



December 2019 Ponderings and Musings: Gifts, Goals and Vision

“The best thing a human being can do is to help another human being know more.”

- Charlie Munger

“The secret of success in every person who has ever been successful, lies in the fact that they have formed the habit of doing things that failures don’t like to do.”

- Albert E. N. Gray

“A goal properly set is halfway reached.”

- Zig Ziglar

“If you don’t design your own life plan, chances are that you’ll fall into someone else’s plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.

- Jim Rohn

Northern Virginia Family Services Recognizes VWG with the CARE Award



For the second year in a row, VWG Wealth Management is a proud recipient of the CARE Award, presented by Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS). NVFS’ mission is to empower individuals and families to improve the quality of life, and to promote community cooperation and support in responding to family needs. The organization’s CARE (Companies As Responsive Employers) Award recognizes companies proactively making the region a better place to work, live and play.

Winners of the CARE Award demonstrate extraordinary leadership and sustained commitment in creating community outreach and engagement, outstanding workplace culture, and family-friendly environments. Being a CARE Award winner shows a commitment to employee satisfaction and a strong connection with the Northern Virginia community. VWG is honored to be recognized along with other prominent local companies that value strong corporate culture, employee well-being, and community involvement.

Ashley Ruder, Elana Fine, John Verfurth and Jeff Grinspoon represented VWG at the CARE Awards Breakfast on November 15th. Beyond the CARE Awards, NVFS supports families in the Northern Virginia community through a wide range of programs. [Beyond the CARE Awards, NVFS supports families in the Northern Virginia community through a wide range of programs. \(Northern Virginia Family Services\).](#)

NOW Is the Time to Focus Your 2020 Vision

On Veterans Day, November 11, the entire VWG team participated in a half-day “Becoming Your Best” workshop, led by Rob Shallenberger. The workshop focused on some specific tools and practices that could spur transformational personal and professional growth. It was an intense session of learning and sharing. Here are some summary points of our session from which all can benefit:

1. No goal or resolution can be successfully addressed without first defining a clear and specific vision. As stated in Shallenberger’s book, [The Transformational Challenge](#), “the vision is a focus beyond obstacles and doubts and seeing where you want to be.” The more you can see, feel and even taste and smell your vision, the better you will be able to set effective goals. For example - visualizing clean counters free of dirty ashtrays, walking up the stairs without shortness of breath, looking in the mirror and seeing bright, shining teeth, and getting into your clean, fresh smelling car - is a much more effective first step toward the goal of quitting smoking.

2. There is never a time to NOT be creating and pondering your personal, family, professional and mental visions. If you want a solid set of goals and resolutions for the year 2020, you need to have your vision taking shape in advance of January 1.

3. Effective, transformational goals, set in the pursuit of your vision, should follow the SMART structure:

Specific: well-defined and unambiguous

Who is involved? What will be accomplished? Why do I want to achieve it?

Measurable: clear criteria that can be used to measure your progress

How many, how much? How do I know if I reach my goal, what is my indicator of progress?

Achievable: attainable and not impossible to achieve

Do I have the resources and capabilities to achieve the goal? If not, what am I missing?

Realistic: within reach, and relevant to your life purpose

Is the goal reachable within my time and resources? Am I able to fully commit to it?

Time-Specific: clearly defined timeline including a starting date and a target date

Does my goal have a deadline? What is the urgency and motivation behind it?

4. Your vision and your goals should be written down, preferably in your own handwriting. The physical action of pen put to paper helps cement these within your subconscious mind. Your vision and goals are stronger, clearer, and more likely to be attained, when shared with an accountability partner – a friend, co-worker or family member.

5. One of the most powerful methods to stay engaged with your goals is pre-week planning. Pre-week planning involves habitually setting aside a 15-20 minutes block of time every Saturday or Sunday to plan your upcoming week, within the context of your long-term vision and goals.

The “Becoming Your Best” workshop challenged us to further strengthen our vision and goals. It gave us some real tools and techniques. The simple pre-week planning ritual particularly resonated with some VWG team members. Many have committed to put it in place by year end, with the hopes of increasing personal and professional fulfillment and vitality. We’ll keep you informed of our progress, and the clarity of our 2020 Vision. We would love to hear your personal experiences and successes.

Managing Your Charitable Gifting

No December “Musings and Pondering” would be complete without a discussion of Donor Advised Funds. Holidays and the end of the tax year combine to remind us to make contributions to worthy organizations and

causes. Using a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to manage charitable gifting offers many benefits. And it can help strategize tax management now that state and local tax (SALT) deductions are limited to \$10,000 annually.

