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The Latest

From CCCU Intern to CPA

Education and experience go hand-in-hand when you're a young person trying to build your career. Former CCCU employee Lisa Ybarra understands the importance of obtaining both in the business world.

Lisa first joined CCCU in 2003 as a high school junior while participating in Clark County's Summer Business Institute, a program that is designed to give local youth the opportunity to experience a corporate environment. A year later, Lisa was hired on as a teller at the Tenaya branch, where she worked full-time while also attending college full-time at UNLV. During the summer months, she also interned with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

By the time Lisa completed her undergraduate degree in Accounting, she already had an impressive resume complete with both education and related work experience. She went on to earn a Master's degree in Accountancy while working as a research assistant at UNLV.



Just as the CCCU internship turned into a full-time job for Lisa in her early working days, her PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) internship turned into a full-time job as well. There, she worked as a senior auditor auditing publically traded companies within the gaming, utilities, medical device, and gaming manufacturing industries. Now, Lisa resides in Orange County, California and works as a senior accountant/financial analyst at Endologix, a medical device company. She maintains an active CPA license in Nevada and is a member of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) as well as Nevada Society of Certified Public Accountants (NVCPA).

For those of us that had the pleasure of working with Lisa while she was a part of our CCCU family, we are so very proud of her and wish her the best in all things.

For more information about Clark County's Summer Business Institute, you can visit their website.

Getting Ahead

401(k) Plans And Your Retirement



Any sensible retirement planning strategy starts with a target number. This number is how much you need to have saved for living comfortably and independently throughout your retirement. A good rule of thumb is to take your current living expenses and multiply that by 400. That's how much you'd need to have to sustain yourself on a 4% return.

That looks like a wildly intimidating number. You might be thinking to yourself that there's no way you could possibly save that much out of your paycheck. The good news is it doesn't all have to come from one place.

You've probably already seen information on Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) that you can set up at [CREDIT UNION]. That's money you have to save and invest yourself. A great way to expand your retirement options is with a 401(k) that is set up by your employer. Since the beginning of the year is a great time to make changes to your payroll information, let's take a look at a few common questions about 401(k) programs and what you can do if your employer doesn't offer one.

1.) What's a 401(k)?

A 401(k) program is a retirement account named for the section of the tax code governing it (section 401(k)). It is an alternative to traditional pension plans that puts the responsibility of saving for retirement on the shoulders of the employee. Instead of the company holding a pension fund and paying retired employees each month, employees make contributions to a tax-deferred account they can invest in stocks, mutual funds and other instruments. Once they retire, they can start taking money out of the account to pay for living expenses.

The account is "tax-deferred" - meaning contributions get subtracted from your taxable income. Withdrawals are taxed as ordinary income. For people in their peak earning years, this usually results in a considerable tax savings. There are, as usual, limits on how much can be contributed annually. For 2015, the maximum contribution is \$18,000. If you're 50 or older, you can make a "catch-up" contribution of an additional \$6,000.

Many employers also include special incentives for contributing. They may provide "matching" funds, where the company will match an employee's contribution dollar-for-dollar, up to a percentage of the employee's income. For instance, if you make \$50,000 per year and your employer offers 3% matching funds, they will contribute up to \$1,500.

401(k) programs are a really popular destination for retirement accounts. In 2015, the average 401(k) account was valued at just over \$90,000, up 30% from 2011. Part of that growth is the gains made by the stock market (which grows 10% on average per year), but a larger part is the larger number of people getting involved.

2.) What do I need to do to get involved?

You'll need to speak to someone in HR or payroll at your work to find out what options exist with your current employer. You'll need to fill out a form for elective contributions, or the amount you want to have come out of your paycheck. This might mean adjusting your budget to accommodate a slightly lower take-home pay. Remember, though, this isn't a dollar-for-dollar reduction since the elective contributions you're making are pre-tax.

As far as how much you should contribute, you should at least maximize your employer's contribution. If they match 3% of your income, contributing less than that is leaving "free" money on the table.

