

Introduction

We all need a financial plan. When you reach your mid-forties you have another 15 or 20 years of your working life still to come. After that, you should expect a further 15 or 20 years of happy, which includes prosperous, retirement. You probably know what you want to do when you retire - buy a second home, travel round the world, maybe just enjoy a good life. All that will not just happen; you have to plan to make it affordable.

This book aims to guide you through all the principal elements you need in order to put together your plan. You do not have to become an expert in investment or taxation, nor do you have to spend hours every week going through financial data. But in financial planning, like so many areas, you get back what you put in; you need to recognise that the modern financial world has become complex. People out there, in government and the financial marketplace, should treat you fairly and honestly but it is nobody's job to look out for you!

You will talk to your friends, and you will probably know someone who is a stockbroker or an accountant. If you feel you need professional help you can hire one of the several thousand financial advisers who operate in the UK. But you need to build up some basic knowledge - not just to pick the right adviser but to know the questions you should ask and to understand fully what he is telling you. Some decisions only you can make, such as what degree of risk are you prepared to accept in order to meet your financial targets?

This book aims to make your decisions easier and that much more effective.

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JARGON BUSTER