman, Director of Equity Research for Regions Investment Management. "There has been true innovation in the sector, which has driven strong earnings growth."

[1] FactSet Research

Adding to that growth is the way that technology has pervaded every industry, as companies race to innovate as a matter of survival. "Even very defensive sectors are adopting next-generation technology, such as utilities using sensors to determine how fast the wind is blowing or telecom exploring 5G technology," she adds.

But the drivers for the next generation of tech stocks go beyond just innovation and competition, says Amala Duggirala, Enterprise Chief Information Officer for Regions Bank. "Cost challenges and operational expenses are forcing companies to do more with less, so automation is becoming critical," she says. "Infrastructure costs are also increasing, so more companies are getting comfortable with public cloud-computing solutions. And as traditional channels of reaching the customer, such as brick-and-mortar retailers, are waning, companies need artificial intelligence technologies, machine learning and data aggregation to market to tomorrow's consumer."

WHAT TO EXPECT

The latest boom, of course, comes with cautions. Many investors remember the popping of the so-called dot-com bubble in 2000. But tech companies now bear little resemblance to the Internet start-ups of nearly two decades ago, according to Smitherman. "In 1999, the tech stocks traded at prices that were far higher than their earnings would ordinarily warrant, and many of the companies offered products and services that had very little proven success in the market," she says. "Tech stocks today aren't as expensive as they were then; they have some of the best balance sheets across all industries, with very little debt, and their earnings growth is strong and proven," Smitherman adds.

MONSITJ/GETTY IMAGES

> *"Stocks with true growth and innovation will outperform the rest of the market over the long term."*
>
> —**Fran Allen Smitherman,** Director of Equity Research, Regions Investment Management

Despite years of strong growth, the tech giants—including the biggest e-commerce site, phone manufacturer, social media site, and search engine—continue to deliver impressive profits and revenue. "Currently, the giants are still nimble enough to find new sources of growth and innovation," says Smitherman. "But expectations are very high for these household names, and if competition causes decelerating growth, the stocks will begin to underperform."

WHERE TO START

There are, however, plenty of ways to invest in technology, beyond just the tech leviathans. For instance, investors may want to consider technologies that aggregate personal data to make everyday life easier, says Duggirala. "In the near future, consumers will expect everything they buy to come to them, instead of having to search in stores."

Technologies that increase the speed of transactions will also be hot. "Soon banking customers will be able to send and receive money in minutes, with no 24-hour settlement period, as is the standard today," she says. That same push for greater speed will compel industries once wary about cloud computing to adopt the platforms, driving growth of the technology. "Banking and health care have a strong need for security and data protection, so they want cloud technology to prove itself before they adopt it," says Duggirala. At the same time, companies will also be investing more in cybersecurity solutions. Other fast-growing areas of technology are artificial intelligence, sensor technology and face-recognition software, adds Smitherman.

WHY BOTHER

It's easy to be wowed by a revolutionary technology that promises to change the way we experience the world. Investors, however, should look beyond the flash and ask how people or companies will use it over time, says Duggirala. "Any technology that does not create value for the consumer will be a slow-growth investment. If customers don't really need something to be automated, it's not going to sell."

Despite the recent bull market, Smitherman remains cautiously optimistic about the sector. "While it's unrealistic to assume that the growth technology stocks have enjoyed recently will last indefinitely, stocks with true growth and innovation will outperform the rest of the market over the long term," she says. "With a diversified and balanced approach, and the proper expectations in place, investors should continue to maintain exposure to this important part of the market." ▲

Technology Opportunities, Beyond the Tech Sector

Where to look when options are slim.

Investing directly in emerging technologies can be difficult, since many of the latest innovations are often spearheaded by privately held companies or smaller companies with less-than-sturdy balance sheets. Instead of picking pure technology plays, investors may want to look for companies that stand to benefit the most from new innovations.

"Investors need exposure outside of technology to have a diversified portfolio, so look at sectors and companies where technology is driving growth," recommends Fran Allen Smitherman, Director of Equity Research for Regions Investment Management. "Companies that are investing in technology and deploy it well will outperform their competitors."

