

Advantage

Your Personal Finance Edge

September–October 2018

5 Tips to Keep Your Retirement on Track

Is Owning a Franchise Right for You?

Tips for Handling Negative Online Reviews

Apps for Staying in Touch on the Road

Let Them Eat... Pumpkin!

Halloween Movies for All



Defining Your Next Chapter

September and October often mean settling into new routines for school, sports and other activities. Sometimes, the transition to something new can be challenging, but this doesn't mean that you shouldn't try a new adventure—or two. Taking on new challenges is the focus of this issue of *Advantage*.

From how to make the transition to retirement easier to determining if owning a franchise is the right challenge for you, we're covering a lot of ground to help you feel at ease—whatever your

"next chapter" may be. We've also included tips to help you handle negative online reviews for your business and how to keep in touch with family and friends when you are on the road.

This time of year is also when signs of fall, such as pumpkins and Halloween movies start to appear. Check out our unique pumpkin recipes and our list of some of the greatest Halloween films so that you can truly enjoy the season.

Your Trusted Accounting Advisors



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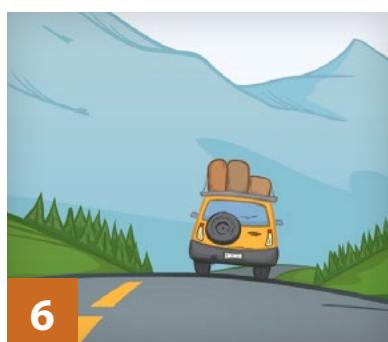
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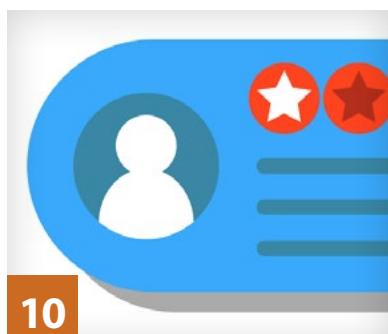
Halloween is the perfect time to share some of these seasonal movies with family and friends.



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5 Tips to Keep Your Retirement on Track



Most of us who are still working have a healthy interest in planning for retirement! If the thought of not being financially ready for retirement brings you feelings of anxiety, you are not alone. Our firm's financial professionals can help keep your retirement plans on track. In addition, these tips will help you proactively prepare.

1 Know your numbers

Do you know how much income you need to maintain your current lifestyle in retirement? If not, you are like many others who don't have a clear retirement saving goal. While working with a financial professional will help you drill down to an exact number, a good rule of thumb is that you will need approximately 80 percent of your current annual income in retirement.

2 Consider where your money will go

The lifestyle you want during retirement is another thing to consider now. Do you want to spend money on travel, entertainment and eating out when you retire? Don't forget to factor in healthcare costs, which will likely increase significantly as you age, including the cost for long-term care.

3 Take action now

Perhaps the most important retirement preparation tip is to just do it! Make saving for retirement a priority (put it above college savings if you have kids) and set up an automatic debit to your bank account, or through your paycheck, to start growing your nest egg.

4 Revisit your retirement plan

Your plan for funding your retirement should be updated periodically (at least every five years). Updates are based on the market, your income and expenses, and life events such as a child being born, marriage and other milestones.

5 Ask for professional help

While you know your situation best, it can be helpful to have an objective expert working with you to ensure you are doing everything you can to stay on track for a better retirement.

As you think about planning for retirement, don't let balancing the life you want to live today with the life you desire in retirement add to your stress. Follow the tips above and get the advice of a financial professional to make sure your retirement is on track. ■

Source: forbes.com



Apps for Staying in Touch on the Road

Goats On The Road blogger Nick Wharton has made a career out of sharing insights and tips about travel—and how to keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues while doing so. If you're taking off on vacation or an extended trip for work, you may want to pack this list of Wharton's recommended apps to help you stay in touch while on the road.



Best Messaging Apps

 **Google Voice** allows you to forward your calls from your regular phone and answer them from your computer. Essentially, Google Voice is like having a physical phone at your work or home, even when you're traveling.

