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**Focusing On Your
Financial Freedom**

Focusing On Your Financial Freedom

By Heather Navarra, The Write Type



Ruth Ann Gillis, Len Bick and Adrienne Sprogis

It's no secret that we are about to experience a retirement phenomenon. Baby boomers (Canadians born between 1946 and 1964) are getting closer to retirement. Those who were born in 1946 are now 60 and, over the next 15 years, the employment landscape will dramatically change as a tremendous number of people in this group move out of the workforce.

Many Canadians who are getting closer to retirement feel that they haven't saved enough. If they haven't taken retirement planning seriously, their future lifestyles may become limited. We all get caught up in day-to-day living expenses - groceries, taxes, putting kids through school and taking care of parents. As a result, there may not be the time or money to focus on the future.

Leonard Bick's mission is to help individuals and families achieve financial independence. For clients that have

started early to fund retirement, there are a variety of tried and true strategies to use. For those who are starting late, innovative strategies to accelerate the savings process need to be examined.

"We care more, do more and know more," says Len. "Our business culture attracts knowledgeable people to our firm who use their talents for the benefit of our clients. Our clients are everyday people from many different backgrounds who value the services of a financial advisor or planner. I believe people are looking for an advisor who will take the time to learn about them as individuals, and who will create a comprehensive financial plan to help them achieve their life dreams and goals. Canadians want continued support and service over time."

Len recognizes the difficulty some people have finding a qualified and experienced financial planner that they



can relate to. He recommends that they follow a process to examine the credentials and experience of the planner, to interview several planners and get references.

While attending McMaster University to complete an MBA in the early 1980s, Len participated in the Small Business Advisory Unit that provided consulting services to small business owners. In 1982 when Len graduated, it was already obvious that baby boomers would be a growing market for consultants in the financial planning and investment industry. In 1983 Len, along with his brother Clarence, began their careers as financial advisors with Financial Concept Group. Both subsequently attained the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and Registered Financial Planner (RFP) designations.

In 1990, Len and Clarence opened an Ancaster office of Financial Concept Group, which became the first office of Bick Financial Security Corporation in 1992. Now there are

locations in Scarborough, Milton, Ancaster, Stoney Creek, Smithville, Grimsby and St. Catharines. Bick Financial employs 46 people and the company has developed an excellent reputation. The brothers have a great partnership and bring different strengths to the company.

Clients often ask the difference between an 'investment advisor' and a 'financial planner'. An investment advisor focuses primarily on investments in the context of an individual's risk tolerance and investment knowledge. Financial planners take a more holistic approach and consider the client's stage in life, personal circumstances and retirement goals before making recommendations.

"Investment advice is critical," says Len. This is where Len's experience plays an important role. "Clients want to have a high degree of certainty when it comes to the portfolios that will fund their retirement." Risk management, tax and estate planning are other areas of expertise that one should expect from a seasoned financial planner.

"At Bick Financial, we have knowledgeable and caring financial advisors and planners, backed by systems and proven strategies, who consistently deliver results for our clients," says Len. "We think differently. We want to understand the real goals and dreams of our clients, not just the financial ones. People are looking for forward-

thinking firms. We create programs to help individuals overcome obstacles to their goals."

Len's team includes Ruth Ann Gillis and Adrienne Sprogis. "Each of us has unique knowledge and talents that come together to effectively serve our clients," says Len. "My focus is on planning and investment issues. Ruth Ann brings a wealth of experience and oversees administration, while Adrienne helps create financial plans and is knowledgeable in specific investment strategies. Clients can speak to any member of our team in confidence for advice."

With investments, there are ups and downs that can be stressful for clients. "Market declines and shocks like those that occurred in 1987, 1998 and 2002 serve as reminders that one of the most important services we provide to clients is to remain calm in the face of widespread market panic," says Len.

This dedicated professional has a unique outlook. "I have learned that



Grand Opening 1990, Len Bick, Reg Whynott, Bob Wade, Clarence Bick

worry is a waste of imagination. Instead, I devote my energies to serving my clients and finding new strategies that work in changing circumstances to achieve results in the long term. Having been in the business for 24 years, I can tell you that it works.” Len is working on his first book aimed at helping Canadians who are behind in saving for their retirement. “It’s not too late for most individuals to create something substantial for their future needs.”

Bick Financial is a privately owned financial planning and investment advisory company. Being independent is an advantage because the company can be more objective in giving advice and can adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Len and the other planners in the firm understand that knowledge is power, so continuing education is part of the culture. Clients are the beneficiaries of this knowledge, resulting in a high number of referrals.

“Because we implement time-proven approaches,” comments Len, “as well as develop new and effective strategies that are ‘outside the box’, our clients experience the results and are delighted, ultimately referring us to their friends and family.”

The company also has a real community focus. “Bick Financial sets aside time and a generous budget to support community events. We are proud to encourage staff’s involvement in community and charity organizations and events.”



Anna-Marie, Lou-Ann, Melissa, Cassandra, Jessica, Len and Daniel Bick

Well known locally, Len has been named ‘One of the Best’ in the financial planner category by Hamilton Spectator readers. He has written hundreds of articles on financial planning and investing.

Len indeed works hard but keeps everything in balance. He is an avid hockey player and coaches a girl’s hockey team. He also enjoys golf, skiing and camping with his family. Len is a member of the Ancaster Rotary Club AM as well as the Rehoboth United Reformed Church in Ancaster.

Contributing to Len’s success is the support of his family. Married to Lou-Ann since 1979, Len and his wife have five children: Anna-Marie, Jessica, Daniel, Cassandra and Melissa. Four of the children are currently in university. “My wife Lou-Ann inspires me and keeps me focused.” Over the years, each family member has been involved in the business in some way.

This knowledgeable expert’s advice for new people entering the industry is this: “Work only with people that you like and respect. I am surrounded by great people,” says Len. He conducts his business in a manner that ensures he will be respected and sought out. “Never compromise on doing the right thing. Hire the right people. Work hard for your clients and the business will take care of itself.”

Len has found this industry truly rewarding and plans to continue to grow his team in order to better serve his clients. “I enjoy meeting people from all walks of life and helping them plan and execute strategies to achieve their life goals.” Helping clients achieve financial security is a focus that clients can relate to and benefit from.

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