Banks, health care and insurance companies are three industries that Amala Duggirala, Enterprise Chief Information Officer for Regions Bank, says have an opportunity to transform themselves through technology. "Every bank is publicly saying it will grow its top line through automation and artificial intelligence. But it's important for investors to evaluate how aggressively a company or industry is investing in technology. Health care, for example, is picking up the pace in adopting technology, which should make a well-performing sector even stronger."

Talk to your Regions Wealth Advisor about:

- Whether your portfolio is positioned to take advantage of potential technology-related growth
- Finding companies to invest in that are using technology in innovative ways
- Ways to invest in new technology's possibilities outside of the tech sector

ADAM VOORHES/GALLERY STOCK

TECHNOLOGY *and Your Wealth*

Innovation is changing how we manage our finances, but there are some things new tools can't replace.

While technology can make grand entrances in the form of new mobile devices or driverless cars, more often it quietly changes our lives before we've really noticed. And while there are areas in which it's made everyday tasks and transactions simpler and easier, there are some areas of our lives that we still prefer to keep on pre-digital islands.

For some, wealth management has long been one of those islands, with paper records and face-to-face conversations. But the technological tide is rising, as advisors and clients grow more comfortable with the efficiency and security of new digital tools. The advisors who have gotten the most out of these tools have focused not on the new technology itself but on using it to enhance what they already offer: personal, informed advice that helps us make delicate, emotional decisions about our money and our legacy.

Right now, new software and tools are helping to automate paperwork, aggregate and organize information, and provide 24-hour account access to clients who want it. And the benefits extend to clients who work with advisors. "New technology allows advisors to have more opportunities to meet with clients face-to-face. And we have more information to bring to those meetings. The tech provides efficiencies in the access and organization of the data we look at," says Greg Firek, a Fiduciary Manager with Regions Private Wealth Management. And though technology has changed the way many people invest, Firek stresses that there is a way to swim successfully in the rising digital sea.

Being nimble and connected everywhere

While a major advantage of financial technology comes down to speed of transactions, trading and communication, managing your family's financial security remains a long game. Retirement, family trusts and charitable grants are often decades in the making. But as technology changes the markets and client expectations, Wealth Advisors need to keep pace. "Clients love to be nimble," says Adam Wilkinson, Wealth Advisor with Regions Private Wealth Management. "So many banks are creating a more fluid financial advisory process."

Regions has introduced that fluidity in the form of two major technological advances. The first is the Regions Wealth Platform (RWP), an integrated digital solution for all Private Wealth Management clients that offers a streamlined view of your portfolio, allowing our advisors to better serve client needs. The second major investment in technology is a wealth-planning tool called rTrac, which allows clients and advisors to aggregate all financial information into one central system to determine a plan to help meet client goals. Both the Regions Wealth Platform and rTrac are central to Wealth Management serving clients' needs in more efficient and holistic ways.

"With rTrac, we can store and manage a wide range of information," says Cherry Shaw, Wealth Advisor with Regions Private Wealth Management, "such as tax returns, wills, health-care directives, powers of attorney, life insurance documents and trust documents." Aggregating these disparate bodies of information helps clients have a single source for their information. It also helps advisors understand the complete picture of each client's assets and obligations, which helps them consider all the variables and how hypothetical situations might affect a client's portfolio and plans.

"It was imperative for us to provide clients with a centralized system, like rTrac, that helps them navigate the world we're part of now," says Wilkinson. "During the past decade, wealth management has evolved so much. You've seen tremendous growth in the capabilities and monitoring structure of platforms that can be a great benefit to clients and advisors."

The biggest transformation is how information in a centralized digital repository allows clients and advisors to access vital information via secured shared drives even when they're in different locations.

"I'm up front with clients, and tell them rTrac is only as good as the information we put into it, which includes the information the client is willing to share," says Shaw. To get a complete picture, she encourages clients to enter into rTrac not only information on accounts managed by Regions, but also external accounts, so clients can see a complete picture of their assets, liabilities and cash flows in one place. Even paper statements, which still can be processed manually, can be included. The system can also create safeguards, and remind clients when it's time to have important discussions or to make decisions. Advisors and clients can agree to set alerts that notify advisors of large sell-offs or balance increases. "Technology in the past met the needs of the financial institution. What's different now is that it's geared to the people those institutions are serving," Shaw says.

One of the most exciting benefits of the Regions Wealth Platform is that clients are able to access their information and account status from their mobile devices.