 **Google Hangouts** is similar to Skype (another video calling alternative) and a good option if you like the Google platform and don't want to pay for calls to the United States and Canada. Another plus—you can connect up to 10 people on one call!

 **WhatsApp** is a smartphone app that combines fast video calling and built-in messaging capabilities.

 **Facebook Messenger** is often a go-to for those who are already on the social platform. The Facebook Messenger app can be used for calling and chatting online with other Facebook users. Wharton likes Facebook Messenger in particular, he says, because, "Calls seem to work better on slow internet, and if you don't use video functionality, you rarely get delays or dropped calls."

 **iMessage** and  **Facetime** are for those using Apple products such as the iPhone or iPad. iMessage, as you might guess, is a messaging app and Facetime is a video call application. Wharton warns that iMessage can sometimes cost money for texting and Facetime can be slow, depending on the speed and quality of your internet connection.

 **MarcoPolo** is a smartphone app that allows you to leave video messages for other MarcoPolo users without having to be online simultaneously. You can "Polo" someone and they can "Polo" you back at their leisure. You can also use the app for real-time video chats.

These are just a few of the many messaging and video apps available to keep connected while traveling. One more tip to make keeping in touch on the road easier: Check with those you want to contact to make sure they have your preferred app downloaded, so they'll be ready when you touch base. ■





Is Owning a **Franchise** Right for You?

If you're looking for a "no-fail" business opportunity, be reminded that there really isn't one. Owning any kind of business has inherent risk. However, buying into a time-tested, well-managed franchise can be a good option if you don't want to build a company from scratch and you are willing to do your due diligence. These tips from the Federal Trade Commission can help you decide if owning a franchise is a good fit for you.



Don't Miss These Tax Deadlines

Keep these dates handy to avoid paying penalties

PARTNERSHIP/S CORP TAX DEADLINES

March 15, 2018
Partnership/S Corp Filing Deadline

September 17, 2018
Extension Deadline

C CORP TAX DEADLINES

April 17, 2018
C Corp Filing Deadline

October 15, 2018
Extension Deadline

ESTIMATED QUARTERLY TAX PAYMENT DEADLINES

1st Quarter 2018
April 17, 2018

2nd Quarter 2018
June 15, 2018

3rd Quarter 2018
September 17, 2018

4th Quarter 2018
January 15, 2019

INDIVIDUAL TAX DEADLINES

April 17, 2018
Individual Filing Deadline

October 15, 2018
Extension Deadline

IRA CONTRIBUTION DEADLINE

April 17, 2018

Please visit
www.irs.gov for additional updates throughout the year.

Before you invest in a particular franchise system, think about the realities of your situation. The questions below can serve as a starting point for evaluating a franchise opportunity. When answering them, it is important to be brutally honest. You should also try to gather objective feedback from your family, friends and other acquaintances whose opinions you trust.

Your Investment

- How much money do you have to invest?
- How much money can you afford to lose?
- Are you purchasing the franchise alone or with partners?
- Do you need financing and where will you get it?
- What's your credit rating and credit score?
- Do you have savings or additional income to live on until your franchise opens and turns a profit?

Your Abilities

- Does the franchise require technical experience or special training or education? For example, auto repair or home decorating.
- What special skills can you bring to the business?
- What experience do you have as a business owner or manager?

Your Goals

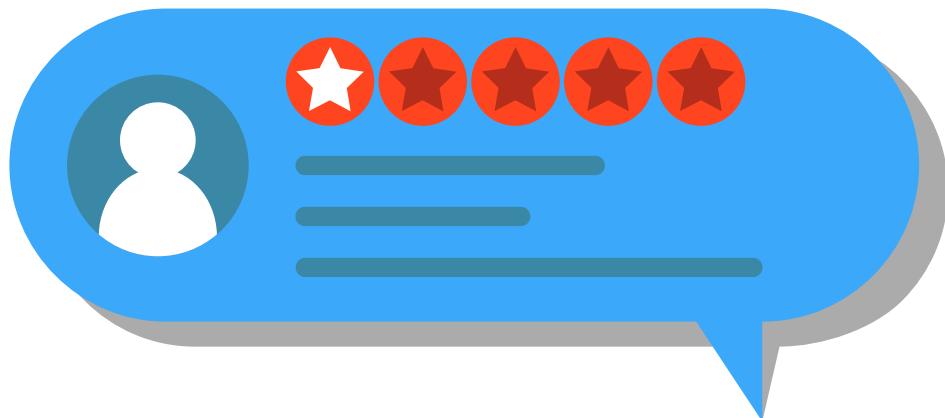
- What are your reasons for buying a particular franchise?
- Do you need a specific minimum annual income?
- Do you want to work in a particular field?
- How many hours can you work? How many are you willing to work?
- Do you intend to operate the business yourself or hire a manager?
- Will franchise ownership be your main source of income or a supplement to your current income?
- Would you like to own several outlets?
- Are you willing to let the franchisor be your boss?

