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Half a year, as they say, is a long time in politics. (Well actually, they were talking about a week, but let’s not quibble.) As the winter solstice and the ensuing festivities bear down on us, it’s quite hard to reflect that it’s been a full six months since Theresa May lost her electoral halo in the mid-June election, in the sort of dramatic throwaway election decision that would have made a decent plot for any Greek tragedy.

You know the storyline already. She whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. Or proud, or triumphant, or something like that. Not that any of those descriptions properly fit Theresa May’s description, we might protest. Decent, yes, determined, yes, intelligent, yes, principled, probably, argumentative, yes – but mad? Surely not?

No change, honestly

That doesn’t alter the fact that the knives are currently out in the forum, and that the Brutuses and the Cassiuses (Bruti and Cassii?) are still plotting. But so far, so good. As December approached, the heavily-rumoured conspiracies against the iron-effect-lady were still in welcome abeyance, and even her continental adversaries seemed aware that, if they undermined her too badly, they’d only open the way for a coup d’état from the Borisites or the Govites, or even the Corbynites. And that would be worse than anything.

Praise be, then, for Mrs May’s Chancellor, Philip Hammond, who delivered just enough on 22 November to keep the spittle-flecked hordes at bay without opening up too much of a vulnerable flank.

His deceptively skilful Budget speech absorbed all the economic bad news, without appearing to concede that anything much needed to be done to improve matters.

Oh, he said, the country would be building 300,000 homes within eight or nine years, and we’d beef up our tech investment with extended tax incentives for risk investment, and we’d reinstate George Osborne’s forgotten talk about the Northern Powerhouse, but otherwise it was going to be business as usual. For once, there was no need for big changes to taxation or pensions; just an incentive for first time housebuyers and a quick bung to the National Health Service, and the job was done.

Crowd pleaser

To nobody’s great surprise, the London stock market applauded. Well, sort of. (Question - do you detect a pattern here?) The Footsie’s stability during the next few days seemed to suggest that relief rather than adrenaline was driving the trend as we all rolled toward the Christmas bonus season. All we had to do was hold our collective breath, and we’d make into through to the spring with, well, a spring in our step.

Is that confidence justified? I ask that question in a wide-open way. Bearing in mind, of course, that the Footsie has been supported by the multinationals who account for so much of its weight. And that gold, oil and financial stocks have been in an uptrend that has more to do with warring Middle Easterners than with the success of Philip Hammond’s local prognostications.

Or that Mrs May and her Brexit ministers can expect a personal carpeting in Brussels - not to say a carpet-beating! - unless she can move the withdrawal agenda forward in a meaningful sort of way. Any hold-ups in negotiating trade deals would clobber British industry and commerce in ways that are hardly being voiced at present. But you can take it that investment, job creation and the entire question of where to site the European command and control room are being discussed, and urgently so. The shareholders would expect nothing less.

Where does that leave the Prime Minister? Still in charge, still centre stage, but still in need of her prompter as the pantomime plot develops at a pace that would leave Ant and Dec breathless. Is she in danger of getting voted off the island?

“Oh no she isn’t.”

“Oh yes she is.”

“They’re behiiiiiiiiind you…”

Happy Christmas!

Michael Wilson
Editor-in-Chief
Advisers falsely claiming Certified Financial Planner™ status risk being taken to court and expulsion from the Institute, says CISI

In response to the latest Which? report on financial advisers publishing false credentials in online, paid-for listings services, Kevin Moore Chartered FCSI, CISI Global Head of Business Development said: “If we get to hear of any advisers falsely claiming to hold the Certified Financial Planner™ designation, or any of our designations, we will investigate this immediately.

“If subsequently we discover the adviser is fraudulently misrepresenting themselves we will take disciplinary or legal action against that individual and this could result in that individual losing their membership of the CISI.

“We would like to remind all CISI members and CFP™ professionals that they are personally responsible for updating all details relevant to their CISI membership, CFP™ designation or Accredited Financial Planning Firms™ status listing on commercial listings websites which they themselves may have paid for and signed up to.

“All CISI members have to comply with the CISI Code of Conduct which requires members to uphold the highest personal and professional standards at all times, and act with integrity whilst seeking to avoid any acts, omissions or business practices which damage the reputation of their organisation or the financial services industry”.

The CISI has a list of all CFP™ professionals and Accredited Financial Planning Firms™ status on its consumer-facing Wayfinder website or details can be verified via the CISI’s member directory.

Of course, there are other financial services qualifications which could be abbreviated to the letters of CFP™ however planners and paraplanners are warned to take care that they aren’t infringing any rules when using such abbreviations. The term CFP™ is heavily trade marked by the global financial planning body the Financial Planning Standards Board and can only be used in relation to the Certified Financial Planner™ qualification.
Congratulations to the winners of the PFS 2017 Personal Finance Awards

On Wednesday, 22 November, the Personal Finance Society (PFS) held its 2017 Personal Finance Awards dinner, supported by NS&I, at the Camden Roundhouse in London.

It was a glittering ceremony which reflected the standards of excellence demonstrated by so many worthy candidates who had entered the PFS awards.

The team at IFA Magazine wishes to congratulate all the award winners as well as those who were runners up.

The flagship award of the year went to Philip Rose of Group IFA, who was named as Chartered Financial Planner of the Year. Philip is pictured below (centre) receiving his award from Ian Ackerley, chief executive officer for NS&I (left), together with host, Gyles Brandreth.

Among the other awards was a very popular, posthumous ‘lifetime achievement’ honour for AJ Bell’s head of platform technical, Mike Morrison, who died very suddenly in November at the age of just 55.

The nine main awards (see right) were again complemented by a further six media awards for both the consumer and trade press.

“The exceptionally high standard of the candidates presented the judges with an extremely difficult choice in every single category, which is testament to the expertise and excellence of all that were shortlisted,” commented Personal Finance Society chief executive, Keith Richards.

“We commend their professionalism across the board and the important role they play in raising standards and inspiring public trust.”

Chartered Financial Planner of the Year
Phillip Rose - Group IFA

Chartered Financial Planning Firm of the Year
Capital Asset Management

Investment Advice Specialist of the Year
Olivia Bowen - Castlefield

Retirement and Later Life Advice Specialist of the Year
Allan Cruse - Strategic Solutions

Paraplanner of the Year
Grahame Hopper - VWM Wealth

Mortgage & Protection Advice Specialist of the Year
Rachel Lane - Group Rapport

Special Award for Outstanding Consumer Engagement
Pete Matthew - Jacksons Wealth Management

Lifetime Achievement Award
Mike Morrison - AJ Bell

MoneyPlanner of the Year
James Lawton - Futures Assured
Financial services profession pays tribute to pensions expert Mike Morrison, following his sudden death

Like so many people across the profession, IFA Magazine was very sad to hear the news in November of the sudden death of Mike Morrison. Mike was an incredibly well-liked, well-known and respected member of the profession.

Following his death, he was given the prestigious lifetime achievement award at the annual Personal Finance Society awards, which took place in November in London. It was the first time that the award had been made posthumously and clearly the award was both popular and well-deserved.

Accepting the award, Tom Selby, senior analyst at AJBell, gave a very moving speech in tribute to his former colleague. Clearly emotional, he said that Mike would have been incredibly proud to have received the award.

Mike joined AJ Bell in 2012, where he was head of platform technical. He was a regular press commentator and a veteran of the adviser seminar circuit, speaking to hundreds of advisers every year via AJ Bell’s ‘On the road’ adviser roadshow. Mike was 55 and leaves a wife and young daughter.

Andy Bell, chief executive at AJ Bell, comments: "Mike was never more comfortable than when he was in a room full of financial advisers talking about complex pension topics in his unique, engaging and light hearted way. He was one of the most popular pension commentators in the industry and leaves behind many friends and colleagues.

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LET’S TALK HOW.

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“Most importantly he was a dearly loved husband and father and our thoughts and support are with his family at this difficult time. He will be sorely missed by everyone at AJ Bell.”

Sue Whitbread, Editor of IFA Magazine, also knew Mike well. She said: “I was so sad to hear this awful news which came as a real shock to me. Mike was a very special person and incredibly knowledgeable. He had the knack of making complicated technical matters sound simple, which when it came to pensions was always a plus! More than that though, it was his kindness, his patience and willingness to help others that really stood out. He was one of the good guys – and he will be very sadly missed by everyone who knew him. Our thoughts are very much with his family who must be devastated by their loss.”

Mike Morrison, much loved and greatly missed.

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Patience to be rewarded

As you’ll gather from this month’s Budget coverage on pages 32-35, Chancellor Philip Hammond’s Budget speech contained such a very short section on the forthcoming reforms to higher risk investment that you could have been forgiven for not noticing it at all.

Which would seem like a surprising omission, given that the Treasury’s plans for reforming the Enterprise Investment Scheme and Venture Capital Scheme have been brewing for the last 18 months, and that the sums involved amount to £20 billion or so. But the Chancellor is a busy man, and on Budget Day he had more on his mind than the needs of affluent and sophisticated investors seeking to optimise their use of tax-efficient strategies such as EIS, SES and VCTs.

So, to business. The Treasury has been concerned for several years that wily investors are using these schemes, intended to reward brave investors in high-risk enterprises, in ways that aren’t really that risky at all. Either they focus on companies that have great walls of capital protection, such as property or other assets, or else they were out-and-out wangles that used rebates and planned losses to eat their cake while still keeping it safely in the tin. And getting the 30% upfront tax rebates and other benefits as well.

The so-called Patient Capital consultation and review recommended in October that the government should disqualify the 62% of such schemes that just weren’t risky enough for the Revenue’s tastes. And on Budget Day Mr Hammond sent a confirmatory response to the Patient Capital people, promising a raft of new measures which will come into force next April, or in some cases earlier. As follows:

- From 6 April, investors will be allowed to invest up to £2 million a year into patient capital, compared with only £1 million. That doubles their immediate cashback to £600,000 a year.

- But only if the companies they or their funds invest in are truly “knowledge-intensive”. Any other businesses, such as restaurants or horse-training centres or ballet schools or bakeries, will have to prove that they are genuinely high-risk and not just a soft option based on a cushion of safe assets. A “risk to capital” test is being introduced to weed out the slackers.