You'll need to pick an investment vehicle to use for your 401(k) account. It makes sense to choose one with relatively low risk, since this will represent a significant chunk of your retirement savings. Also, pay attention to the fees charged by the account. The difference between a .5% fee and a .05% fee could be tens of thousands of dollars over the course of your account.

If you've held 401(k) plans at previous jobs, it might make sense to roll over those accounts to your new employer program. This is a simple process that your HR representative can walk you through. Doing so will help you to manage your retirement accounts all in one place while avoiding extra administrative fees.

If you need access to that money to buy a house or pay for college, you can make early withdrawals. Otherwise, resist the urge to cash out those accounts. You'll pay a steep penalty - 10% of what you withdraw plus taxes on the withdrawal as if it were newly earned income.

3.) What can I do if my employer doesn't offer a 401(k) plan?

Investigate Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) IRA plans. These are programs designed for employees of small businesses and the self-employed. They work like 401(k) programs, except all contributions are made by the account-holder. The annual limits are much higher than an IRA account, as much as \$18,000 in 2015, with similar catch-up contributions possible for workers over age 50.

For larger contributions, consider an individual 401(k) program, sometimes called a solo k or a uni-k. These programs require considerably more paperwork. They may also include start-up charges (a few hundred dollars) and annual fees (between \$20 and \$150, depending upon the provider). The limits are much higher: 25% of income for workers and another 25% for small business owners and sole proprietors.

These options won't have the matching funds of a traditional 401(k) program. However, they provide the same tax benefits as those other programs. They can be a workable alternative for retirement savings for people who don't have another option.





Getting Ahead

Planning a Vacation?

Here's How to Save More Money



Sign up for Benefits Plus to save on your upcoming travel plans. As a CCCU checking account holder, you can get cash discounts on dining, entertainment, travel, and groceries. Experience all the money saving benefits of Benefits Plus® for a low monthly fee of \$5.95

New mobile app makes it easier than ever to use Benefits Plus!

We are thrilled to announce the official debut of The Personal Mobile Concierge® App for Benefits Plus®. The App became available on Wednesday February 4th at the Apple App Store for iPhones and iPads and at the Google Play Store for Android phones and tablets. This tremendous enhancement is like having a personal concierge in the palm of your hand.

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News & Events

Happy Couple, New Home

Long-time members Jason and Jessica Weeks recently had a great experience with one of our mortgage representatives, Terri Kight. Jason and Jessica were under the gun to have their new mortgage close quickly, because they were selling their old house and buying a new one simultaneously. They wanted the timing to be perfect; however, if you've ever purchased a home you know that unforeseen challenges often arise.

Terri was able to help them get their mortgage closed 2 weeks before close of escrow, and the day before they signed to sell their old house. Jason and Jessica were blown away by the speed and efficiency of the entire process, and they were grateful that the timing worked out just as they'd hoped.

If you are looking for a new home or if you're just looking to refinance and take advantage of the near record low rates, CCCU has a talented staff of mortgage professionals who are standing by ready to serve your home financing needs:

- Terri Kight: 1425 E Windmill Ln, Las Vegas 89123
- Joshua Pasene: 303 S Water St, Henderson 89015
- Abbey Sellers: 9311 W Sunset Rd, Las Vegas 89148
- Patricia Johnson, Christine Tassone and Dawn Young: 2625 N Tenaya Way, Las Vegas 89128

Whether you're looking for a 1st mortgage, 2nd mortgage or Home Equity Line of Credit, we're happy to help.

For more information on a mortgage from CCCU, call 702-228-2228 or go directly to the mortgage portal.





How I used accounting to get my wife to marry me

Editor's Note - This is the second segment of a series of financial help articles written by an inspiring young writer who recently became a CPA. He also just happens to be a long time credit union member. We think you'll like his fresh outlook towards building and caring for personal family finances . . . if you want to read more of his articles, check out his blog.

Let's go back to summer 2005. I had just finished my sophomore year of college. A friend convinced me to venture off to California to spend my summer vacation as a door-to-door salesman. For 6 days a week, we spent all of the daylight hours going from door...to door...to door...to door. So when 12 o'clock arrived every day, we were ready to spend some money on lunch! Because we deserved it darn it!

