

In today's world, proper financial planning is more important than ever. With increasingly complex financial markets, longer life expectancies and uncertainty about Social Security and long-term health care coverage, choosing the right mutual funds could play a critical role in helping to secure your financial future. With more than 10,000 different mutual funds to choose from and hundreds of mutual fund companies, one of the most important decisions you can make about your future is to seek the advice of a qualified investment professional.

Here are a few reasons why:

1. A Financial Advisor may help you increase your investment results

A study covering the period of January, 1984 through March 31, 1996 by DALBAR Financial Services, a respected financial services research organization, shows that using a professional financial advisor may help you achieve your financial goals. The study found that investors who purchased equity and fixed-income funds through professional financial advisors achieved higher returns than those who purchased funds on their own - by more than 16% for their equity fund investments and more than 27% for their fixed-income fund investments.

2. A Financial Advisor takes time to fully understand your goals & investment needs

It is your financial advisor's business to get to know who you are and what you want to achieve with your investments. Whether you're investing toward a secure retirement, starting a college savings plan for a child, or simply interested in accumulating additional assets for future needs, it's your financial advisor's job to help you clearly define both your short- and long-term goals. After identifying your goals, you and your financial advisor will be able to create a financial plan that suits your needs, your risk tolerance and your time horizon, putting you in a better position to achieve these goals.

3. A Financial Advisor can help you determine the best way to allocate your assets

One of the most important steps to achieving any goal is to develop a plan. When investing toward financial goals, an important part of your plan will be to diversify your assets among stocks, bonds, short-term investments and possibly foreign securities. Based on your needs, your financial advisor can develop an asset allocation strategy that can help lower your overall risk by increasing your exposure to a greater number of investment opportunities.

4. A Financial Advisor can offer specific investment recommendations based on your needs

Once you've determined the best way to allocate your assets, you still have the important task of selecting the right investments for your portfolio. With thousands of mutual funds to choose from, finding the right fund, or combination of funds, can have a significant impact on your degree of success. Your financial advisor has the knowledge and resources necessary to help you find the mutual funds that best suit your needs.

5. A Financial Advisor will stick with you every step of the way

The benefits of working with a financial advisor don't end with your first investment. Your financial advisor can answer any questions about your investments, provide guidance during periods of market volatility and monitor your progress and make any necessary adjustments as your needs change.