- Investee companies will be able to take in £10 million of venture a year, instead of £5 million at present. And the rules that say that they must be under ten years old or within ten years of first turning over £200,000 will also do.

- VCTs face a whole raft of regulatory tweaks that will require them (among other things) to hold at least 80% of their holdings from qualifying companies, instead of 70%. They’ll get longer to re-invest any dividends that they receive, but they’ll be barred from making soft loans to their investee companies. Or from wangling cash back to their investors in various obscure ways.

- A mighty £20 billion package of enterprise funding is to be built around various vehicles from the British Business Bank – of which the government will probably be funding about a third. The rest of the money will come either by persuading investors to join in, or else by building funds that can be floated off on the stock market at a later date.

- Lastly, and most controversially, the Treasury is looking for ways to let pension funds invest in high-risk tax-efficient assets. Yes, there’s a recognition that this isn’t what pensions normally do, so the idea is just at the consultation stage. But generally, the Treasury is aware that the lowering of the lifetime pension allowance to (currently) £1 million has created a pent-up pool of money looking for tax-effective alternatives. It’s a meeting of convergent needs. Isn’t it?

- The new rules may also allow pension trustees, especially in defined benefit schemes, to invest similarly. No details are due for some time yet.
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2018: A Wall of Worry

We need twelve months of normality, says Michael Wilson.
But will we get it? Chance would be a fine thing

Is it only me who’d like to see the word ‘disruptive’ deleted from the dictionary, just for one short year?

Okay, here’s the deal for 2018. We’ll put up with the Oxford English Dictionary giving us post-truth and selfie and vape, and maybe even covfefe, and in return we’ll enjoy a blissful twelve month break from the accursed D word. Quite frankly, it’s beginning to scare me a bit.

Yes, I know that January is a time for out with the old and in with the new. And yes, “creative destruction” is a wonderful, vibrant thing as long as it doesn’t slip its leash and run completely riot in the park and bite everybody. But it’s not just Uber and Tesla and P2P and the challenger banks that I’m talking about here. It’s the kind of disruptive that seems to have flourished around the two most toxic topics in the papers, Trump and Brexit.

What with Breitbart and 4Chan and fake news and covert election-influencing; what with midnight Twittering and £350 million a week for the National Health Service; what with Kim Jong Un and Mr Trump’s “modern presidential” style, we seem to be witnessing a sea change in the entire public edifice of truth and trust on which our civilisation is based.

Normalising the post-truth world

What bothers me especially about that is that the public is beginning to accept all this stuff as normal. So who cares if Donald Trump or Boris Johnson or Vladimir Putin say things they don’t mean, people are starting to say? These are good strong figures who are leading the world boldly into the future, albeit erratically, and they’re sweeping away all the namby-pamby ideological clutter that liberal democracy has lumbered us with.

Nor is the disruptive reality limited just to the politicos. Quantitative easing and negative bond yields and the VIX volatility index and crypto-currencies such as bitcoin are all instances of the new market truths that might very well be real and important - but which also have the potential to become abusive if we don’t keep a tight grip on them.

If we ever feel that politicians’ stock is generally suffering from all this bombardment, we should be careful not to absolve the financial markets from blame for some downright manipulative behaviour as well.

I mean, quantitative easing is a very useful one-off shot to have in your locker when demand is low and volatility is high, but have you ever sat down and wondered who pays for the extra liquidity in the end? Does it get painlessly distributed through all levels of society, as some would have us believe, or is it a debt to our grandchildren? There are those who say that this disruptive stuff has the power to start an inter-generational war. Jeremy Corbyn probably wouldn’t disagree.

Okay, I’ll get off my pedestal in a moment, because we have a lot of ground to cover and time is
running short. Oh for the blissful
days and the green remembered
hills where the only disruptive
model we needed to worry
about was Naomi Campbell.
So, without further ado, let’s
take a look into the crystal ball
and see where this complicated
scenario is likely to take us.

**Elections**

With one minor exception, or
maybe two, 2018 is probably
not going to be the electoral
terror that 2017 once promised
to be. Apart from bitterly-
fought presidential showdowns
in Mexico (July 2018), Brazil
(October) and Venezuela
(autumn), the political
battlefields of the Americas
are going to be dominated by
the 6 November mid-term
Senate elections – of which
more anon, obviously.
Pakistan is due to hold a tense
presidential and general election
by 3 September at the latest, and
Zimbabwe will presumably be
voting in a new administration
as soon as the country’s military
guardians are feeling confident
enough to allow a poll. There
will be general elections in
Thailand (November), Malaysia
(no date set), a presidential
election in Egypt (February
to May), and a parliamentary
election in Afghanistan (July).
Clearly, any of these could
provoke trouble, but they don’t
appear to be the kinds of top-
grade risk events that we’ve seen
in recent years. China and Hong
Kong have no elections coming
up, although Taiwan has a local
election coming up (no date),
during which the often fraught
differences between nationalists
and unificationists can be
expected to dictate the discourse.
Nothing new there, then.

And whereas continental Europe
has faced (and survived) a series
of nasty 2017 elections which
threatened to bring nationalism
and anti-Europeanism to the
fore – and whereas, on the
whole, it succeeded in voting
them down in France, Germany,
Italy, the Netherlands and
elsewhere – there are relatively
few major polls coming up in
the new year. Unless Germany’s
stalemate continues, obviously?
Perhaps the toughest to call
will be in the Czech Republic,
where the incumbent centre-left
Miloš Zeman, a former Prime
Minister, is due to face the polls
in January against some worries
about his health; and in Hungary,
where the April poll will pit
the incumbent Viktor Orban
and his eurosceptic and anti-
immigrant Fidesz party against
sentiment from the even-further
right. Zeman in Prague is also a
migrant-refuser who was among
the first leaders in Europe to
welcome the election of Donald
Trump in the United States.
That’s somebody who Brussels
will be watching closely, then.

**Top Trumps (continued)**

The surprising thing next year
will be if the king disrupter,
President Donald Trump,
alters his erratic behaviour at
all. The ten months since his
inauguration in January have
confirmed that the blustering,
overbearing, bullying and
name-calling Republican Party
candidate of 2016 has become
the blustering, overbearing,
bullying and name-calling
president we should have
expected all along. As to whether
the Prez’s character will move
the financial markets in 2018,
that’s quite another matter.

Trump’s front-line political
bodyguard squad, consisting of
generals John Kelly, James Mattis
and Herbert McMaster and
former oil boss Rex Tillerson,
are likely to continue doing a
good job protecting the President
until the day he fires them…

Oddly, however, Mr Trump’s
America has proved to be a good
dea more resilient than expected
during 2017. Production is doing
fine, and unemployment is low
(although US jobless figures
are always deceptive because
they exclude many millions
who have simply abandoned
the search for work). There’s
room for speculation as to
how much of this he owes to
the Obama legacy (which also
saw a soaring stock market),
and how much to the promise
of the tax cuts programme
which was winding had finally completed its way through the Senate as we went to press.

On the face of it, Trump is proposing to give away a vast and apparently unaffordable net sum, and some of that money will go to middle income Americans and to the wealthy; the main beneficiaries, however, are businesses which will pay a lower top corporate tax rate.

At least, that’s what they think - in practice, a large chunk of new taxes will come in from the likes of Apple, Facebook and Starbucks who have ingeniously offshored their earnings until now, but who the new rules will force to repatriate it.

In some ways it’s quite hard not to like that idea, but Mr Trump needs to force the tax plan through first. And at present, his stumbling chances of succeeding in the one and only policy success of his presidency so far depends on the Republicans’ willingness to concede that Trump’s tax policy is their best hope of keeping their seats in next November’s mid-term elections.

And that’s going to be the crunch in 2018. The tax plan is what’s attracting foreign money into America; but will it run away again if it fails? Trump’s scheme has weakened the dollar, which in turn has helped with the trade deficit, but the threat of trade wars with China, Mexico, Canada and Europe may yet cast a shadow over 2018 which would show us how self-sufficient America’s ebullient economy really is.

It’s a bit of an all-or-nothing strategy. Can the economy live up to the President’s own bluster during 2018? Or will Trump’s scheme be ruined by his own thick-skinned swagger, or by his willingness to insult foreigners of every kind?

If it comes unwound, there’s a danger that it could unravel quite quickly. Here’s hoping not.

There, and I haven’t mentioned the Russia inquiry even once, have I?

The B word

Over on this side of the Pond, Prime Minister Theresa May is facing a different kind of disruptive threat. Having personally committed Britain to leaving the EU by March 2019 (by activating Article 50 last March), the PM has defined her role in the history books, for better or worse. Irrevocably, too, unless something gives way, either on her own side or else in Brussels.

As 2017 draws to a close, it is becoming retrospectively apparent that the rosy economic statistics that followed the June 2016 referendum vote were a flash in the pan; by this autumn consumer demand was down, growth was down, inflation was rising, and so was personal debt. (Consumers, it seemed, had financed a brief spell of splurging with new credit, and were showing signs of slowing.)

Moody’s had downgraded the country’s credit rating, and Chancellor Philip Hammond had come under pressure to abandon the fiscal goal of balancing the budget by 2010.

It would hardly be wise to try and second-guess what the EU27 will do during 2018, but it would be equally unwise to suppose that they are anything but exasperated with our expectation that they’ll devote very much more time to negotiating with us. That in turn is likely to come back and bite the PM quite hard – can she maintain control of the hard-line Brexiteers in her own Cabinet?

As December approaches, it’s not at all clear that Mrs May’s stumbling command can hold out. Her weary expression and the slight nervous yodel in her voice are telling us more about the strains of office than her brave talk of strength and stability. And all the time, business leaders are imploring her to make better progress with securing the transitional arrangements after March 2019. Nobody is looking forward to jumping off a cliff without even a parachute, let alone a compass.

Will all this impact on the British economy? Unless sterling
plummets far enough to lift our exports substantially, it seems highly likely. By the time you read this you’ll know what was in the 22 November Budget (see pages 32-35), and hopefully the path will have become clearer.