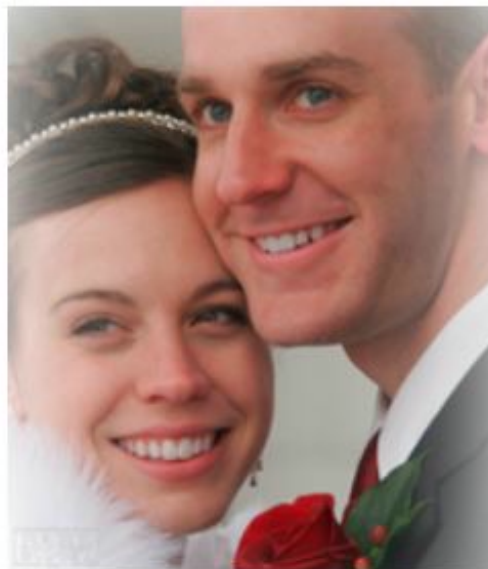
Living the good life - I had been frugal all my life. Now that I was making more money than I was accustomed to, I made a conscious decision to squelch those pesky old-fashioned frugality inclinations. In high school, I used to spend no more than \$2.12 on lunch. But now I was splurging on combo meals! We're talking upscale fast food, local Mexican places, Chinese buffets, you name it.

Accounting for finances - After a few weeks of financial ignorance and nutritional irresponsibility, I started wondering exactly how much I was spending. This all led to the creation of my first spending tracker (not to be confused with a budget). I wasn't budgeting quite yet at that point, but all of my spending was accounted for, and my newfound financial awareness was a huge first step toward becoming more financially responsible.

Fast forward a few months, and I was back in school and had met my future wife. I liked her, but she wasn't really sure what to think of me. We got a quick lunch one day on campus, and the cashier didn't give me my receipt, so I asked for it. It completely blew her away that I wanted a receipt, especially for a meal that cost less than 3 dollars. She was like, "What's this guy's deal?" He skateboards, studies accounting, doesn't talk much, keeps asking me out, and asks for receipts. Suffice it to say that accounting for my finances was not the type of accounting that helped me win over my wife.

Accounting for feelings - Our relationship had a rocky beginning. I was totally committed from the start and doing my best to convince this girl that she should be with me. I knew there was something different about her, which led me to do something I had never done before.

After our first few dates I started putting my thoughts and feelings about her and about our time



together on paper. I did it all in the form of a letter to her. After a couple months, it had grown to a twenty-one page document, NONE of which will I be posting here.

Anyway, I didn't really know why I started writing these letters, but it turns out that my subconscious instincts came through for me! When she tried to end things with me after a few months of semi-dating, I happened to have an amazing twenty-one page insurance policy! Before I left her house that night, I convinced her to meet with me just one more time. I tried to make it memorable, and then I delivered the package [insert mischievous laugh here].

Thanksgiving break gave me a lot of time to mope, stew, and drown my sorrows in endless games of ping pong with my brothers. I felt like I was in good shape by the time I got back to school. After a few more weeks, I was in full blown denial having convinced myself that I was back to normal and doing really great.

But luckily that wasn't the end. Turns out the account of my feelings was insightful—and convincing—to my wife. After a few months, we started actually dating.

Fast forward to the end of my senior year. We're married, both of us asking for and saving receipts so we can enter them daily into my upgraded excel budget.

Feelings & Finances - Accounting is fun whether it be accounting for your finances or accounting for your feelings. Put them together and you've got a recipe for success.

Just as you ought not cheat on your loved ones, you should not cheat on your money. Safeguard yourself with a written budget. One of the definitions of the verb "budget" is to plan the allotment of something. Budget your money, your time, your food, and your relationships, and you will be much better off.

Happy Valentine 's Day!

