

'Spot' Financial Planning: The Newest Trend?

Like it or not, when writers and columnists for widely read publications such as *Money* magazine and the *Wall Street Journal* make favorable mention of what they believe to be new “trends” in financial planning, millions of readers take notice. A November 2004 article in *CNN/Money* online refers to “comprehensive—and pricey—financial plans as so 1999” and dubs “spot financial planning” the latest and greatest idea. To wit: “Is a Roth IRA right for you? Should you borrow from your 401(k) to buy a home? Do you have enough life insurance? In the past, financial planners were too expensive (or required a serious commitment of assets under management) to be a ready resource when life’s conundrums surfaced.” The article (as did Jonathan Clements) mentions the Web site *Myfinancialadvice.com*, which includes an online database of about 100 vetted advisors who provide phone or online consultation for specific financial planning questions or scenarios ranging in cost from \$15 to a few hundred dollars, and up. Many advisors affiliated with *Myfinancialadvice* are CFP certificants. One

satisfied customer sums up her experience this way: “I got exactly what I wanted: an abbreviated financial plan and great service. I wasn’t belittled or intimidated.”

Aside from the obvious question—Why would the average consumer feel he or she would be belittled or intimidated by a financial planner?—there are others, and we’d like to hear your thoughts: Where does this type of service take financial planning in the eyes of the general public? What are the risks—and benefits? Would you consider affiliating with such a service, and why or why not? Is this compatible with financial planning’s desire to be recognized as a true profession? In the interest of presenting all sides of the issue, *Voice* has invited the founders of *Myfinancialadvice.com* to submit a Viewpoint essay.

We’d like your thoughts now: go to www.journalfp.net and to the March Talking Point. If you are affiliated with *Myfinancialadvice.com*, we’d especially love to hear from you.