What business is very clear about, however, is that Jeremy Corbyn would be only too happy to lead a socialist revolution in Britain if she fails.

**Interest rates going up**

If there’s one thing we can predict with confidence, it’s that interest rates are on the rise. In Britain and in America, central banks have already begun a cautious series of increases which they expect to continue during the new year. But it’s a delicate task requiring careful balancing.

Too slow, and you weaken your currency and drive investment abroad. Too fast, and you choke off the recovery before it’s properly under way. And if you’re doing it to control inflation, you need to be very sure whether those rising prices represent excess demand, or whether it’s just that externally-d dictated prices for oil or foodstuffs have gone up for reasons that have nothing to do with your national economy.

A hospital specialist once explained to me that, when you get a patient brought in with extreme hypothermia, you don’t heat him up as fast as possible, because that will just drop his blood pressure and you’ll have a nice warm corpse on your hands before you know it.

Instead, you warm him by a degree or so every six hours, which will get you where you want to be. That’s why it would be surprising if rates rose by more than half a percentage point during 2018.

But even that would be enough to sharpen the economic divide between the young (who borrow, through mortgages and student loans) and the old (who lend). More fuel for a disaffected youth demographic! Will the Prime Minister’s worries never end?

Actually there are far more serious causes for concern. If interest rates go up, either in Britain, in Europe or in the United States, then so will government bond yields, and that will impact on bond prices in a way that is virtually certain to send the Great Rotation back into equities – a place where valuations are already too high for some analysts’ comfort. It’s a wall of worry.

**The dreaded omnibubble**

But let’s take a look at those equity valuations, because there are those who say that today’s apparently inflated ratios are not as high as they seem. Even the Financial Times’s highly-respected (and cautious) Martin Wolf wrote recently that perhaps this time it really was different.

Pause for effect. We are used to the old wisdom that when the shoe-shine boy at your hotel tells you to buy stocks, then it’s time to sell. But an eminence grise like Mr Wolf? Really?

Wolf doesn’t disagree that much of the investment universe is in bubble territory, and he says he’s uncomfortable that assets are moving in lock-step.

(An “omnibubble”, as he calls it.) But when we observe that the cyclically-adjusted Shiller ten year ratio for the S&P 500 is at its second-highest ever level (higher than 1929 but still well below 1997-2001), are we clear about what we’re looking at?

Wolf’s argument revolves around inverting the Shiller ratio to obtain a cyclically-adjusted earnings yield which allows us to measure prospective real returns. And on that measure, he says, the current US ratio is 3.4%, which doesn’t sound so bad.

It sounds even better when you consider that CAPE estimates for Germany and the UK roll out at cyclically-adjusted real earnings yields of 5.1% and 6.2% respectively. While Japan scores a historically high-ish 4.1% yield. (Japan was never a place for particularly high earnings yields.) Wolf’s conclusion is that the US is the only major market where CAPE ratios are badly out of...
step with the long-term trends: those of other major markets are still well within bounds. Then again, there are those who say that any ten-year comparison of stock ratios, such as the CAPE, is bound to be illusory because the current numbers still include the terrible collapse of 2007/2008. Once those figures have rolled out of the calculation - presumably during mid-2018? – the whole picture should look more rosy. Not necessarily wonderful, you understand, but a bit less overcooked.

**What’s still hot for 2018?**

So if developed market stocks are close to a peak in 2018 and fixed interest is looking profoundly overdue for a correction, what’s there left to be positive about? Many analysts are agreed that probably the most promising area for investment at the moment lies in the emerging market area, where economic growth is still bucketing along at an impressive rate and where China, in particular, looks set to enhance its lead.

Now, admittedly, some of that is happening because President Xi is taking advantage of President Trump’s willingness to withdraw from global political leadership – and to that extent, the whole picture is subject to political influence. South America is seeing some of the regrowth that has been awaited for most of the last stalled decade – which is one reason why the 2018 polls in Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia are all worth watching.

So is the political situation in India, where growth has stalled under the initially promising leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Can he get the motor of growth restarted in 2018? It’s a good question.

We could speculate that an incipient conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia will reignite the oil supply question, but first we’d need to accept that global over-supply of oil is quite severe and that a lot of tankers are laid up around the world. But for all that, the commodities sector appears to be moving out of its cyclical slumber these days, and if there’s one thing we can be sure of, it’s that the plant is not making minerals the way it used to.

Will 2018 be the year when synthetic ETFs finally give way to physical funds? I’ll leave that question floating, if you don’t mind.

All I’ll say is that consumers are showing a distinct preference these days for physically-backed funds, which I personally take as a welcome sign that the issues of counterparty risk and the hyperbolic nature of derivative structures is becoming more widely understood. Heaven forbid that 2018 should provide us with any more reminders of the advantages of physical possession. Still, the management costs are lower, I suppose?

**As for the planet...**

Well, as far as we know we aren’t going to be wiped out by any passing asteroids. Unlike last September, when asteroid Bennu missed the earth by a million miles or so (quite a close shave in the bigger picture of things), there are no major cosmic calamity collisions...
forecast for 2018 – although a tiny 15 metre rock did pass between the moon and the earth in October (oops), and although NASA is keeping close tabs on a number of other asteroids, just for safety’s sake.

That’s not to say that errant rocks can’t cause problems. A recent uptrend in seismic activity – both volcanoes and earthquakes - has been getting the scientists worried. Recent well-publicised quakes in California, Iran, South Korea and Italy have been seen as an indication that global seismic activity may be ‘waking up’ after a period of relative quiescence. And Mount Agung in Indonesia was reported at the time of writing to be brewing up for an eruption which had forced a general evacuation. There are also reports of new (or rather, renewed) volcanic activity in Iceland.

Where’s next? We have absolutely no idea, but quakes and tsunamis are by far the bigger worry because of their ability to swamp heavily populated areas. But can we plan for these events if we think we’re entering a cycle of activity?

Only insofar as we can calculate the mean times between events and then listen for warnings in the ground.

They won’t help to protect New York or Florida or San Francisco (or Tokyo)

if the Big One ever hits, but that’s a threat that the financial world has had to live with for long enough now. The last really major quake, in Tokyo in 1988, had a surprisingly brief impact which was quickly absorbed – thanks, not least, to the heavily internationalised market structure which has proved itself able to carry on regardless even when major trading centres have been knocked out.

**Hurricane force**

That’s about as far as the good news goes, however. 2017’s devastating sweep of hurricanes, particularly in the Caribbean and central America, is being seen in some quarters as a portent of things to come. Not least, because of the inescapable evidence that sea temperatures are rising both in the Gulf and in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

We could argue the toss about whether or not these rising temperatures are the result of man-made interference, or whether (as per President Trump) it’s just the earth telling us that it’s going into a cyclical warming phase.

The one thing we know about rising sea temps, however, is that they cause hurricanes.

And hurricanes, as you’ll know, have just smashed Bermuda and the Caymans and Barbuda and Saint Martin (“95% destroyed”), and Costa Rica and the British Virgin Islands where Richard Branson’s pad was levelled. There are valid questions to be answered as to what we’ll do if the storms return often enough to make these islands effectively uninhabitable in the future. But those questions are not being aired sufficiently, if at all.

And some of these bashed islands, remember, are the preferred tax havens of much of the western world. Are we asking those questions as well? I’m expecting to see the topic surfacing during the new year. Aren’t you?

As always, there are significant economic issues for advisers and planners to consider when making asset allocation decisions for 2018, and we’ve touched on many of them here. The wall of worry is there but providing clients with insight, guidance and peace of mind from knowing that their investment portfolios are properly diversified in order to weather whatever the world decides to throw at us, means that the role of professional advice has never been more important. Wishing all our readers a happy New Year, whatever it might bring!
Will 2018 be a happy New Year for investors?

It’s been a funny old year, has 2017. Brian Tora is in reflective mood as he considers the events of the past year and looks ahead to what 2018 might have in store.

While investors have, overall, been treated well during 2017, there have been plenty of upsets along the way and in some ways the continued optimism enjoyed by markets seems at odds with events. Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of the year is the speed at which circumstances can change – both for nations and for companies. In turn this has demonstrated that even the most revered of managers can find their investment strategy undermined by unforeseen events. It certainly has been a funny year.

Us and them

Aside from political upheavals – Trump’s ascendency to the White House, May’s unfortunate judgment in going to the country, Macron’s overturning of the political establishment in France and the threatened break up of Spain – the Euro zone’s fourth largest economy – economic uncertainties cloud the outlook. At home, life after Brexit is looking challenging, with the Bank of England warning of massive job losses in the City of London if no trade deal is reached, whilst elsewhere threats of a trade war with America and the ending of quantitative easing hardly point to a settled future.

Indeed, Central Banks are playing a powerful role in determining the direction of markets. Having arguably rescued the global economy from prolonged recession by printing money furiously, the cash tap is now being progressively turned off. What affect this might have on economic wellbeing and on financial assets is difficult to gauge.
The expectation that loose monetary policy would spark inflation turned out not to be the case. But financial assets prospered during this period, leading many to wonder just how much of the cash generated found its way into markets.

Can we learn a lesson from the Millennium Bug?
There is arguably a precedent for this. In 1999, Fed Governor Alan Greenspan eased monetary policy ahead of the new millennium. His concern was that the functionality of banks would be interrupted as the clocks ticked over from 1999 to 2000 – the so-called “Millennium Bug”. By pumping money into the system he hoped to avoid a liquidity crisis if the worst happened and bank computers shut down in the New Year.

As it happened, the millennium bug turned out to have little bite and the main beneficiary of the Fed’s munificence appeared to be the army of IT specialists hired by all manner of businesses to head off the impending disaster. Except there was another IT gain over this period. The technology bubble had its roots in the late 1990s as hordes of companies were formed to exploit the growing dependence of business and society upon computers. Many were floated on the stock market on little more than a promise of riches to come in the future, financed by an insatiable appetite amongst investors to ride the technology bandwagon.

