

Lessons Learned the Hard Way!

There may be an upside to the financial crisis that struck in 2008 – American workers have grown more cautious and disciplined in managing their money according to a recent survey by Fidelity Investments. In contrast to five years ago, we are putting more thought into purchases, saving more and thinking seriously about the future. For example:

- **56%** of respondents said they have gone from being scared or confused about managing their money to confident and better prepared.
- **42%** are now contributing more to workplace savings plans such as a 401(k), individual retirement accounts or health savings accounts. Just **5%** report contributing less.
- **72%** are now carrying significantly less personal debt than before the crisis.
- **55%** say they feel better about retirement than they did five years ago and are taking more interest in their financial futures.
- **42%** have increased the size of their respective emergency funds to cover unexpected expenses, family illness or loss of a spouse or partner's income.
- **54%** report paying more attention to the distinction between “needs” and “wants” which can significantly improve an individual's or family's financial well being.

Fidelity Vice President John Sweeney is especially impressed at how many workers are now taking a serious interest in their retirement incomes. Before the crisis, these same persons never paid much attention to retirement – now they are taking a “hard look at the numbers” and making adjustments to ensure a secure lifestyle.



As an EAP member, you have access to a wide variety of financial tools, components and expertise to help you make decisions that will benefit you and your family. You may call and speak with a professional counselor for guidance or you may wish to explore online resources on your own by accessing the web address on the bottom of this newsletter. You may find the following especially helpful:

Tools for Tough Times: Prominently located under *Featured Solutions*, you will find guidance with mortgages and home ownership; heating and home energy; links to fuel economy including GasBuddy.com; links to frugal living and deep discounts including Dealcatcher.com.

Financial Calculators: Located under the *Financial* tab, you will find 167 calculators for making good decisions from car financing to accelerating mortgage payments. Simply plug in your numbers and the calculator will do the rest.

No doubt, the great recession of 2008 knocked us down. But if the end result is a cautious, better informed consumer, then maybe even this dark, ominous cloud has a silver lining!