Once you have taken time to consider the questions above, you should have a good idea of whether you should take the next step and research specific franchise opportunities. If you decide to move ahead, the Federal Trade Commission offers many resources that can help you evaluate franchise opportunities and select the right one for you. ■

Source: ftc.gov



Tips for Handling **Negative** Online Reviews



According to *The Wall Street Journal*, even the Great Wall of China, one of the most impressive wonders of the world is not immune to a bad online review. In fact, the landmark's average Google review is 4.2 stars. Keeping this in mind the next time your business receives a less than stellar online review helps keep it in perspective. Following the advice below will help you rebound from a negative review effectively.

Be open to learning from feedback

It's virtually impossible to please everyone, even if your business is amazing. There is likely to be a small but vocal minority of people who can find fault with even the best intentions. These are the folks likely to drop an unflattering review online. So instead of being defensive when you see negative comments, consider whether there is any validity in the criticism. If there is, take appropriate action to rectify it.

Follow up with any staff who are involved

If the online review mentions any specific staff members, get their side of the story. That way you'll have a clearer picture of the exact nature of the complaint and how to handle it internally and externally. You may even ask those team members involved if they have any ideas to help resolve the issues raised in the review.

Respond to the review with the customer in mind

Other than being belligerent (not recommended), the worst thing you can do is to ignore a negative online review. Customers (and potential customers) will think more highly of your business, even with a negative review, if you take the time to address it. When you do respond, put yourself in the customers' shoes. Affirm their feelings, whether you agree with them or not, and thank them for taking the time to share them with you. Then proceed with the rest of the tips noted here.

Take your conversation offline

If a review is negative, responding defensively and publicly is not a smart strategy because it will only escalate the situation. Instead, try to take the conversation offline by offering a direct email or phone number where you can be reached. This will allow any additional grievances to be shared privately, for you to collect more details, and for a more comprehensive response.

Turn negativity into opportunity

While you may not like a negative review, it may have a silver lining for your business after all. For example, it gives you an opportunity to learn more about what customers want. It can also help you identify weak areas in your operations so you can be proactive about heading off any future issues. And even if you made an error in the eyes of the customer, handling it professionally can win back their confidence and loyalty.

Any kind of negative review of your business—online or offline—can be very painful and difficult to deal with. The best strategy is to use the tips above to handle reviews objectively, resolve issues in a positive manner, and learn more about how your business can better serve customers in the future. ■

Let Them Eat... **Pumpkin!**

Fresh pumpkins start appearing in stores in September. And by October, they're a welcome sign that fall has officially arrived as they decorate porches and harvest-themed displays. While they are definitely beautiful to look at, fresh pumpkin is delicious to eat as well. Consider breaking the pumpkin pie "barrier" this year by trying some of these recipe ideas.



Spicy Pumpkin Chips

Ingredients

- 1 medium pumpkin
- 1 tbsp. cumin
- 1/2 tbsp. coriander
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 3 tbsp. oil, plus oil for frying

Directions

- Preheat oven to 300°F.
- Clean out your pumpkin and remove the skin with a knife.
- Using a mandoline, slice chip-sized pieces as thin as possible.
- Place your chips in a large bowl and coat with oil and spices (except for salt).
- Place chips on a parchment lined baking sheet in a single layer and sprinkle with sea salt.
- Bake for 15-20 minutes or until crispy, flipping them over once during baking.