Was it just a coincidence that the bubble burst in March 2000, the very month that Mr Greenspan reined in the cash he had freely doled out just a few months previously? It made 2000 a bumpy year for markets, as so-called legacy industries were first shunned and then returned to favour as the technology companies that had replaced them amongst the leaders fell from grace and in many cases disappeared altogether. The FTSE 100 Share Index suffered the biggest number of constituent changes in its history – before or since.

The need to be nimble
So what might 2018 have in store for us as monetary conditions start to return to what passed as normal before the financial collapse of 2008?

The worry is that households, which have suffered falling income in real terms, may be ill prepared to cope with higher interest rates. And if the unforeseen side effect really was to bolster the value of financial assets, could they see a retrenchment if liquidity tightens? Only time will tell, but 2018 is looking like a year when investors will need to be nimble on their feet.

The Governor of the Bank of England at the time of the financial crisis of a decade ago was Mervyn, now Lord, King. An academic economist who joined the Bank in 1991 as Chief Economist, he penned his account of the upheaval that took place and posited some lessons for the future. Entitled “The End of Alchemy”, he concluded the old model was broken and that banks should never be allowed to gear themselves as much as they did in the run up to 2007, or to create such complex and little understood structures as those that accelerated the collapse.

We will have to see if governments and regulators heed his advice, but President Trump is already contending that the financial sector is over regulated. The signs are that the global economy is set to continue its recovery and that China is managing its transition to a consumer society better than could have been hoped. But geo-political issues lurk just over the horizon, while potential financial upsets must remain on any investors watch list. With luck we will survive the unwinding of QE unscathed and 2018 will not see the end of the longest running bull market in generations. But investors and their advisers need to keep a watchful eye on events.
Military Issues

In the Adviser Spotlight this month is Brian Hill, MD of advisory firm Jones Hill. Brian talks to Mike Wilson about how the advice process can be tailored to meet the specific needs of service and ex-service families.
I’ve always had an affinity with those who sign on the dotted line for Queen and Country. And for good reason. They tend to be very good delegators, are quick to learn, and are very loyal. But, as an adviser, I find that both ex and current military personnel often have different planning needs and financial circumstances compared to many other clients. And sometimes it can take a bit of inside knowledge from us as their advisers in order to help them make the most of their situations.

That’s where my years with the forces help to complete the picture. I joined the Army in the 1990s after having spent time living in the Middle East and travelling through Eastern Europe - about the same time as the Berlin Wall fell, something I’m sure you will remember. Although I was eventually war-pensioned out after an injury, the forces remained an area of special interest to me. These days, being based in Wiltshire, we are well placed to deal with a substantial number of serving and ex-servicemen; and then there’s also the fact that Wiltshire will soon be home to a large part of the Army relocating from Germany.

The military structure

Maybe we should start our look at this particular sector from a somewhat basic level. The military is broadly split into three parts: The Naval Service (made up of the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines) the Army and the Royal Air Force. There are other parts of the Ministry of Defence, such as the Royal Fleet Auxiliary which is a civilian-manned fleet supporting the Royal Navy. All Arms have a reserve, or part-time, element such as the Army Reserves.

All the armed forces split their personnel into commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers and other ranks. Each service has its own rank structure – a factor which can make it challenging for the uninitiated adviser to know just how senior the client sitting in his office is (or was). And it’s the client’s final rank, more than his final salary, which has an impact on his (or her) pension entitlement. Then there’s the tendency of those serving to train within different roles and to move between units, or even between different Arms.

For example, Prince Harry originally commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst into the Blues & Royals in 2008, but then moved on to the Army Air Corps in 2010. The various pension options along the way are also going to be unfamiliar to some advisers: it is possible, for instance, to transfer a military pension to another scheme that is a member of the Public Sector Transfer Club, and that may cause complications with recalculating the Annual Allowance.

Flexibility

It’s no great surprise that military personnel can spend many months on operations abroad, and as a financial adviser you need to be flexible with your meetings and to embrace technology to keep the relationship running. The client might have been seconded to a unit based in the USA, sent on operations in Afghanistan, or posted to Cyprus for two years. But he won’t be in your office for his six-monthly reviews. This is something you’ll need to work around.

Same but different

There are particular financial planning areas where specific knowledge is required.

School fees

The topic of school fees is one which comes up regularly with many clients, but for obvious reasons it’s more of an issue for those in the military. The Continuity of Education Allowance for Service Children (CEAS) assists service parents with the continuity of education for their children, which would otherwise be lost due to their parent moving with the job.

Parents can apply for a CEA Certificate which evidences their entitlement to financial support with their child’s
education and, if necessary, boarding. CEAS is typically worth £5,719 - £7,245 per term, although children with special needs have additional funding.

If you need the details of allowances, these can be found in Joint Service Publication 752 Part 2. But there are also many schools which offer discounts and bursaries for the children of service personnel – you can find a list at http://serviceschools.co.uk/cms/army_forces_awards/.

**Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS)**

Suffice it to say that armed forces pensions are not straightforward and need an expert eye. Upon leaving the forces, personnel may be entitled to a number of different payments, such as pension payments and Early Departure payments. And as an adviser, you need to know your way around them.

There are 3 AFPS schemes: 75, 05 and 15 – referring to the year in which they came in. It’s not uncommon for personnel to be members of more than one scheme. Any pension benefits accrued before the 2015 scheme came into place are protected. Pensions earned before 2005 are payable when the individual reaches age 60, however, like the state pension, individuals have to claim it, as payment won’t be made automatically. Members can be entitled to a tax-free lump sum, called an Early Departure Payment Lump Sum or a Terminal Grant.

I often encourage service personnel to join the Forces Pension Society, as it does a sterling job of fighting for the pension rights for them and their beneficiaries.

**Divorce**

You will find that proportionately more of your military clients will be married than their non-military counterparts, especially those under the age of 30.

It’s a commonly held belief that divorce rates within the UK military are higher than in ‘civvy street’. Although it has been shown, unsurprisingly, that marital difficulties are more likely where there has been a deployment of 13 months in a 3-year period, divorce rates are no higher with military personnel for those over the age of 30.

Divorce lawyers do tend to target military pensions, and they can often take a real hammering.

One of my clients had experienced a loss of 85% of his military pension following a divorce some years previously! Cashflow planning is a critical, non-negotiable part of our work with all of our clients, especially where divorce is concerned.

If you and your business are looking to specialise in this area, my tips on how to go about it are quite simple: ‘tell it straight’, know your stuff, be clear and transparent, and have a methodical structure with momentum. That way you’ll be best placed to strike a chord with those individuals and families with whom you hope to build a long-term planning relationship, to your mutual benefit.

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**Brian Hill is MD of Jones Hill, an independent Financial Advice practice based in Bradford on Avon in Wiltshire. Jones Hill operates a flat, fixed fee structure for all financial planning clients, both for the initial work and ongoing (they call it OnTrack).**

You can hear more about Brian’s approach to financial planning in an interview with the Financial Planning Training Academy. Brian also provides nonverbal communications training for Financial Advisers though Kinesics Method.

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Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future returns. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and clients may get back less than they invest. The funds may invest in overseas markets and so the value of investments can be affected by changes in currency exchange rates. The Fidelity Emerging Markets Quality Income UCITS ETF invests in small and emerging markets which can be more volatile than other more developed markets.
Narrowing your target audience may sound more like financial suicide than the path to growth. Surely, it makes more sense to spread your net as wide as possible and maximise your opportunities? As many successful financial planning firms are finding out for themselves, focusing on a particular sector of your ideal client base can help you to create clear marketing messages and provide a profitable direction to follow.

One of your business goals may be to gain twelve more clients in the next year. If you then decide to develop a marketing strategy focused on defining and creating a niche market, it will make it easier to see which routes to market to pursue and which specific actions are needed to fulfil that overall business goal.

But first, how do you decide which niche to go for and what really constitutes a niche?

When is a niche not a niche?

Many advisory firms describe themselves as catering for a niche market in terms of HNW individuals, business owners or people with £X of investible assets. While these may all be accurate, they’re too broad to be of much value in your marketing and will not give you a competitive advantage. After all, a niche isn’t a niche if most other financial firms want to service the same group of people.

Instead, a niche should identify a particular part of your target audience by specific criteria, such as age range, geography or occupation. One method of selection is known as the 3Ps - population, passion and product/service. Don’t just hone in on one of those categories, though, think of it as a Venn diagram and focus on the point of intersection. It could be empty nesters; interested in travel; looking for retirement planning.

Potential niches

Selecting your niche will obviously depend on your particular area of expertise. But also think about your current client base. Who do you like working with? Where do you feel you make the most difference? Do they have a common job? Do they share a typical problem (not just lack of planning)? One new and emerging niche is the HENRYs (High Earners, Not Rich Yet). These are typically younger than the average financial planning audience, let’s say in their mid-twenties or thirties. They’re perhaps likely to work in the medical or legal sector and will probably be based within commutable distance of a large city, where they can command a higher salary.

Facebook may or may not be where you think your potential niche ‘hang out’ but Facebook Audience Insights can be very helpful in enabling you to identify a new client base. You can test the size of that audience by location, job title and age and decide if that is a viable medium for any advertising campaign.

Another option is to see which pages of your website are being most regularly visited. Keyword Hero’s free version gives you keyword data for your 25
most frequently visited pages so you can see which issues are of most interest to your prospects. Hubspot Free will also give you data about who your leads are and what they did on your site. Both these tools may help you identify a niche you hadn’t previously considered.

**What does your niche enable you to do?**

Armed with a definition of your ‘niche market’, it will suddenly become clear how you should be marketing in order to attract them. Your marketing material can now be directly targeted with specific messaging - leading to a much greater chance of response. Howard Gossage, an American advertising innovator during the ‘Mad Men era’, famously said, ‘I don’t know how to write for everybody, only to somebody.’ How much easier is it to write effectively if you have a particular person in mind rather than some vague, amorphous group that may just happen to be interested in your service at some point in the future?

A sharper focus will streamline your efforts and ensure you’re not diluting your core message. So if you’ve decided to target doctors then tailor your marketing accordingly and make sure it just talks to doctors. They’ll feel you understand them and the issues that are important to them.