Lifestyle

Fuel Sippers for All Budgets

There is a fuel-efficient model out there for you

Even with gas prices falling again, fuel economy is still among the biggest factors people consider when buying a new vehicle. Spending less at the pump can help you spring for the model that you may not have been able to afford before. Here is a list of some of the best:

Toyota Prius: The Toyota Prius has become synonymous with green driving. Starting at an affordable MSRP of \$24,200, the 2015 Toyota Prius achieves up to 51 mpg city and 48 mpg highway. Impressively, around 95 percent of Prius models sold in the past 10 years are still on the road. Unique features like Toyota Hybrid Synergy Drive, regenerative braking and Eco-sensitive driving help the Prius strike an optimal balance between fuel economy and everyday drivability.



"Thanks to some very clever drivetrain programming, you'll get excellent fuel economy almost regardless of how heavy you are on the gas pedal," noted Kelley Blue Book. "It does this with all the practicality of any hatchback, with a decently sized rear seat and plenty of cargo room."

MAZDA6: The MAZDA6 is a vehicle that tends to be skipped over when people shop for a mid-size sedan. But those days seem to be coming to an end thanks to its impressive array of features and a starting MSRP of \$21,190, which is lower than a large chunk of competitors. Named a *Car and Driver* "10Best," the MAZDA6 is available in Sport, Touring and Grand Touring, the latter being the most fuel-efficient when the GT Technology Package is added. In addition to advanced safety items like Forward Obstruction Warning System and Mazda Radar Cruise Control, the package adds fuel savings features like active grille shutters and the i-ELOOP regenerative braking system that helps the MAZDA6 achieve up to 28 mpg city and an awesome 40 mpg highway.

"After undergoing a complete makeover last year, the 2015 [MAZDA6] has emerged as a clear winner," according to the experts at *AutoTrader*. "Although priced on par with other popular family sedans, Mazda has infused its five-passenger sedan with a sleek and sophisticated body, outstanding driving dynamics and an interior that is technologically savvy without being overly complicated."

Ford Fiesta: If you're looking for a small car that's big on features and fun, but small when it comes to fuel expenses, check out the Fiesta and its starting MSRP of \$13,965. With seven fuel-efficient models available, the Fiesta can achieve up to 31 mpg city and 43 mpg highway when equipped with the 1.0-liter Manual EcoBoost Package. Even with those excellent numbers, performance is still zippy with 123 horses and 125 lb/ft of torque.

"Affordable to buy, cheap to operate and entertaining to drive are three of our primary criteria for a desirable economy car, and the 2015 Ford Fiesta has no problem scoring high on each," Edmunds said. "A classier-than-expected interior and fully up-to-date infotainment equipment only underscore our feeling that the Fiesta is a subcompact car that punches well above its price class."

Audi TDI Models: For those who demand a luxury vehicle, but still want excellent fuel economy without committing to a hybrid, Audi offers a full lineup of TDI clean diesel vehicles. From the A3, A6, A7 and A8L luxury sedans, to the Q5 and Q7 SUVs, you're sure to find a model that fits your needs. The benefits of TDI technology include more torque and reduced CO2 emissions, all while helping you achieve fuel economy as high as 38 mpg highway. On A7 TDI models, you can get fuel economy that's dramatically improved. With 36 percent better highway fuel economy, 33 percent less fuel emissions and 24 percent fewer estimated trips to the pump, the A7 TDI can cut over \$5,000 off your fuel bill per year.

There are plenty of great fuel saving models out there for you to buy so be sure to do your research. Stop by and let us help you choose a loan with an excellent rate so you can have the financing before you even walk into the dealership.

Lifestyle

The Evolution of Valentine's Day

The history and dramatic evolution of St. Valentine's Day

If you think Valentine's Day isn't what it used to be, you're right, and not just because of the ever-expanding commercialism. The holiday has undergone massive evolution in its long history, and it seems like the changes have even sped up in recent years.

Records are a little murky when it comes to determining who the holiday was named for, and exactly how it began, but historians have uncovered many details about the past that shed light on the origins. Many historians believe that there were three Christian saints with the name Valentine in the time period when the saint who gave his name to the holiday likely lived. It is most likely, however, that the man who ended up being memorialized in the day's name was a third century Roman priest who served under Emperor Claudius II.