> *"Clients love to be nimble, so many banks are creating a more fluid financial advisory process."*
>
> —**Adam Wilkinson,** Wealth Advisor, Regions Private Wealth Management

SHANNON FAGAN/GETTY IMAGES

Highly functional tools to use—with care

In developing these tools, Regions kept a firm focus on managing the risks of digital technology. Both the Regions Wealth Platform and rTrac employ multi-tier authentication and encryption for advisor accounts, to manage the ubiquitous risks in our connected world. "That connectivity allows us to share risk mitigation responsibilities among different parts of our teams," says Firek.

But the risks of digital technology don't come just from a cybersecurity standpoint; they come from a human one as well. As organizations lean into technology more and more, there is the chance that advisors become overly reliant on the software. "The tech presents a tremendous amount of value, but advisors must make it part of the solution, not the entire solution," says Wilkinson. "At Regions we work hard to make sure that technology and data are inputs into our recommendations, but that we rely on sound judgment and analytical thinking to make recommendations that meet client needs," Wilkinson says. "We are always sure to remain diligent about digging into the details of our clients' accounts."

In the end, it's still about people

Digital platforms have given advisory teams the means to work in concert with clients to better understand, analyze and manage their assets. These systems offer the promise of being more efficient, even while handling a tremendous amount of data. But their true value will be seen over time, as they help advisors track and focus on clients' long-term goals and strategies. "If the market had a 5% pullback today, our new rTrac platform lets clients check their financial plan, at any time, and see whether they're still on track to meet their goals," says Shaw. "This allows advisors and clients to easily access and make changes to a financial plan."

Technology can help inform and shape a dialogue, but human judgment and experience are what continue to bring wealth management clients to advisors. "It's very simple," says Wilkinson. "If you remove the advisor, you lose someone who looks out for your best interest, who takes it beyond a mathematical equation and just quantifying goals. You remove a functional, emotional mechanism that helps you get where you want to be." ▲

Talk to your Regions Wealth Advisor about:

- How you can utilize the latest technology to better understand your investments
- How you can use Regions technology to research financial solutions that might help you meet your goals
- How our advisors can use our new technology solutions to better serve your needs and help you meet financial goals

The Limits of Technology

Understanding what technology can—and can't—do is the key to getting the most out of it.

MALERAPASO/GETTY IMAGES

Financial technology—fintech to use the buzzword—is not waiting to revolutionize the banking industry. It's already begun to upend the fields of investing and market and risk analysis. The algorithms and models it deploys continue to speed up and are creating a more granular understanding of market performance. While these factors affect wealth management, actual software that can make the right choices with your money is still a long way off, if such a thing will ever exist. For now, here are a few tools at the disposal of professionals who understand both the potential and the limitations of new technology.

Artificial intelligence In terms of financial analysis, artificial intelligence (AI) has been up and running for years, sorting huge amounts of data and building investment models. As it becomes more sophisticated, it will take on a bigger role in the analysis and calibration of those models. Still, no AI is ready to start working with clients, especially those with complicated portfolios and goals. But as some advisors expand to manage more clients, expect AI functionality to appear as a backup option at more wealth management firms.

Algorithmic trading Algorithmic trading uses complex mathematical formulas and advanced trading software to make high-speed transactions in a portfolio. It can be used to manage volatility or to support investment strategies like arbitrage. It's also become popular with technically savvy retail advisors. But over the long term, the markets are still a function of human activity, and their unpredictability continues to be a steep challenge to predictive computing power.

Robo-investing The basic promise of robo-investing is that you can "set it and forget it" by letting a software platform manage and rebalance your portfolio. Though valuable, these platforms may not be ready for deployment on their own, especially for clients with diverse holdings and mature strategies. "Generic technology can't talk to our clients, seek to understand their many goals and dreams, and help them find solutions tailored specifically to them," says Regions' Greg Firek, "and that's a part of our high-service model."

JOHN LAMB/GETTY IMAGES

Optimizing Your Online Presence

Key considerations for developing your digital strategy.

Over the past two decades, the digital revolution has transformed the way companies do business. With this change has come a shift in customer expectations. Websites, mobile-optimized sites, apps and social media allow businesses and consumers to interact across multiple platforms, with more speed and convenience than ever before.