**Speak their language**

One of the most telling ways that shows how well you understand your audience is how you speak to them.

As an episode of BBC’s *The Apprentice* earlier in the autumn highlighted, if you’re dealing with the hospitality sector, you need to say ‘guests’ not ‘consumers.’ A HNW individual doesn’t call themselves a ‘HNW individual’, but a doctor does call themselves a doctor. So make sure you’re using the language of your prospect, not ‘industry speak.’ Try and come across as natural and authentic.

It’s a good idea to have a ‘tame’ member of your target audience to test out some of your marketing messages to see if they ring true.

One note of caution: a market notoriously difficult to get right is the teenage one. They will spot an infiltrator a mile off! Neutral, friendly and approachable, in this instance, is usually more successful than attempting to use the ‘in phrase’ and getting it wrong!

**What’s a marketing persona?**

How do you apply your marketing campaigns to your niche? The most important step right at the outset is to draw up a marketing persona - a fictionalised representation of your target audience which helps you to address specific concerns, rather than fall into the trap of broad generalisations. There are lots of free templates online to get you started. This is where you really get under the skin of your ideal prospect. What do they do? Where do they live? What are their hobbies? But you’ll go into much more detail too. What are their concerns? Their daily frustrations? Their ultimate ambitions? Answering probing questions like these will ensure your personas are the right ones and not just based on your assumptions.

The better you know your ‘niche market’, the better you can communicate with them. And the better you can communicate with them, the more likely they are to engage with you and become a long-term client with all the mutually rewarding benefits which that brings.

Sam’s original article, on creating a marketing strategy for your advisory firm, can be found in the August issue of IFA Magazine or on www.IFAMagazine.com

ClientsFirst is a marketing agency which specialises in working with financial services firms.

Website: www.clients-first.co.uk
Change, Choice and Consultation

Lee Pringle, Wealth Planner at Succession Group, gives a planner’s perspective on the challenges of advising clients on defined benefits pension benefits and why a detailed assessment of each individual scenario is essential when considering suitability of a transfer.

It was an interesting year. The Falklands War began, Bobby Robson was appointed England Manager and Mark Thatcher got lost in the middle of the Sahara. Meanwhile, health workers demanded a 12% pay rise, and Laker Airways collapsed, adding to the 14% unemployment figures for the UK [source: Bank of England].

It’s 1982; in the same year the DeLorean car factory is put into receivership, the Ford Sierra is launched to buyer controversy for its “ultra-modern aerodynamic styling”. This is the year when long-dated gilt yields were 14%. It was also the year that The Clash released their only number-one single, “Should I Stay or Should I Go?”.

The defined benefits conundrum

Okay, it’s a tenuous link, possibly already overused in the industry, but one that reflects the “talk of the town” at the moment, which is around defined benefit pension transfers. It’s the basis of important decisions facing many advisers and clients right across the UK. Should they stay or should they go? Do they take the transfer value which is on offer and hope for the best, or stick with the defined benefit (DB)scheme?

The changes in pension legislation since April 2015 have somewhat divided opinion in the adviser community on the respective advantages and disadvantages of considering a transfer of DB benefits to a defined contribution (DC) arrangement.

The regulator’s stance

The FCA’s current guidance is clear that the starting position should always be that a transfer of defined or safeguarded benefits will not be suitable. A transfer should only be considered suitable with demonstrable, contemporary evidence that the transfer is
in the client’s best interests. However, it is important to recognise that the economic and legislative environment has changed significantly in recent years. Clients now have more options available to them when accessing their pension savings. In addition, recent changes to the financial and political environment, have led to historically high levels of transfer values.

The advice process

After this period of FCA consultation, the FCA will, of course, continue to insist that the focus remains on whether a transaction is right for the client, and that it is assessed on a case by case basis from a neutral starting position.

As advisers, our responsibility is, therefore, to establish, and fully evaluate, the client’s financial circumstances, needs and objectives, as these will help indicate whether transferring the scheme may be appropriate or not.

While a client’s objectives may be the reason he or she has sought our advice, the client’s needs must also influence the advice process. We cannot underestimate the importance of using cashflow modelling to build a financial plan as part of this advice - and the subsequent review – process, that addresses the client’s needs, goals and aspirations.

Analysis should, therefore, include sufficient information for advisers to understand and explain how prioritising any of the client’s objectives may result in trade-offs.

For example, if the client is prioritising death benefits, then the pension freedom reforms offer the opportunity to pass these substantial funds down the generation in a very tax efficient manner. However, it is also imperative that any adverse impact of this on potential income should be illustrated.

The value of assessing and prioritising a client’s needs and objectives is hugely significant. This becomes particularly pertinent when you have experienced the impact of your advice at first-hand, as the following example highlights.

Encouragingly, the FCA in its June 2017 Consultation Paper (CP17/16-Advising on Pension Transfers) stated:

“We are taking this opportunity to re-state the starting assumption when advising on a transfer of safeguarded benefits, and clarifying that the onus is on the adviser to prove that a transfer is in a client’s best interests.”

Notably, it confirms, this is not a softening of its approach. The paper makes it clear that it is essential for an adviser to demonstrate that an individual will benefit from giving up a valuable pension.

In looking for a more rounded assessment of suitability, the FCA acknowledges that some of the current rules do not explicitly allow for the variety of options available to members under the pension freedoms.
Additional guidance from the FCA

In its Consultation Paper 17/16, the FCA proposes additional guidance to help advisers to assess suitability, and, importantly, to clarify its expectations of the adviser community.

In assessing suitability and to provide a suitable personal recommendation, an adviser should consider the following elements:

- The client’s income needs and expectations and how these can be achieved; the role which safeguarded benefits play in providing this income and the impact and risk if a conversion or transfer is made;
- The specific receiving scheme being recommended following the transfer and the investments being recommended within that scheme to ensure that it is appropriate for the risk profile of the client;
- The way in which the funds will be accessed, either immediately or in the future, including follow-on arrangements;
- Alternative ways of achieving the client’s needs. For example, there may be ways for a client to provide death benefits which can be funded from income rather than by a lump sum funded by a pension transfer, and which does not carry so much risk;
- The relevant wider circumstances of the client. These might include tax issues, death benefits, interaction with means tested benefits, state of health, family situation and other sources of retirement income.

We all know that the world of pensions and retirement planning has changed significantly in recent years. No doubt this will continue at the same rate of change for the next few years.

It is important for us to adapt. The introduction of pension freedoms and the more recent FCA consultation have altered the options available and how these might be assessed. Ensuring that we have robust processes in place for assessing suitability is essential.

For some clients, a transfer may now be suitable when it wasn’t before.

So, for some, perhaps previously a “Should I Stay?” is now a “Should I Go?”

Case Study

Mike was introduced to us in December 2015. Divorced, with three non-dependant ‘20-something’ daughters, he requested our assistance in assessing the £1.3m cash equivalent transfer value for his non-contributory deferred defined benefits pension plan.

Discussions and planning on his objectives around Lifetime Allowance protection, early retirement plans, levels of pension commencement lump sum and the significant difference in potential death benefits were held.

His subsequent acceptance of our report findings led to submission of all relevant documentation with a transfer of monies completing early March 2016.

Sadly, Mike died of a heart attack 20 days later, aged 62. Each daughter now has a third of Mike’s pension fund monies available to them.

About Lee Pringle

Lee is a Wealth Planner with Succession Group, based in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. He has worked in the industry since 1992, in a variety of financial planning and managerial roles. Lee is a Chartered Financial Planner and Fellow of The Personal Finance Society.
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Do you plan your day first thing every morning, or do you just jump straight in and answer a few emails?

If you do jump straight in I’m going to suggest that you could be way more productive than you currently are, so read on. I’ll explain why later in this article. Nowadays I start every day with a coffee and my daily planner. I’ve learned my lesson. However, I’ve got an even more valuable tip for you if you are trying to improve your personal productivity.

The key step is actually taking your to dos for the day, and entering the time you expect each job to take in your diary or scheduler. This way you can see if tasks are achievable.

**Where do I create problems for myself?**

There are some shortcuts that I have tried to take (that don’t work). I know that most clients I work with do the same, and it doesn’t work for them either, so take heed. How many of the shortcuts below are you guilty of?

1. **I don’t enter times in the diary**
   When I don’t enter the time each task will take in my diary, I always seem to get in a pickle. Why? Because I can delude myself that it’s all possible; that I can get everything done. The truth is I can’t get it all done, and nor can you.
   When I take ten minutes to simply plan out the time each task will take, I often spot in the planning phase that I’m being unrealistic. It won’t all fit into the time I’d like to work today. If I’m ok with working until 8pm it all fits, but if I want to stop at 5pm, it doesn’t.

2. **I overreach**
   I often try to do too much. Now you can laugh this one off and say “Yeah, everyone does this. So what?”. By deluding myself that I might get it all done, I am avoiding the real issue: that I probably have too much on my plate. More on this in a minute. Lying to myself is never a good thing. Moving forward in one’s business requires total honesty.

3. **I don’t allow time for a proper lunch break**
   Sometimes I just omit lunch altogether in my day plan. Big mistake. A person has got to eat in order to concentrate and work at their best. If I try to ram down a quick sandwich on the fly it’s never enjoyable, and it still takes 20-30 minutes minimum by the time I nip out to get it and eat it.

4. **I don’t allow some down time between tasks**
   There needs to be some down time between jobs for a few reasons:
   a) It can take five or ten minutes to regroup and to mentally switch from one job to the next. Not in every case, but taking that time just to have a break or a coffee is useful and enjoyable.

5. **I don’t allow time for a proper lunch break**
b) Sometimes my team need a response to something, and I can do that in these in-between times. If I plan my time to the second, it might work for me, but not for my team.

c) Occasionally a task overruns the time I allowed for it, and so some slack in the timings lets me recover that easily and without any stress.

5 I don’t allow a realistic (and then some) time for each task

I often used to put in timings for each task and still run into problems. Why? Because I entered the amount of time each task would take if it all went perfectly, I was on fire, and there was not one distraction.

