



## Getting To The Right Side Of Financial Planning

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**South Africans are renowned for their pioneering spirit. Our ancestors are a mixed bag with one thing in common** – an adventurous attitude that saw them leave the safety of Europe to settle in an unknown wilderness.

In the spirit of that pioneering attitude, savvy financial planners are hitching their wagons and heading towards a new frontier in financial services – one that emphasizes the importance of applying right-brain thinking to the financial planning process. The interior concerns, hopes, stories, lessons, experiences and regrets attached to people's money is the true driving force dictating where they will park that money - and to whom they will hand their keys!

Percentages, returns, rates, analyses, and probabilities are the lexicon of conventional financial planning. They are easy to calculate and quantify - all one needs is a calculator. But other matters—those that are defined by conscience, intuition, spirit, and imagination—these are implied, inferred, read between the lines, and spiritually discerned. These very words



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excite every cell of being and intelligence, and these are the very tools that have the power to bring the financial planning process to life – literally.

Is there anything truly unique or compelling in telling clients today that we are good at fund selection, asset allocation, probability analysis, financial planning, or any other technical function that has become ubiquitous in the financial landscape?

The prominent lesson we are learning regarding today's financial planning marketplace is that most of the existing value propositions are based in the left side of the brain. Multiplying and dividing, analysing and allocating, selecting and projecting are all left-brain functions and processes that, while being valuable, are easily duplicated and consequently commoditised. These functions are remnants of a scientific age and ideology which, in our opinion, are now on life support.

How much more value is left in measuring, calculating, projecting, and scrutinising, when everyone purports to do it and we all have standardised tools for doing it with? The present age calls for us to trade in our microscopes for an MRI machine that will help us to see into the inside of the matter - that which cannot be observed (or measured) on the surface.

An example is the deeply held belief amongst financial planners that the heightened ability to manage, manipulate, and project numbers - as well as produce sophisticated financial plans (i.e. perform the mechanics of financial planning) – will sustain their business. Someone could be the greatest

tactician in the world and yet be completely clueless as to how to connect with a prospect or client.

The new frontier for building your business is in mastering those functions that cannot become a commodity - and those functions and competencies are based in the right-side of the brain. These are the intuitive functions: establishing context for the work you will do; discovering the basis for your clients' hopes and fears; and conceptualising, strategising, sensing, and connecting with the key emotional drivers. Astute students of financial advice and planning acknowledge that this business boils down to helping clients formulate and actualise their dreams - it's about using money to make the uttermost of their innermost.

The challenge facing financial planners is learning how to master an intuitive skill-set. The following chart contrasts the left-side/right-side functions. You will notice that every function listed on the left-side is vulnerable to expanding competition and contracting margins and fees. The functions on the right-hand side though are intuitive and this is where the 'life' aspect of financial life planning comes in.

#### ***Building the Bridge from Left-Side Rationale to Right-Side Intuition***

**Rationale**  
Analysis

**Intuition**  
Synthesis

Content	Context
Detail	Big picture
Facts	Stories
Information	Emotions
Investigating	Sensing
Means	Meaning
Quantitative	Qualitative
Reading the lines	Reading between the lines
Story of numbers	Number of stories
Technical insight	Strategic insight

The fact is that the left brain seeks to analyse and the right brain attempts to synthesise. While the left brain attempts to gather and organise content, the right brain seeks to discover the living context for all this information. While the left-side digs for details and facts, the right-side seeks out the 'emotional information' by gathering stories and formulating the big picture.

The left-side strives to get itself around the means (the raw material substance - what it is and how it will be used) while the right-side endeavors to wrap itself around what it all means (the meaning and purpose of all this 'stuff').

Curiosity is present in both sides of the brain. While the left-side is concerned about with that which can be quantified and measured, the right-side is concerned about the qualitative - the emotional story (reading between the lines) that is better weighed than measured.

The end-product that benefits the client is the utilisation of full-brain advice, which we believe is a superior form of strategic insight. But strategic insight that hits the bull's-eye with a client's deepest wishes and goals is hardly possible without an understanding of who a client is, which requires moving way beyond what a client has to where he or she has it stored.

Who your clients are - why they want what they want, whom they will trust, and the emotions attached to the assets they have gathered and how they are to be distributed - belong to the right-side of this business. This new frontier involves the inside of the client and the potential on the inside of the advisor, which we have hardly begun to recognise or explore. That will all change in the years ahead.

### Not like Politics

Recently a successful advisor came to me (Mitch) after a speech I delivered on the intuitive side of financial planning and remarked that all the things I was talking about - reading between the lines, getting the client's story, figuring out the meaning of money for each client, and understanding the emotions associated to money - have always come very naturally to him. He just struggled with doing all that versus all the technical and tactical processes (which he could also do quite well) that his company advertises as their chief value.

I told him that he didn't have a problem - he had a gift. He just needed to purge the word 'versus' from his descrip-

tion because this is not an either/or proposition, right brain versus left brain, intuitive versus rational. These functions are designed as the perfect complement (unlike politics where the left and right are at odds with one another). The left and right sides of the brain are the ultimate allies seeking to blend the emotional and factual into one pure solution.

Part of the problem is that in the educational process, both academically and in corporate training, we are taught to place a premium on left-brain skills. IQ is measured this way. Scholarships and promotions are given on this basis.

However, things are beginning to change. Today's market is calling for more. Clients are seeking insight, experience, interpretation, and ultimately, wisdom. How do we begin to prepare for such a marketplace? These functions are not accomplished in the left-side computer or by the manmade machines that mimic these processes. Rather they are created through intuitive, right-brain insight working in conjunction with left-brain rationality to create a full, complex understanding of a client's situation.

It will also become important to understand the organic order in which these functions need to operate. The big picture (the contextual work of the right brain) needs to precede the small picture (detail work of the left). We need to weigh a client's emotional comfort level with our recommendations before we implement those ideas. We need to figure out the objectives for the money before we decide where to direct the money.

We continually see financial planners who do possess the (right) stuff diminishing their value proposition to reflect commoditised services based on computation instead of skills founded on intuition and experience. This is because even though they possess the intuitive functions, they do not know how to sell the 'right stuff'.

Once they learn how to sell the stuff and services of right-brain origin, no one can compete with them nor turn their value proposition of insight into a commodity, because the right-side value proposition is about how well I know you, how in-tuned I am into your situation, how much I care about you reaching your potential and making your life count, and how well I pay attention on an ongoing basis. What price will the consumer pay for this value proposition?

There is abundantly more economic upside in the right-side proposition than there is in the expanding competition/shrinking margin, left-side proposition.

There is only one way out of the hell of comparative numbers driving your life and business - begin to plant your value proposition squarely in the right-side of your client's brain.

***Rather than deal only with things measured, we would much rather prefer to deal with those numbers in the context of matters that are weighed. Measuring is what we do with the life of matter, but weighing is reserved for matters of life. It's time to start moving this industry in the right direction.◆***