

MANAGING YOUR MONEY



Survey: Getting Financial Advice Pays Off

(NAPSA)—According to a recent survey, nearly 84 percent of Americans believe they are in either excellent or okay “financial fitness” shape. Eleven percent believe they are in troublesome shape. Yet when asked if and how they seek financial assistance, 67 percent of consumers had never received advice on their personal finances; only 31 percent had sought advice.

Overall results of the survey, conducted on behalf of the Financial Services Roundtable—representing 100 of the largest integrated financial services companies providing banking, insurance and investment services—indicate that financial advice for consumers equates to a better understanding of finances, which results in better money management and fewer bankruptcies.

Nearly 78 percent who consider their personal financial situation to be in excellent or pretty good financial shape work with or have worked with someone offering them financial advice. Conversely, only one in 10 of those who felt they were in terrible shape had actually sought or received advice. Testing by the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) shows a significant improvement in consumer financial knowledge—by as much as 10 to 40 percent—when a person receives financial counseling or advice.

Given this data, some sort of credit counseling or financial advice seems to play a role in the overall financial health of American consumers. NFCC also found that “poor money management” (67 percent) was the top reason that consumers were considering bankruptcy.

As we continue to evaluate how all American consumers can take



Americans who get financial advice tend to be in better shape with regard to “financial fitness.”

actions that might prevent them from having to consider a bankruptcy path at all, men and women alike would be wise to consider exploring the reliable resources available at their fingertips—from trustworthy credit counseling to credible online sites. Each can play a significant role in educating us on how to better manage our money.

The Roundtable has launched an aggregate resource, www.mymoneymanagement.net, to provide consumers with information on everything from balancing bank accounts to protecting against natural disasters. The Web site contains content from a variety of consumer groups, credit counseling agencies and financial services organizations. It will also facilitate easy access to pre-bankruptcy credit counseling assistance.

If you're in financial distress, credit counseling can help. If you're not sure of your stability, basic guidance from your lender or a financial advisor can also better prepare you for the future.