That doesn't mean that you should abandon your physical presence, though. "With each innovation comes the expectation that the shiny new thing will replace what came before it," says Andy Hernandez, the Birmingham-based Head of Regions eBusiness. "More often than not, this isn't what happens. Instead, the new and old coexist, and businesses and consumers get to choose between an ever-expanding array of options."

Finding the most effective mix of the digital and in-person is critical for any business hoping to gain an advantage over its competitors. As you consider how to optimize your online presence, keep in mind these four key values: simplicity, customization, consistency and balance.

SIMPLICITY

"When it comes to interacting with your customers, simplicity trumps everything else," says Hernandez. Rather than immediately embracing the latest gadget, he warns, first ask yourself if it makes things easier for you or your clients. If it doesn't, it's probably not worth your time or money. If, on the other hand, you can cut a 30-minute process down to five, that's something worth investing in, he says.

Successful businesses have perfected the art of removing friction from customer interactions. This begins with the search experience (see Optimizing Search), continues through the information-gathering process and culminates in a purchase or other meaningful transaction. A process that, years ago, required several minutes can now often be done with just the click of a button. One-click purchasing, for example, has transformed the retail space, and widely available fraud-prevention tools now allow businesses of any size to collect enough data to safely deploy such technology.

CUSTOMIZATION

"Understanding what your customers value is key," says Hernandez, and many of the latest digital advances help businesses do just that. Predictive assistance—platforms that leverage known behaviors to anticipate client needs—is allowing companies to personalize experiences to a degree never seen before.

This customization can take many forms. Many businesses send out different e-newsletters to various demographics. Some retail chains have developed apps that know when customers enter their stores and deliver customized offers to their phones. Other companies have created digital rewards programs that are customized to fit the particular preferences of each customer, taking into account their buying history and location. Consumers, meanwhile, are becoming more comfortable with the idea of companies collecting their personal data. According to a recent survey, 73% of consumers actually prefer to do business with brands that use personal information to make their experiences more relevant.[1]

Optimizing Search

Consumers won't buy if they can't find what they're looking for.

One digital tactic that too many businesses neglect is optimizing their online search functions. A recent study found that shoppers who perform on-site searches end up buying from that business at twice the rate of visitors who don't use the search function.[2] Improving your business' on-site search capabilities could be what differentiates you from your competitors.

The best on-site search technology interprets consumer needs and delivers relevant results on a consistent basis. While this technology used to be prohibitively expensive for many small and medium-size businesses, affordable cloud-based search engine tools have emerged in the past few years. They are easy to customize and update, and deliver personalized results that drive conversion rates and loyalty.

Cloud-based systems also allow companies to create seamless search experiences across a variety of platforms. This means that customers searching from their mobile devices will experience the same level of quality and ease-of-use as customers searching from their laptops at home.

[2] Smart Insights, "ECommerce Conversion Rates," April 25, 2016

"When it comes to interacting with your customers, simplicity trumps everything else."

—Andy Hernandez,
Head of Regions eBusiness, Regions Bank

CONSISTENCY

While consumers do want options when it comes to dealing with businesses, they care just as much about consistency across these options. If an interaction can be accomplished via an app or online, but the app option takes twice as long, you've got a problem, says Hernandez. "Each option should be just as fast, easy and secure as the others," he argues. For example, digital technology has made depositing checks easier than ever, but it only made sense once it could be accomplished as securely as deposits to ATMs.

BALANCE

Businesses should aim to create unique, pleasurable experiences across all channels and at all stages of the client interaction. That means not only creating exceptional online content and making the digital experience as frictionless as possible, but also embracing the possibilities of physical spaces. Brick-and-mortar stores and offices give customers the chance to engage with friendly and knowledgeable staff, forging connections that digital interactions, for all their advantages, can't offer—at least not to the same degree.

So should your business focus on digital or in-person interactions? "The answer is yes to both," says Hernandez. ▲

[1] PSFK Labs, "The Future of Retail 2016"

Perspective

MICHELE M. LAPORTE
CPA/PFS, Vice President, Trust Advisor, Regions Private Wealth Management

The Value of an Estate Plan Lives On

I was having lunch with a new client and suggested that we review his estate plan. "Why would I need that?" he replied. "There's talk from Washington that federal estate taxes will be repealed, plus the taxable threshold is so high that it doesn't apply to me."

