



MONEY TOOLBOX RESOURCES

THE UNCONVENTIONAL GUIDE TO MASTERING YOUR MONEY

The Be Your Own CFO Checklist

Craft a personal mission statement. Keep it simple. Be honest and emotional. Use positive language to describe the things you want to be and do in life.

Set goals. Create short-, medium-, and long-term goals to support your mission. These goals should not be based on what others want. They should inspire you to action.

Develop a plan of action. Combine your mission statement and supporting goals to create a plan of action that includes a list of “next actions” you can perform today.

Organize your time. Make time to manage the affairs of You, Inc. People who prioritize money management generally find they have more money to manage.

Organize your space. Create a place to work on the business of You, Inc., and set aside space for archives.

Organize your accounts. Streamline your financial infrastructure. Draw up a chart of accounts and a chart of payments. Purge accounts you no longer use, merge redundant accounts, and check to be sure service levels are adequate.

Upgrade your accounts. Go online to find the best deals on checking accounts, savings accounts, and credit cards. Match these products to the needs of You, Inc.

Automate everything. Have money automatically set aside from your paycheck to save for retirement. Make automatic payments when possible. Schedule monthly contributions to other saving and investment accounts.

Create a balance sheet to show what you own and what you owe. Note your net worth—the difference between your assets and your liabilities. Run this report once per month to measure the progress of You, Inc.

Create an income statement to track your financial habits over time. Note your profit (or loss). Run this report once per month to measure the progress of You, Inc.

Compare your net worth to your “expected net worth”, as defined by Stanley and Danko. Also compute your profit margin and your liquidity ratio.

Get your free credit report at annualcreditreport.com. Go online to obtain an estimate of your credit score.

Create a simple budget. Base the budget on last month’s income, and be sure it includes space to save for a rainy day. Also set aside some money to enjoy life. Give every dollar a job. If your spending on needs is greater than 50% of your after-tax income, think about ways you can cut costs.

Compute your profit and profit margin. Make a note of them. Repeat this step monthly.

Brainstorm ways You, Inc. can improve profit. Divide these into high- and low-reward actions. Further divide each list into high- and low- difficulty actions.

Make a list of Big Wins available to You, Inc. Add each as a goal in your personal action plan, including a “next action” to start you toward victory.

Calculate how much You, Inc. spends. Use the categories from the Consumer Expenditure Survey: housing, transportation, food, retirement saving, health care, entertainment, clothing and personal care, and miscellaneous expenses. Compare these numbers to those of the average American.

Drive less. Brainstorm ways that You, Inc. can save on transportation. Look for ways to walk or bike. Explore public transit. Consider selling a vehicle and replacing it with something more economical.

Pay less for housing. Consider relocating to a cheaper neighborhood or someplace altogether different where the cost of living is lower. If you rent, attempt to negotiate a reduction in your lease. If you’re buying a home, spend as little as possible. If you already own, consider downsizing, refinancing, or prepaying your mortgage.

Save on food. Be smart when dining out. Grow your own fruits and vegetables. Cook in batches to save time and money. Most importantly, reduce how much food you waste.

Become better educated. Ask whether your employer reimburses for continuing education. Regardless, check your local university or community college to learn what classes are available. Then take one—even if it’s unrelated to your field of work.

Consider taking a second job, and use the income to reduce your debt or to boost your profit margin.

Negotiate your salary. Whether at your next performance review or the next time you take a new position, ask for more money. Read Jack Chapman’s *Negotiate Your Salary*.

Sell your stuff. Turn your trash into cash by selling the most valuable items online, the bulk items on Craigslist, and everything else at a yard or street sale. Donate what’s left to charity.

Get creative. Explore other ways to earn more. Consider starting a side business or becoming a landlord. Look into research studies, tutoring, and mystery shopping. Ask your friends and family how they supplement their incomes.

Get out of debt. If You, Inc. isn’t earning a profit, reduce overhead and increase income until it is. Next, use the debt snowball to repay your debts one by one in an accelerated fashion.

Save for the unexpected. Establish an emergency fund to act as self-insurance against life’s slings and arrows. Likewise, open an opportunity fund so that you can take advantage of pleasant surprises.

Use targeted saving to achieve your goals. Set up named savings accounts for each goal in the You, Inc. action plan. Treat each of these accounts like any other bill that you’re required to pay every month.