Sadly, that’s not the real world, and so often things would implode. The minute I start thinking I might be able to shave five minutes off this job, or steal ten minutes from that one to do another one, I’m in real trouble.

Facing the truth

Why would I do the things I’ve listed above? I’m not an idiot.

The only conclusion I can come to is that it’s a form of denial or delusion, and I see it in almost every single one of my clients. The truth is, when it doesn’t work in the planning, it doesn’t work in the execution. The planning is the key step.

What’s really behind all of this is that, in the past, I just had too much on my plate. With too much on your plate there are decisions that need to be made:

Work out what’s important – Probably, something has to go. You can’t do it all. However, this now requires you to make choices about what’s most important to get you to your objectives.

Most business owners don’t ever make these tough choices consciously. They let disorganisation make the choice for them, and it’s a really poor way to do it. You can go for months or years at a time wondering why you seem to be chasing your tail, and not doing the things you know you should do to succeed.

Build a team and delegate – Alternatively you could get more support in place, so that you can focus on the things that only you can do. The rest can be delegated to other members of your support team.

The test here is easy enough to work through. If you can afford to hire more support then just do it. If you are really tight for cash you might want to let go of the non-essential tasks by making conscious choices as I outlined above.

The most important thing is to stop the delusion, and that all comes from one simple step: doing the planning at the beginning of every day.

Planning for success

Here are the key takeaways:

• It’s the planning part of the day that is critical - If it won’t work on paper now, right at the start of my day, it’s not going to work as my day heats up.

• Plan the day well and it’s more fun - with time off for a lunch break and some free time in between, everything not only gets done, but it gets done in a fun and enjoyable way. I can’t describe what a difference that makes to my journey. And remember, success is a journey, not a destination.

• Stop deluding yourself - get planning your day properly by entering the time each task will take into your diary at the start of each day.

• If you can’t plan your day effectively and honestly yourself, get your Personal Assistant or an organised team member to assist you - Doing this with another person can stop you lying to yourself, and can dramatically improve your productivity and quality of life.

Business and personal success doesn’t happen by accident. If you can become a master of planning you can achieve anything you set your mind to. Here’s to making it happen and making your 2018 a very happy new year!
No rabbits, no refunds, no kidding

Philip Hammond’s November Budget didn’t excite the press, says Michael Wilson. So what were we expecting, a full-on circus extravaganza?

Sometimes it’s hard to know what the world expects of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, especially on Budget Day. Should he exude quiet capability, or stand there blaring like a loudhailer with the volume turned up to 11? Should he go all out to trumpet his brilliant achievements, or should he simply thank his hardworking team and get on with the advancing slog?

Most of all, the papers tend to ask, where are the sweeteners in the Budget speech? Where are the headline-grabbing giveaways, the vibrant slogans, the last-moment rabbits pulled out of the hat in order to send the commentators home with big smiles on their faces?

That’s where Mr Hammond differs from his flashy predecessor George Osborne, who could never bear to finish a Budget speech without producing a surprise bunch of flowers from the tip of his Montblanc pen. Or, indeed, a welter of measures: by some estimates, Osborne’s last Budget speech carried 77 separate initiatives, compared with 40 in Hammond’s spring Budget and barely 30 in November’s address. (There were more to be found in the printed fine detail.)

But the point was, this chancellor wasn’t wearing a ring-master’s fancy regalia.

It wouldn’t have looked good anyway, considering that the fanfares were falling a bit flat, the bears were growling ominously, the tigers were already out in the audience, and some of the other onlookers were plainly keeping an uneasy eye on the exit door. No, this was an occasion for sobriety. Which was exactly what we got. With just enough good jokes to keep it palatable.

The economic outlook

It says a lot for this chancellor that he didn’t try to dodge the problems with a lot of high-falutin’ language. As the Financial Times’s excellent Robert Shrimsley put it, his “economicky words” (a ministerial in-joke) “were not overly technical. They included such complex jargon as “stubbornly flat”, “regrettably” and “continues to disappoint”.

It’s hard to argue with that, but you’ll have seen the statistics yourself, so let’s move on quickly. The honourably independent Office for Budget Responsibility (established, to his credit, by George Osborne) had dropped its growth forecast for this year from 2% to about 1.6%, and its forecast for 2018 from 1.6% to about 1.4%.

Given that Moody’s had already downgraded the UK’s credit rating back in August, and that sterling had weakened significantly since the Brexit vote, it probably wouldn’t have made sense to buck the OBR’s assumptions for productivity growth, which were due to drop from around 1.5% this year to 1.3% in 2019/2020 before returning to 1.6% by 2022.

But then, that wouldn’t have been Spreadsheet Phil’s style anyway. And nor would it have fitted his other moniker, Box Office Phil (surely ironically intended?)

The point we’d make here at IFA Magazine is that Britain’s business partners in Europe would rather have it straight from Hammond’s honest mouth than from a dozen razor-tongued self-publicists. If Theresa May were to fall under an NHS bandwagon bus next year, there’s no doubting who they’d like to see batting for Britain.

Are we allowed to say that?
Readers, unless your clients are heavily into universal credit, which we doubt, the ramifications of this particular Budget will have been largely confined to the impact on higher earners.

Income tax brackets moved largely in line with inflation. Tax rates remained un-tinkered-with. Even pensions were (perhaps surprisingly) untouched, apart from the long-trailed progression of the lifetime allowance, which rose from £1 million to an inflation-adjusted £1.03 million. There were no changes to ISAs, and no fancy new investment vehicles, and... hang on, what’s this?

The Chancellor’s changes to the risk investing regime were announced so sotto voce, and so briefly, that we at IFA Magazine spent hours debating whether he had in fact opened his mouth on the subject at all. If you’d coughed at the wrong moment you’d have missed it. But the implications for risk investing are significant nevertheless.

You won’t need reminding (will you?) that, for the last eighteen months or so, the Treasury has been debating a new regime for risk investment, known as the Patient Capital Review. To put it succinctly, HMRC had become concerned that investors and scheme administrators were weaselling their way around the adventurous intended scope of the Enterprise Investment Scheme parameters, by setting up ‘ultra-safe’ instruments that kept the investor risk to a minimum. Which was not what the concessionary tax environments for EIS and VCT were meant to do at all.

For the last 15 months or so, the debate has raged as to whether EIS investors should be allowed to build ‘safe’ risk investments that centred on property or capital-rich operations, or which sought to offset any such risks through large up-front tax rebates which would all but negate the risk. And the final consultation process, which had ended in September, had given rise to the final Patient Capital recommendations, to which the Chancellor was due to respond on Budget Day.

He duly did so, although not immediately obviously. Let’s explain.

On the plus side (for investors), the Chancellor doubled the allowable EIS limit for investors “knowledge-intensive companies” from £1 million to £2 million – which means, at 30% upfront tax relief, that your clients can obtain a maximum £600,000 from next April, instead of £300,000 at present. The Treasury is well aware that EIS is an attractive way of soaking up the money that would once have gone to a pension fund, but which has been forced to decamp now that the lifetime allowance has been slashed.

That’s the obviously welcome news. The Treasury thinks that around 4,000 investors a year will want to take advantage of the increased limit from next April – and it says that as much as £7 billion a year more may be raised for early-stage enterprises as a result.

There’s more good news for Venture Capital Trusts, which will effectively be able, like EIS, to put in £10 million a year instead of £5 million a year. But again, the rules were not entirely clear at the time of writing.
Is low risk still bad?

Time will also tell as to whether the Chancellor’s changes to the EIS entitlement in “knowledge-intensive companies” are in fact a full response to the reservations that HMRC had expressed about EIS tax exemptions being used for low-risk investments instead of the higher-risk vehicles that the original inventors of the EIS scheme had envisaged?

Looking back to the Treasury’s August consultation paper, “Financing Growth in Innovative Firms”, it’s a little difficult to see how the Budget’s patient capital reforms have made it harder for investors to dodge the higher-risk requirements. Part of the problem lies in the Chancellor’s use of woolly terms like ‘knowledge-intensive’ and ‘low-risk’ without cleanly spelling out what he means by them – are we to assume that the current range of low-risk options will still be available, but up to the existing £1 million limit?

In practice, we suspect that the essential details will emerge only slowly as to how the Chancellor intends to put the squeeze on the cowboys. What his statement does do, however, is to fully address the August paper’s expressed need for covering an estimated £4 billion funding gap between US and British firms – and, with luck, it should create more and better ways for start-ups to access the financing they need.

The crackdown continues

Elsewhere, as you’d expect from any self-respecting Chancellor, the onslaught against tax-dodging by both British nationals and foreigners is set to continue. Mr Hammond told us that the more than 100 new measures since 2010, both by himself and his predecessor, have raked in a rather impressive £160 billion.

For foreigners and especially non-doms, the pressure comes from measures to chop the tax losses to certain offshore trusts, and the obligation to pay capital gains tax on UK property purchases from April 2019. (A move which has frightened the London property market quite a bit. Although it specifically excludes purchases by pension funds)

For UK nationals, some of the pressure will come from the double rates of council tax charging on vacant properties. More, however, can be expected from an enhanced crackdown on bogus self-employed workers who disguise their employee status under a tax-effective cloak of self-determination. Not to mention new measures against offshore companies that pay salaries via non-repayable loans that wangle their way past the tax laws.

More controversially, the Chancellor declared his intention to require that VAT should be collected at the point of purchase whenever consumer purchases are made online (so as to tackle tax-evading overseas sellers). Now, that might be a more courageous step than it sounds – how do you force the rest of the world to comply with your own extraterritorial demands? But it sounded good on the day. Let’s see how it fares during the parliamentary debate stage.

Regional budgets, infrastructure and health

You’ll have heard, perhaps, that Mr Hammond chose in this Budget to reinstate one of George Osborne’s ideas, the so-called Northern
Powerhouse, which the former chancellor launched amid considerable hoopla, but which had been all but buried in Hammond’s spring Budget. That fits the political bill on a number of levels – firstly because it carries a promise of self-determination for regions which do not particularly love London at the moment. Secondly, because the provinces outside the M25 have been generally under-represented in government schemes hitherto but are in fact heavily represented by the EIS and high technology investment sector. And thirdly, because there are currently genuine needs for better infrastructure north or Birmingham. (And often south as well.)