I asked what steps he had taken to ensure that the children from his first marriage will receive an inheritance, and to protect their inheritances if their marriages ended in divorce. I also asked if he had a legally designated guardian for the young children in his second marriage. None of those things, I pointed out, have anything to do with the federal estate tax.

> "Planning for a day when you may not be able to handle your affairs or advocate for yourself is one of the most profound legacies you can leave."

After a thoughtful pause, we scheduled a meeting to discuss estate-planning solutions.

While estate planning can be a hard topic to embrace, every Regions Trust Advisor will tell you that clients are relieved when they address the details of their estate, so that their wishes can be carried out in the most efficient way possible.

Michele M. LaPorte is a Trust Advisor for Regions Private Wealth Management, in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Estate Planning: Mind Your P's

- **Protection:** The right trust documents can protect you and your heirs from creditors. They can also keep your heirs' inheritance separate from divorce proceedings, and enable someone you choose to care for you if you ever become incapacitated.
- **Privacy and (avoiding) probate:** With a living revocable trust, your assets can be distributed exactly as you want, without public notices or court approval—eliminating the costly probate process.
- **Preferences:** Spelling out how you want your assets distributed is an expression of your values and ethics. One client's estate provided education funds for his grandchildren, as long as they maintained a solid GPA and finished school in a timely manner.
- **Peace of mind:** Five core documents are the foundation of an effective estate plan:
  - Will
  - Durable power of attorney
  - Health-care power of attorney
  - Living will/advance directive
  - Revocable trust

The will comes into play once you pass away. But the other documents will help your family care for you. Planning for a day when you may not be able to handle your affairs or advocate for yourself is one of the most profound legacies you can leave. It offers guidance for your loved ones, releasing them from the burden of making difficult choices and giving them the solace of knowing that they followed your wishes. ▲

Spotlight

"The mission of the museum is to spark the creativity, imagination and liveliness of Birmingham by connecting all of its citizens to the experience, meaning and joy of art," says retired director Gail Andrews.

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM OF ART

Civic Pride

Newly retired Birmingham Museum of Art director **Gail Andrews** reflects on her career, the importance of cultural organizations and how to be a more effective patron.

When Gail Andrews retired last October after a 40-year career at the Birmingham Museum of Art, she left behind a legacy of championing underappreciated arts and artists. An authority on folk art and textiles, Andrews joined the museum in 1976 as a curator and became a director in 1996. During her career, Andrews identified and documented hundreds of artfully sewn quilts by long-overlooked makers, greatly expanded the museum's collections, and through her thoughtful curation, raised the museum's reputation to one of the South's finest. During Andrews' tenure, one thing never changed—her passionate advocacy of museums in the life of communities.

AHA MOMENT

As a child, I loved American history. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, and I headed east to the College of William and Mary. I never thought about working for a museum until I saw a flier for the Cooperstown Graduate Program for Museum Studies. That was my "aha" moment. I realized that you can learn about the way people lived through objects.

CULTURAL ANCHOR

The Birmingham Museum of Art has one of the finest collections in the South. You can go from viewing an object in our Japanese collection dating back to 5,000 B.C. to seeing a quilt made in Alabama last year. I'm especially proud of increasing the number of works by women and African-American artists in the collection.

We are incredibly fortunate that the City of Birmingham provides half of our operating budget. Museums and other cultural organizations should be considered essential city budget items. They make life worth living.

In addition to governmental support, you need corporate and private donors. We all need to work to make our cities great.

BEING BETTER PATRONS

One reason we have such a good contemporary collection is because three women banded together and said, "We're tired of having to go to New York to see what's new." They recruited friends and created the Collectors Circle for Contemporary Art, and each year they add a piece to the collection. We also have patron groups supporting the Asian, European and American collections. Acquisitions are not part of our operating budget. Without benefactors willing to build a collection, we wouldn't have it.

I tell patrons to follow their passions. Give to organizations that inspire you. It's our job to create places that are open, nurturing and stimulating. When people feel engaged, we're both doing our jobs. We're lucky to have supporters who want to improve our collections, or to positively impact every third-grader in Birmingham.

NEXT ACT

I used to sew when I had more time, though I'm getting back to it. My daughter and I took a workshop with Natalie Chanin in Florence, Alabama. I made a terrific skirt. My new life will probably involve more making! ▲

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