

Monthly Newsletter – September 2013

A Message from Thayn Niemand

There's nothing like an upcoming overseas family holiday to spur us into updating our wills – unless someone close has recently died, of course. Plan your will now, and you avoid the inevitable rush at the end of the year, when holidays loom.

Most wills leave the entire estate to the surviving spouse, and if they are not available, to parents or children. I suspect this is as a result of no estate planning and the drafter of the will being told exactly what to write in the required legalese.

A will older than two years needs to be reviewed to ensure it is still relevant to changed personal circumstances. For example, the children might have reached 18 and are of majority age, or the executor might have fallen out of family favour.

In many instances no changes may be required from the testator/testatrix's (the person whose will is being drafted) point of view, but laws may have changed which require amendments to the will, to ensure there are no unnecessary problems and delays in the winding up of the estate.

Planning

An efficient estate plan can save costs, taxes and ensure that your legacy is protected from these and other legal and non-legal threats such as insolvency, divorce or beneficiaries who require protection due to their age, substance abuse or marital situation. It is, however, imperative that you don't draft a will until you've undergone an estate analysis and, if necessary, a planning exercise.

An estate analysis is no more than the winding up of your estate while you are alive and able to see the financial and legal consequences of the clauses in your will. An estate-wise financial planner will be able to make cost efficient planning recommendations to reduce the effects of estate costs and taxes, ensure the protection of bequests and succession planning without incurring a plethora of costs to you.

What to do?

Estate analysis and planning requires full disclosure of everything you own at the current value of those items. Information about insurance policies, company pension, provident fund and group life benefits, investments, property etc. is also required. If the bank asks a client for an annual statement of that client's assets and liabilities, this document can be often be used in the initial planning stages.

In addition, a copy of relevant legal documents such as partnership, antenuptial and divorce agreements as well as the current last will and testament will be needed.

Although this process may seem tedious, remember that if the documents and information are difficult to get while the client is alive, how much more difficult will it be when they have died?

So avoid the Christmas rush to update your will. Contact your financial planner now!

-- Thayn Niemand

Strong mentors vital for young people

One of the main ways that young people find career inspiration is through finding strong mentors, says US business expert Caroline Ghosn, co-founder and CEO of Levo League.

Ghosn says a successful mentorship must comprise honesty and mutual consideration, and to start off with, mentors should have no vested interests in telling you what you want to hear, but rather what you need to hear to succeed.

She suggests that young professionals seek out someone in their industry who has experience and lessons to share, holds their success as the core of the relationship, and will be comfortable directing the mentee's progress even if it's out of their comfort zone. These type of mentorships drive a more honest, critical perspective than a peer mentorship with a friend or co-worker could provide.

Mutual consideration is also an important component of an inspiring mentorship. "There's nothing worse for a mentor than being asked generic questions that anyone could answer," Ghosn cautions. "They want to ensure that their time is having an impact on you."

If you're in a senior position in your career, it can be fulfilling to take a younger person on and mentor them to greater career heights. Many mentors find that helping someone else to move up through the ranks often reminds them of what they like about their chosen field.

Destination: Costa Rica

It may not seem like the obvious destination for South Africans, but Costa Rica is a fascinating option to consider for your next trip – it's a wilderness where green landscapes blur into turquoise horizons, red volcanic flames bleed into the black night, and rainbow-tinted birds streak across the sky.

Costa Rica is one of the most biologically varied places on the planet it's the size of Switzerland, yet it's home to 4% of the earth's wildlife species. Just don't expect to get anywhere fast: much of Costa Rica – its roads and its glacial pace – will try your patience.

Choose your Costa Rican adventure wisely it's not one of those places that you master on your first visit. And while it's the most developed country in Central America, it has roads that are so poorly maintained, they would have been better left unpaved; pristine forests that are accessible only by light plane, followed by taxi, then boat and, sometimes, foot; and a rainy season that can make moving from one place to the next unimaginable.

There's too much to do in one visit, but here are some suggestions. If you are there for at least four to five days, inland from the white sands of the Pacific is one of the last intact dry tropical forests of Central America. These rise up a volcanic mountain range to the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve in Puntarenas, an essential stop on any nature-lover's itinerary.

The reserve allows only 160 visitors at a time on its brick paths, and a handful of decent hotels line the road to the park.

If you have another three to six days, explore the Nicoya Peninsula and Quepos. Populated by American pensioners, international surfers, and tico farmers, this coastal corridor claims some of the country's finest hotels, all of them built with a conservationist's eye.

The nicest places to stay on the Nicoya Peninsula are the beachfront hotels that run south from Guanacaste all the way to the tip of the peninsula, at Montezuma.

Across the Gulf of Nicoya on the mainland, near Manuel Antonio National Park, adventurers can kick in their endorphins in countless ways: horse-riding, kayaking through mangrove swamps and estuaries and sport fishing for marline, tuna or sailfish.

Mellow music and road rage

Choosing the right music for your commute could make you a safer driver, researchers say. Promptly changing to soothing music is the most effective way to calm down while driving in stressful conditions that could trigger road rage.

Researchers from the US journal, *Ergonomics*, say they already know that music can influence mood and driving styles. More accidents occur when drivers listen to 'upbeat' music, possibly because the music is more distracting or because it causes us to drive faster, while downbeat music is more relaxing and associated with safer driving.

But they wanted to check how quickly mellow music could work – was a gradual or sudden change more effective? So they had volunteers tackle demanding driving conditions in a simulator while they listened to different types of music.

Participants who switched to more mellow music abruptly or gradually both reached the same levels of calmness eventually. However, those who made the switch quickly became calm sooner and made fewer driving mistakes.