A Donor Advised Fund is a simple and elegant way of setting up and managing one's annual charitable gifting. It is a single account, titled in your name and under your control, from which you can direct gifts (termed grants) to multiple charities on your demand. You contribute cash, stocks or even real estate or private interests into your DAF, which is eligible for an immediate tax deduction at the time of contribution. You can then distribute donations to various charities over time, with no forced timeline or pre-designated recipient. And you can invest, manage and potentially grow the fund over time while it awaits your direction of grants.

Using a Donor Advised Fund to manage your charitable inclinations automates and simplifies making gifts and keeping associated records. It helps you and your family establish a legacy of regular gifting to organizations and their causes that you deeply care about. 2018's tax law strengthened the case for using a Donor Advised Fund. This is because limits on SALT deductions have forced many taxpayers into taking the standard deduction, thus removing the tax benefit of charitable gifts. A possible solution for those charitably inclined is to "bunch" three- or four-years of planned gifts into one tax year. The "bunch" will then be large enough to allow one to itemize their deductions in the year contributed, thus reducing taxable income. By contributing this "bunch" into the Donor Advised Fund, the gifts can be distributed over several years as originally planned (which can always be changed at the discretion of the donor).

We'll be happy to discuss this further with you, and help put it into the context of your overall long-term financial planning. Please give us a call. If you prefer some immediate online information, one of our preferred Donor Advised Fund providers is [Fidelity Charitable](#). You can find them by clicking here: [Fidelity Charitable](#).

This year, the VWG Wealth Management Foundation is directing an annual grant from our Donor Advised Fund to the Dog Tag Bakery in Washington, D.C. As we wrote in November's musings, Dog Tag Bakery deeply resonates with our two passions – supporting veterans and promoting entrepreneurship. In addition to our financial support, we are planning other ways we can engage and support Dog Tag's educational and entrepreneurial efforts in 2020. ([Dog Tag Bakery](#)).

Ending Catalog Clutter Redux

Back by popular demand – here is VWG's Lynette Jones' seasonal tip to cut down future clutter and waste.

Catalog Choice is a free non-profit service that can be used to cancel specific catalogs and other types of paper mail. It is a free online service. You create a login then enter each catalog sender's information into the system. A mailing opt-out request is then generated and sent to the sender of the catalog. In some cases, it takes a few mailing cycles for the opt-out request to kick in.

Some effort is required, but those who have used it have enjoyed a noticeable decline in useless mailings. Hopefully the environment, and our postal worker's backs, also benefit.

Top Streaming Series of the Twenty-Tens

December 31, 2019 marks the end of the decade termed the "Twenty-Tens." Looking back, a major popular cultural / technological change of the "Twenty-Tens" was the explosion of online video streaming. This marked the rise of "binge watching" multiple episodes of serial TV shows in one sitting.

The proliferation of video streaming services including Netflix, Amazon, HBO, Showtime, Hulu, and their concurrent arms race in content creation, has led to a ground-shifting change to the leisure habits of many American (and worldwide) families. It has greatly impacted other video content and providers including network television, cable providers, movies and cinemas. Some negative second order effects of video streaming have been postulated, including increased insomnia and fatigue.

In no particular order, here are some of the most watched and highest acclaimed streamed video series of the "Twenty Tens," courtesy of IndieWire, BuzzFeed, and VWG team members. We're sure you've been in casual interactions where one or more of these, and their poignant recent episodes, have been the hot topic of conversation.

- Game of Thrones
- The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel
- The Man in the High Castle

- House of Cards
- The Americans
- The Crown
- Veep
- The Leftovers
- Stranger Things
- The Handmaid's Tale
- Ray Donovan
- Billions
- Fleabag
- The Affair
- Orange is the New Black
- Schitt's Creek
- Ozark

Looking forward to 2020, our goal is to continue to enhance the services we provide to improve your financial well-being and peace of mind. The entire VWG team cannot thank you enough for the opportunity to serve you and your families. Best wishes to all for a joyous holiday season. We wish all a very healthy and deeply fulfilling New Year!

Regards,

VWG Wealth Management
HighTower Advisors

Suzanne, Ashley, Lynette, Michelle, Rashmi, Kay, Justin, Ryan, Patricia, Elana, Susan, Marnie, John, Rick and Jeff

[Who we are](#)

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