

# THE S & J READER

Swanson & Johnston Lending Team

MORTGAGE  
TRUST, INC.

July 21, 2009  
VOLUME 3 // ISSUE 6

## FINANCIAL FACTS:

55 banks have failed in the country YTD. The FDIC had 305 banks on its list of problem banks as of 3/31/09, the highest number on the list since 1994 (source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation).

During the 5 years from 1987-91, a total of 1,901 banks and savings & loan institutions failed in the USA or more than 1 per day (source: FDIC).

Only 1 in 4 working Americans (26%) surveyed in April 2009 believe they will be able to retire before age 65. Just 2 years ago (2007), 38% of workers anticipated an early retirement (source: Employee Benefit Research Institute).

61% of retirees work with a financial planner (source: OnWallStreet.com)

## 4 STEPS TO GREATER CONTROL OF YOUR MONEY

By Evan Swanson, CMPS

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. For most of Americans the last 12 months have created many financial challenges. But thankfully, these challenges have not been life threatening.

If you're like me, this financial hangover has got you looking for ways to gain better control of your finances. My wife and I recently decided to take some steps toward improving our fiscal management. In this article I want to share with you the 4 steps we'll be taking to accomplish this.

**STEP 1) INVOLVE YOUR SPOUSE** Just like a sports team, it's difficult for a household to be successful financially if all the players don't know the game plan. I made the realization recently that my wife and I don't do a very good job of involving each other when it comes to managing our household finances.

There are certain tasks that she handles like paying utility bills, managing household projects, and managing her own business bank accounts. I, on the other hand, track our investments, our loans, and do most of our banking. As a result, each of us is only familiar with half of our financial picture.

To start down the path of involving each other, we recently sat down looked over a spreadsheet we created that lists all our financial accounts (i.e. bank, investment, loans, insurance, etc.) including account numbers, contact information, and notes about the relevance of each account. In discussing each account we both walked away with a clearer understanding of our financial life.

**STEP 2) TAKE INVENTORY** Sales guru Todd Duncan once wrote that "you can't improve what you don't measure." After agreeing that we should both be involved with the management of our finances, we decided that the next step would be to take a detailed inventory of our financial life.

I am currently in the process of aggregating our financial information into an easy-to-read

household balance sheet that will list each of our asset accounts as well as our liabilities. After that is completed we'll complete a monthly cash-flow statement which lists all of our sources of income as well as our expenses.

Our goal is to update this weekly so that we can track our financial standing together.

**STEP 3) SET GOALS & PRIORITIES** Once we've initially created and reviewed our household balance sheet and cash-flow statements we'll come together to list some goals & priorities. We'll then use this list of goals & priorities to drive future financial decisions.

As an example, we recently sat down and listed all our household projects we'd like to complete that will require financial resources. We then went back through and prioritized each of them on the basis of need and level of financial investment. Our intent is to use this list as a guide for prioritizing household investment when we are ready to allocate money toward our house.

**STEP 4) WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD MEETINGS** Good financial habits require ongoing attention. We've agreed to spend 30-60 minutes each Sunday to have a 'financial review'. During this meeting we intend to review updated balance sheet & cash-flow statements, discuss household projects, upcoming expenses, investments, and other financially related issues.

Not only will our meetings benefit us by bringing ongoing focus to our financial health but we also believe having a consistent forum to talk about household projects and other financially related topics will improve our dinner conversation, which is where these topics seem to arise now.

Our hope is that by taking these 4 steps we'll feel more in control of our finances and see improvements in our decision-making. If you feel like you could benefit from these initiatives I hope you'll consider a financial review of your own!

## EIGHT COUNTRIES *By Evan Swanson, CMPS*



After 6 months, 8 countries, 16 flights, 6 cars (one of which we bought and sold), countless accommodations, 1 backpack, 2 journals, 17 books, and one heck of a good time I have returned from my sabbatical. In case you weren't aware, my wife and I departed on December 28 for a six-month trip that ultimately took us to Italy, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, England, New Zealand, and Australia.

Our return home is bittersweet. As you can imagine, our travels left us with unique experiences and memories that we will cherish for a lifetime. However, being separated from loved ones and living out of a backpack also made us realize how much we appreciate our home here in Portland.

As I sit at my computer to type this story, I am thinking back through all the adventures we embarked on. In Italy we rang in the New

Year with friends at an Italian villa just outside of Podova. We went on long urban hikes through Barcelona and dined on delicious tapas. We drove from Lisbon, Portugal, to Seville, Spain, in a tiny Peugeot, dodging the dangerous Portuguese drivers. In Falsterbo, Sweden, we were shown extraordinary hospitality while visiting family friends. We absorbed the creative vibes in Stockholm and dined with friends in London.

The bulk of our time was spent in New Zealand. On the North Island we swam in the ocean waves at Tapotupotu Bay, learned to surf in Raglan, and spent time with my parents touring the Hawke's Bay wine region. On the South Island we had a tranquil visit to the Golden Bay, backpacked the Routeburn and Kepler treks, and did a 10-mile hike with my in-laws on the Queen Charlotte Sound. There were numerous more highlights but there are too many to list here.

After New Zealand, we flew to Australia for five weeks. We visited Melbourne, drove the Great Ocean Road to Adelaide, snorkeled at the Great Barrier Reef, fed kangaroos at the Australia Zoo, and spent our last week exploring Sydney and surrounding areas.

All in all, we feel extremely lucky and fortunate for the experiences we had, but the trip was valuable for reasons beyond new

experiences. Taken out of my normal daily life and placed into these new environments, I've had the unique opportunity to reflect on myself. I feel like I have a better understanding of who I am and what is important in my life. Now that I'm back, I expect that I'll have further realizations in this area, and I'm excited to leverage what I've learned.

One realization I've already made is that my presence in the office is hardly needed. In spite of my absence, Aaron and Amanda teamed up to become the top-producing loan origination team at Mortgage Trust, Inc. for the first three months of the year. From the feedback I've received from past clients and professional partners, I gather that they did an outstanding job looking after our customers. If it wasn't for their hard work, my time away would not have been as carefree or enjoyable. I am deeply indebted to them as well as to the continued support from our past clients and professional partners. Thank you.

I am back in the office full time now and have resumed annual mortgage reviews as of July. If you'd like to read more about my trip or look at pictures, please visit my blog: [www.evanswanson.com/evans-sabbatical/](http://www.evanswanson.com/evans-sabbatical/). As always, please feel free to contact me anytime with questions.

### Swanson & Johnston Lending Team



1500 NW Bethany Blvd.  
Suite 255  
Beaverton, OR 97006  
Phone 503-439-9910 | Fax 503-439-9950  
Email [evan@mortgage-trust.com](mailto:evan@mortgage-trust.com)  
Email [aaron@mortgage-trust.com](mailto:aaron@mortgage-trust.com)

#### CHECK US OUT ONLINE

[www.mortgage-trust.com](http://www.mortgage-trust.com)

#### & ON EVAN'S BLOG

[www.evanswanson.com](http://www.evanswanson.com)



ML#2225