Source: FigandPepper.com

Beef, Bean & Pumpkin Chili

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 lb. ground round
- 1 medium sweet onion
- 1 red bell pepper
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tbsp. dried oregano
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 3 cups sweet pumpkin or butternut squash
- 1 can black beans
- 1 can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 can low-sodium beef broth
- 1 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- sliced fresh jalapeños

Directions

- Cook beef in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat for 8 minutes or until beef crumbles and is no longer pink. Remove with a slotted spoon.
- Cook onion and next 2 ingredients in drippings for 7 minutes.

- Stir in chili powder and next 2 ingredients and cook 1 more minute.
- Stir in pumpkin and next 5 ingredients.
- Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low and simmer 20-25 minutes or until pumpkin is tender.
- Stir in cilantro and season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Serve with jalapeños and sour cream.

Source: CountryLiving.com

Pumpkin Spice Smoothie

Ingredients

- 1 (1.23 ounce) package maple and brown sugar oatmeal
- 1 1/2 cups vanilla soy milk
- 3 cups ice cubes
- 2 tsp. brown sugar
- 3/4 tsp. cinnamon extract
- 1/8 tsp. anise extract
- pinch of nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 5 tbsp. pumpkin purée, as needed
- 1 ounce whey protein powder (optional)
- 5 tbsp. maple syrup, to taste

Directions

- Combine the maple and brown sugar oatmeal and 1/2 cup of vanilla soy milk in a small bowl.
- Place in the microwave for 2 minutes.
- Combine the oatmeal, pumpkin purée, whey protein powder (if used), ice cubes, maple syrup and all the spices in a blender.
- Blend ingredients for about 2 minutes until the drink is smooth and creamy.
- While the mixture is blending, add the remaining vanilla soy milk.
- Pour into 4 glasses.

Source: PhamFatale.com

These are just a few pumpkin recipes that you can try. You may even want to add them to your menu if you host a Halloween or fall-themed gathering. The chips and chili are great make-ahead snacks for tailgating, too!



H

Halloween is the perfect time to share some classic seasonal movies with family and friends. Whether you like family friendly films, true horror flicks or something that stirs up a little spooky spirit, the movies selected from *Time Magazine's* "The 25 Absolute Best Halloween Movies to Watch Right Now" list has something for everyone.

Family Friendly Films for Halloween

Halloweentown (1998). This is a Disney Channel original movie of a young girl who learns she's a witch and visits Halloweentown where witches, monsters and ghosts live in harmony. The movie is available to watch on Disney Channel Go.

The Haunted Mansion (2003). If you love visiting the Haunted Mansion at Disney's theme parks, you'll probably like this



movie as well. The plot centers on a family battling 999 ghosts in an attempt to rid a house of its treacherous curse. *The Haunted Mansion* is available to rent or buy on Amazon.

Horror Movies for Halloween

Psycho (1960) is a classic psychological horror film, often considered one of director Alfred Hitchcock's best—and



most terrifying—works. If you've never seen it, beware... it is intense. If you have,

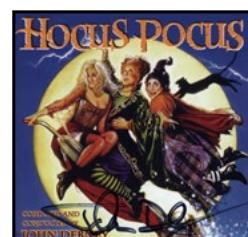
it's a great movie to see again to get you in the Halloween spirit. Rent or buy it on Google Play.

Halloween (1978) was the first movie in the prolific horror movie series. It tells the story of the evil Michael Myers, who escapes from prison and returns to where he murdered his sister 15 years prior. If you're ready for a creepy flick, *Halloween* is available to rent or buy on Amazon.

Spooky-Themed Movies for Halloween

Edward Scissorhands (1990), created by Tim Burton and starring Johnny Depp, tells the story of young outcast, Edward, who tries fitting into suburban life despite his oddities. This movie has stood the test of time and is a great addition to any Halloween film fest. You can rent or buy it on Google Play.

Hocus Pocus (1993). Starring Sarah Jessica Parker, Kathy Najimy and Bette Midler, this



movie features a trio of off-beat Salem witches. Voted one

of America's favorite Halloween movies, *Hocus Pocus* is worth renting (or renting again) on YouTube and Google Play. ■

Source: Time.com

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