In order to encourage young men to fight their best during the battles of the time, Emperor Claudius II banned marriage for young people. He felt that not having wives would make them better soldiers, furthering his military goals and securing his reign. This decree drove the priest Valentine to action, fixing what he saw was an unjust ban on an important religious ceremony.

"This is where Valentine comes in; the pesky priest who believed marriage to be a God-given sacrament," reports the Huffington Post. "Valentine began officiating marriages in secret but was eventually found out and imprisoned."

Although it can't be confirmed, it has been suggested that the notes passed to Valentine when he was in prison were the original Valentine's cards. The transformation from prison notes to love letters is the perfect example of how the holiday's origins are so different from the way we celebrate today.

"The priest was eventually beheaded and then named a martyr by the Church because he gave up his

life to perform the sacrament of marriage: for love of love and love of God," states author Greg Tobin.

Pope Gelasius I declared that February 14 would be St. Valentine's Day at the end of the fifth century. After that, poets and other authors took the idea of the day and began changing it into a day to celebrate romance. Shakespeare even had a hand in the holiday's evolution, making reference to Valentine's Day in his work.

In recent years, Valentine's Day has expanded to include not just romantic love but to encompass all types of love. Now, single people aren't left out because it isn't uncommon to celebrate the love between family members and friends on February 14.

So this Valentine's Day, make sure you show everyone close to you how much you love and appreciate them, and don't forget St. Valentine who gave his life for love.

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Lifestyle

Facts About the Presidents You Probably Didn't Know

Little-known facts about our country's presidents

Memorizing a litany of facts about the presidents during school probably left you without any desire to find out more, but if you do a little research you will discover a plethora of interesting facts that weren't included in your basic history textbook. Here are some peculiar, funny and nearly unbelievable facts about the former leaders of our country.

Princeton's first graduate student was a President

President Madison was the first graduate student from Princeton. He showed his academic aptitude by receiving his undergraduate degree in just two years and then continued on for an extra year, completing the prestigious university's first graduate degree.

A United States President's Name Was Used for Another Country's Capital

President James Monroe's name is forever memorialized as the inspiration for the name of Liberia's capital. The name Monrovia was chosen in part because Monroe strongly supported the colonization of the country.



The Word "OK" Has Presidential Origins

Everyone uses the phrase "ok" or "okay". It has even spread to other countries and been popularized in other languages. The origin of the phrase, however, is much less well known.

"Supposedly, President Van Buren popularized one of the most commonly used phrases to date: 'OK', or 'Okay', according to the Huffington Post. "Van Buren was from Kinderhook, NY which was also

called 'Old Kinderhook'. His support groups came to be known as "O.K. Clubs" and the term OK came to mean "all right."

Andrew Jackson Couldn't Keep Out of Duels

Prior to the presidency, Andrew Jackson participated in more than 100 duels and even took few bullets in order to defend his own honor and the honor of his wife. Famously, a rival named Charles Dickinson wanted the opportunity to duel with Jackson so he insulted Jackson's wife. When a duel inevitably ensued, Dickinson shot Jackson in the chest, but Jackson remained standing.

"Jackson was a notoriously terrible marksman and he knew if he was to be successful in this duel, he would need to remain calm and possibly take a bullet," states Dantan Wernecke from TeachingAmericanHistory.org. "He calculated that if he could be the one to take the second shot, he could better steady his nerves and take careful aim – he could take a better shot than Dickinson had done in haste."

The strategy worked as Jackson was the only one to survive the duel.

Several Presidents Had Peculiar Pets

William Henry Harrison kept a pet goat at the White House during his short presidency. John Quincy Adams famously housed an alligator and Andrew Jackson had a pet parrot, which wouldn't be considered unusual except for the fact that someone taught the parrot to swear. Reportedly, the parrot was kicked out of President Jackson's funeral because of its foul mouth.

If you didn't know these interesting presidential facts, chances are your friends don't either, so they are perfect to help break the ice during uncomfortable dinner party silences.