One major area of infrastructural development, you’ll be glad to know, is the National Health Service, which has probably had time to resign itself to the unlikeliness of getting Boris Johnson’s £350 million a week after we leave the EU. It may not have been a complete coincidence that Mr Hammond declared the award of £350 million as a one-off payment to address this winter’s special seasonal pressures. Or maybe it was intended as irony. But otherwise the Chancellor’s figures looked slippery to us. On paper, the gist of it was that as much as £10 billion was to be sunk into a capital investment fund for hospitals; it was just a pity that nobody else seemed convinced that that was what he had promised. And anyway, it wasn’t clear that the £10 billion would come from government coffers – it might just as easily have been from PFI investment.

Anyway, the English NHS is to get another £2.8 billion a year (no obvious mention of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland); that in turn is less than the £4 billion that the doctors, nurses and administrators had been demanding, but you have to get your comfort wherever you can find it.

The grand finale: Housing

Will all of this generate new potential for infrastructural and construction companies? And are we going to see government cash going into major public construction projects? Motorways, airports, or even the odd rail line expansion? There seemed to be more bluster on this topic than you might have expected – but yes, he said, there would be £1.7 billion for urban transport, £2 billion for the Scottish government (all functions), £1.2 billion for the Welsh government (ditto) and £650 million for the Northern Ireland executive. He declared that councils should be able to use more public land, and that it should be easier to force construction on land that developers were holding back for future capital gain. Some five new garden cities are to be built by 2050 – but gosh, that’s a long way away, so there’s no need to cost it.

But onward to the only real rabbit that Mr Hammond had brought along in his top hat. We already knew that the best-trailed measures in this year’s Budget was the government’s intention to build 300,000 homes a year. With £44 billion of loans and guarantees behind them! Admittedly only by the mid-2020s, as it turned out, but as a statement of intent it was impressive anyway. And, according to the housing charities, it was a better response to the housing shortage than George Osborne’s help to buy programme, which had been accused (not entirely unfairly) of helping to drive up house prices rather than helping to make them affordable.

But the rabbit, when it appeared, was more like a mouse with a megaphone. To hear the fairground barker’s declaration that first time buyers would get 100% exemption from stamp duty on properties worth £300,000 (or to £500,000 in London, of which the first £300,000 will count), you might have concluded that this was a big deal and a major boost to the property scene. In practice, however, the Treasury thinks it will produce only 3,500 additional sales. Which, according to our calculations, would be around £1 billion worth of extra money available for the nation’s housing stock. Which is not much, to tell you the truth. But it made for some good headlines on the day.

As the year moves toward its end and we approach the crucial phase of the Brexit showdown, it’s comforting to know that our Chancellor still has the ability to please the crowds with at least a little bit of feelgood sleight-of-hand. Send them on their way with a song in their hearts and a rousing chorus echoing in their ears. It never fails.
Make 2018 your best year ever

It’s the time of year for clear thinking on how you are going to grow your business in 2018 and beyond. Chris Baigent-Reed, of Jigsaw Tree, gives some practical tips on how you can be more effective in this key area.

Yes, it is that time of year again. The time when, in those rare quiet moments, you can reflect on your progress made during the last year and consider your strategic plans for next year and beyond to get you to where you want to be. The aim of this article is to provide you with some practical ideas on how to take those thoughts forward and turn them into a structure which will support a more formal review and future planning exercise, to give you the best possible chance of achieving your business goals.

Start with what the numbers say

It is vital for any business to stay on top of its numbers. I am working on the assumption that in your financial planning business you will have identified some specific metrics against which you are measuring success. Make assessing your performance against these goals your first activity.

Lessons learnt

A great next step is to bring together the key people in your organisation and debate as a group how you feel you have performed during the year, as well as examining the key data and KPIs of course.

Don’t forget your clients

Look at your client feedback mechanisms, such as Net Promoter and see if the results point to a clear trend. Are satisfaction levels rising or falling? Are your clients more or less likely to refer you to a friend, colleague or family member? This insight is even more valuable if you can spot a correlation.
For instance, did client sentiment improve at the same time you introduced an online portal?

Ok, that is enough looking back for now. It’s time to turn our attention to the future and to look at how to make 2018 the best year ever.

Drivers for change

Before diving headlong into your planning, take a moment to think about what, if any, factors are leading you to change what you do today or how you do it. There might be external considerations like new regulation - take MIFID II for example - or broader changes like the growing use of technology.

They could also be internal, such as an imminent switch of platform, which means a change to your business processes. List these factors and give them due consideration as part of your overall strategy plan.

Foundations of a good business plan

I like to keep things simple here. So, start with a clear vision of what business you are trying to build and those particular developments you want to see in 2018. Think about both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Partner these with the set of SMART objectives that you believe will make that vision a reality. Just in case that term “SMART objectives” is not immediately apparent, I’m referring to objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timed.

I recommend making sure that you are quite ruthless when it comes to these elements as this will help you. You will then need to come up with the detailed strategies, all the underlying work to be done, that will enable you to deliver on those objectives. It’s relatively simple when you put it all down on paper but we all know that in practice, achieving your goals means you will need to put in lots of hard work, have a clear
focus, the support of a great team plus a bit of luck along the way.

**Areas of focus**

When Jigsaw Tree is working with firms to help them become better businesses, we aim to bring clarity by asking them to view their organisation as being based on two models; business and operating.

Your business model comprises of creating something that people need or want (value proposition), attracting demand for the product or service (marketing), turning that potential interest into a paying customer/client (sales) and doing it all at a price, which is sustainable (finance).

So, from the review work I mentioned earlier, it is feasible that you identified a lack of client communication as a reason for not achieving some goals and in your strategy work. Maybe you decided that organising a seminar would help you achieve the objective of creating four new introducer relationships, in both cases the focus area for improvement is your business model and specifically your marketing.

The operating model comprises of people, process and systems. So, when planning for 2018 you might conclude that you need to improve the consistency of your process, perhaps restructure your management team so there is somebody in the organisation accountable for each component of your business and operating models. Alternatively, you may conclude that this is the year in which you are going to crack systems integrations. Whatever your plans, it is vital to ensure that you identify who is going to be doing what, by when, and to what standard.

**Making it a living plan**

When you have done all the hard work, you want to make sure this is not a flash in the pan exercise but something that will drive your business forward from here on in.

A weighty written document is not the answer. Instead look to technology for the solution.

There are many online tools available now which make it much easier for your team to collaborate on building your strategic plan.

It makes sense to put your plan somewhere where you can all access and work on it as individuals and can review it easily together in your management meetings. Smartsheet is a great solution for this.

Of course, you must chunk it down to make it digestible. Put the objectives at the top. Create sections for the different models and the various levels within those i.e. one level is Business Model and next level down is Value Proposition, then allocate individual projects/initiatives to the relevant section. Each must have a clear owner and target delivery date. You may want to break these objectives down into quarters and prioritise them accordingly. I should give a word of warning though. Do try to be realistic as to what you can in fact do as a business each quarter, but be relentless in the discipline of creating your clarified action.

I very much hope that you will be able to take away at least one idea from the points made above that you can use and which helps you in your business. Of course, if you would like to explore any of these ideas further then do contact me. It remains for me to wish you a very happy and successful new year.

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Chris is a financial services professional with over twenty years’ experience in this sector. Having worked for FS advice and technology companies for many years, Chris founded Jigsaw Tree and Jigsaw Tree Outsourcing. These businesses are support companies specialising in providing expertise and outsourced resources where they are needed most. Jigsaw Tree focuses on combining people, process and technology in order to deliver the right results.

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This is just for UK advisers – please don’t show it to your clients
Merry Christmas Everybody?

Look to the future now, it’s only just begun. But will it bring a change to our spending habits, asks Richard Harvey?

Like any ankle-biter, I looked forward to Christmas with almost manic anticipation, and in particular an annual trip to Hamley’s toy emporium in London with my sister and Uncle Bill.

He was one of the most fondly-remembered characters of my childhood “Bit of a rogue, of course”, said Mum, but Bill charmed her - and everyone else - out of the trees.

Always dressed in an immaculate three-piece tweed suit, redolent of gin and cigars, he had all the distinctive characteristics of a boulevardier renowned, but forgiven, for a roué lifestyle.

In my teenage years, he gave me a bit of advice: “My boy, if you’re not living beyond your means, then you’re not living properly”. This rather succinctly summed up his philosophy of life, which was as far removed from that of Scrooge as you could imagine.

So here it is...

Fast forward 50 years, and it seems that Bill’s mantra has been adopted by those of a more sober and serious persuasion, from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the trade union barons at the GMB.

Not long ago, Chancellor Phil was dancing round his office at Number 11 (well, OK, he might just have allowed himself a quiet ‘Get In!’ given all the problems facing him) at the news that our budget deficit for the month of September had shrunk to a mere £5.9 billion – the lowest level since 2007.

That, of course, is simply stacked on top of the national debt, which is running at well in excess of £1.6 trillion. Uncle Bill would have been tickled pink. That’s living beyond our means, writ very large indeed.

Which hasn’t stopped the GMB from howling that public sector workers’ pay has dipped below that of their private sector counterparts for the first time in seven years as a result of “austerity”.

As recently as 2010, when it came to wages, public sector employees were enjoying a premium of almost six percent over the equivalent workers toiling for private business. Strangely, nobody ever asked the obvious question: “Why?”

For generations, it had always been accepted that those working for government, local authorities and the rest of the public sector, would naturally earn less than their private sector equivalents to take into account a) their relative job security, and b) the generous pensions they could look forward to in retirement.

Everybody’s having fun

That all changed under Tony Blair and, in particular, Gordon Brown, who believed it was perfectly reasonable to employ lots more five-a-day outreach advisers, and create the sort of jobs which made The Guardian’s Situations Vacant supplement bulkier than ‘War and Peace’.

The GMB is aware that a huge proportion of public sector pay and pensions is paid for by the er, private sector, and those who choose not to devote their lives to working for Crungewick Borough Council, but instead fund it through their taxes, are the ones who ought to earn the pay premium.

Instead, the union is demanding a “fully-funded, above-inflation pay rise that public sector workers need, and so desperately deserve”.

Quelle surprise. But then it is Christmas, a time of fairytale fantasies and over-indulgence. Just as Uncle Bill would have wanted.

So I’ll avoid a “bah, humbug” message to the Treasury and the GMB, and instead wish them - and, most of all, you - a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous (and fully-funded) New Year.
As recently as 2010, when it came to wages, public sector employees were enjoying a premium of almost six percent over the equivalent workers toiling for private business. Strangely, nobody ever asked the obvious question: "Why?"
Position: Senior Paraplanner

Location: Chichester

Salary: Negotiable

The Business:

This leading IFA firm has offices across the country. They pride themselves on providing an excellent service to their clients whilst organically growing their business.

They are seeking an individual who they can train within the role and who is keen to develop their career within the wealth management arena. This is a very rare opportunity for someone to develop a rewarding career by joining a reputable company which offers such a strong training scheme.

Responsibilities:

• Preparing client reports - these may be in relation to pensions, investments, trustee Investment, IHT planning and other associated financial planning requirements.

• Reviewing a range of products which are available to meet client needs and making appropriate recommendations.

• Reviewing new contracts and alterations in product providers terms and making recommendations to the Directors.

• Undertaking reviews of new funds which become available to meet the requirements of the asset allocators and make recommendations to the Directors.

• Ensuring all paperwork is compliant with FCA requirements.

Skills:

• You will ideally possess the certificate in financial planning and working towards, or have, the Diploma in financial planning.

• Excellent IT and communication skills and the ability to deal with individuals at all levels both within and outside the business.

• Good attention to detail, punctuality and a professional work ethic.
Position: Paraplanner

Location: Bath

Salary: £30,000 - £35,000

The Opportunity:
In this role you will act as a technical support to deliver professional quality written report documentation for financial planners and their clients in accordance with both the company and regulatory requirements.

Key responsibilities & main tasks:
• Act as first point of contact for clients regarding any technical queries and as the technical interface between clients and planners.
• Preparation of client review paperwork to include fund and product research using appropriate financial systems.
• Compilation of financial cashflow forecasts.
• Analysis, monitoring and reporting in respect of investment valuation reports, to include SIPP drawdown analysis, existing policy analysis and portfolios.
• Liaise with product providers / third parties regarding any technical queries.
• Review asset allocation for any platform-based holdings.
• Liaise with the planners to provide briefing for any updates/recommendations for client portfolios.
• Attend client meetings with the planners as required.
• Preparation of required suitability reports, including solution design in conjunction with the planner.
• Obtain key features documents, factsheets, illustrations and exchange quotes through appropriate sources.
• Ensure effective communication between planners, technical support and PA to ensure a continued professional service is provided to clients at all times.
• Comply with compliance procedures, TCF, data protection and FCA regulations at all times to ensure regulatory requirements are met.

What’s needed for me to be considered?
• Previous experience of working in similar role within financial services.
• Practical application of technical financial knowledge within career.
• Previous data research and report writing experience within financial services.
• Fully Diploma qualified with at least one AFPC paper (ideally G10 or G60 or equivalent AF qualifications).
• Good understanding of the Financial Planning process and cashflow modelling.
Position: Paraplanner
Location: London
Salary: £40,000 - £50,000

The Business:
The firm is one of the top providers of financial planning advice to legal professionals and Barristers in London. It is growing at an impressive rate. They pride themselves on providing bespoke, tailored advice and providing a service of the highest quality.

They are directly regulated and independent and well on their way to attaining Chartered status as a firm. The firm also has strong connections with both legal and accountancy firms in the City and has built a superb reputation.

The successful candidate will benefit from an excellent benefits package including competitive salary, pension and excellent bonuses which reward high quality staff performance as well as being supplied with the tools to develop yourself and your knowledge even further.

The Opportunity:
You will already be an experienced professional. If successful, you would join a growing business working as part of a highly qualified paraplanning team which provides ongoing support to the firm's chartered advisers.

You will have the autonomy to make key decisions and will regularly be involved in client meetings and technical discussions with HNW clients.

Ideally you will have a strong track record in paraplanning, with experience of writing bespoke suitability reports as well as be able to demonstrate clear reasoning for your recommendations.

What's needed to be considered?
- Experience of providing technical support within an IFA environment.
- Level 4 diploma qualified and ideally working towards chartered status.
- Have had extensive experience of Avelo, Excel, FE analytics and cashflow modelling.
- Experience of being involved in an investment committee would be advantageous.

Position: IFA Administration Manager
Location: London
Salary: £28,000 - £32,000

The Business:
This is a firm of Chartered Financial Planners which is based in Central London and has over 20 years’ experience. In this time the business has successfully grown a large and trusted client bank.

The Opportunity:
This is a fantastic opportunity for an IFA Admin/Office Manager with proven experience to join a company at the top of their game. You will be running a team of dedicated administrative staff, supporting the needs and development of the business and its clients.

What's needed for me to be considered?
- Proven and extensive experience as an IFA Admin Manager.
- Financial planning qualifications are desired.
Position: Advice Technician

Location: Bromsgrove

Salary: Negotiable DOE

The Opportunity:
A reputable IFA firm has created an opportunity for an experienced Advice Technician to join their successful team.

Responsibilities:
- Understanding of the firm's advice guidance in order to maintain and develop knowledge of the firm's technical approaches.
- Conducting advice audits both on a pre-submission and post-submission basis, in line with the firm's T&C scheme.
- Performing an assessment on specific case-types, which carry a high risk to the client, firm and the firm's IFAs at the second stage of pre-approval.
- Delivery of informative and constructive feedback to IFAs in connection with audits and stage 2 pre-approvals conducted.
- Identification of potentially unsuitable advice cases and phase 2 pre-approval declines and referral to Advice Assurance Co-ordinator as necessary.
- Dealing with day-to-day advice and regulatory queries from other departments, undertaking research, where necessary, in order to provide informed responses.
- Involvement in investigations into client complaints, following the firm's standard complaints procedure and formulating client final responses, where necessary.
- Providing new business concessions, where necessary and referral to Advice & Regulatory Administration for recording.
- Maintaining a good level of knowledge and technical understanding of all financial planning concepts and regulatory focuses through the completion of annual CPD.

What's needed for me to be considered?
- Diploma in Financial Planning as a minimum qualification requirement.
- Willingness to undertake further qualifications relevant to your role.
- Knowledge and experience in personal financial planning.
- Experience of working in an IFA environment, demonstrating quality communications of constructive feedback.
- A high standard of written work and numerical skills including strong report-writing skills.
- A high level of accuracy and attention to detail.
- Aptitude in Microsoft Office.
**Position: Paraplanner**

**Location:** Sale  
**Salary:** £25,000 - £35,000

**The Business:**
This is a major international financial advisory firm which provides specialist financial advice, primarily to British citizens who are either going abroad and become expatriates or those who are returning to the UK. They also provide specialist pension consultancy services to financial advisers.

**The Opportunity:**
This is a fantastic opportunity to join an international firm and be part of an expanding team where professional growth and progression are fully supported. You will be responsible for providing technical paraplanning support and handling complex client queries. You will be a vital part of the financial planning process, supporting several highly successful advisers and their HNW clientele.

**What’s needed for me to be considered?**
- You need to have strong technical knowledge of DB pensions.
- Professional communication manner, both spoken and written.
- Diploma qualified or working towards achieving this.

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**Position: Account Executive**

**Location:** London  
**Salary:** £20,000 - £22,000

**The Business:**
This is a well-established, private investment firm with a long history and respected reputation for serving the diverse needs of high net worth individuals across a range of investment structures.

**The Opportunity:**
This is a fantastic opportunity for anyone with sales experience and who is motivated and looking for a role which offers a range of benefits and has the potential for high earnings.

**What’s needed to be considered:**
- Sales experience.
- Identify opportunities, produce leads and book appointments for the sales force with the emphasis on high quality leads.
- Follow up leads generated.
- Making sure your weekly targets are met.
- Motivated individual.
Position: Independent Financial Adviser

Location: London

Salary: £40,000 - £60,000

The Business:
This well-established firm of financial planners has an excellent reputation in the region for providing comprehensive financial planning advice to a diverse range of clients. Specialising in protection, retirement and equity release services, they have achieved year-on-year success by ensuring that clients' needs are placed at the centre of everything they do.

The Opportunity:
Due to an exciting growth period, this company is now looking to welcome a new adviser to their team to ensure they continue to meet the high expectations of loyal clients. You will benefit from having a large bank of clients that you can work with from day one as well as full back office support. This company also offers a generous bonus structure and future progression opportunities within the business.

What's needed for me to be considered?
- Level 4 Diploma and hold CAS.
- Have previous experience as an adviser within an IFA/Financial Planning firm.
- Effective communication, organisation and relationship building skills.
- Experience with protection, retirement and equity release (advantageous).
- Transferable client bank (advantageous).

What next?
If you are interested in any of these positions, then contact Heat Recruitment immediately. If suitable, one of our specialist consultants will be in contact to discuss the opportunity with you in detail prior to submitting your CV to the particular firm concerned. In this discussion we will aim to identify your specific skills and motivations. Where appropriate, we can also highlight other relevant opportunities that match your requirements.

And also…
If these specific vacancies are not exactly what you are looking for, please contact us to discuss other opportunities we may be recruiting for that aren’t necessarily advertised. Additionally, refer a friend or colleague to us and receive £200 in vouchers if we assist them in securing a new career.

Visit the Heat Recruitment website for more details of these and hundreds of other jobs too
www.heatrecruitment.co.uk
The new GrowthInvest Portfolio Service allows Advisers to introduce their clients to the best of our SEIS and EIS qualifying investment opportunities in a single discretionary managed fund.

If your clients are interested in a diversified portfolio of tax-efficient investments, then contact us to find out more. We are helping UK small businesses to realise their full potential, whilst giving Advisers the tools to introduce their clients to this exciting investment category.

For more information contact us now at growthinvest.com