Episode 19 The Plan Is the Point How Real Strategy Transforms Your Financial Future

Michael Bass:
"Disclosure: The opinions voiced in this show Financial Edge are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. To determine which investment(s) may be appropriate for you, consult with your attorney, accountant, and financial advisor or tax advisor prior to investing. Securities offered through LPL Financial, Member FINRA/SIPC. Investment advice offered through NewEdge Advisors, LLC dba Silver Edge Financial Group, a registered investment advisor. and separate entity from LPL Financial."

Welcome back to *Financial Edge*. I'm Michael Bass, here with my friend, colleague, and the man who's redefined what financial planning can be—Howard Silver.

Howard Silver: You're too kind, Michael. But I'll take it. And today's topic is near and dear to my heart, because we're setting the record straight: Financial planning is not just about how your money is invested. Planning is so much more than allocation. It's about strategy, sequencing, coordination—and doing it all with purpose. If all you've ever seen from your advisor is a pie chart with some colorful wedges labeled 'Large Cap,' 'Bonds,' 'International,'—you've been shortchanged. That's an investment *alloca on*, not a financial *plan*.

Michael:
Today, we're diving into what *real* planning looks like. We're going to break it down—how it goes far beyond stocks and bonds, and how a well-built plan can actually increase your wealth, reduce your tax burden, and preserve your legacy.

Howard:
We'll give real examples. We'll walk through decisions that might look small on paper—like when to take Social Security, or whether to convert an IRA to a Roth—but can have six- or seven-figure implications over time.

Michael:
So if you've ever thought, "I already have a plan," or "I'm too busy to get into the weeds"—this one's for you. Stick with us. And remember, if something we say today gets your wheels turning, give us a call at **561-300-0090** or visit www.silveredgefg.com. We offer complimentary consultations, in person or virtual, with no pressure and no obligation.

Howard:
Let's start with what most firms call "planning." In reality, it's often just asset allocation. You answer a five-question risk questionnaire, they drop you into a model portfolio, and that's it. Done. "Here's your plan."

Michael:
Right. And maybe once a year you get a review. The advisor updates your pie chart, maybe shifts a percentage here or there. But the deeper questions? The ones about tax, legacy, income, or long-term strategy? Crickets.

Howard:
At Silver Edge, the portfolio is the *output*. The plan is the *engine*. We start by getting to know you—your goals, your family, your income streams, your tax bracket, your estate documents, your real estate, your risk tolerance, your business interests. Only after all of that do we even talk about where to invest your money.

Michael:
Because otherwise, you're just investing in a vacuum. And you can have the best-performing portfolio in the world, but if you're withdrawing money inefficiently, or triggering capital gains unnecessarily, or missing key estate moves—you're leaking value every year.

Howard:
And that's the thing, Michael. A good plan *protects against leaks*. It's like a pressure-tested ship. You want it to float no matter what market conditions you're sailing through.

Michael:
Let's take a quick example. A client comes in, just retired. $1.2 million in a traditional IRA, $400,000 in a brokerage account, and $200,000 in Roth. The other firm said, "We'll just take 4% a year from your IRA."

Howard:
But they didn't ask—what's your tax bracket now? What's it going to be when RMDs kick in? What about converting some of that IRA to Roth over the next few years while your tax rate is lower?

Michael:
What we did was run tax projections across multiple scenarios. We looked at Social Security timing, RMDs, Roth conversions, and bracket stacking. The result? A $110,000 reduction in total lifetime taxes—*without* lowering income or taking on more risk.

Howard:
And that's just one example. Want to find out if you've got any of those inefficiencies in your own plan? Call us at **561-300-0090** or email me directly at **howard@silveredgefg.com**. We love showing people what their advisors missed.

Michael:
Let's talk about one of the most overlooked parts of a financial plan: **income sequencing**. It's

not just about how much income you draw in retirement—it's *where you take it from*, *when*, and *why*. That's strategy.

Howard:
Exactly. Most people assume they'll just start pulling from their IRA or 401(k) when they retire and let the rest ride. But that's not always optimal. Sequence of return risk, tax bracket changes, Social Security timing—all of it needs to be coordinated.

Michael:
Here's a great example. A couple we worked with had about $2 million in assets, split across tax-deferred, taxable, and Roth accounts. They were planning to delay Social Security until 70 for the higher benefit—but that left a gap in early retirement where they'd need income.

Howard:
Their CPA had suggested just tapping the IRA, since it had the most money. But we ran the numbers, and that approach would've pushed them into a higher bracket later—right when RMDs hit—causing an avalanche of taxes and higher Medicare premiums.

Michael:
Instead, we recommended a **"tax bracket fill" strategy**—pulling a combination of capital gains from the taxable account and small Roth conversions to stay within their current bracket. It allowed us to pre-pay some taxes at lower rates, grow their Roth account, and avoid a future tax spike.

Howard:
And guess what? Their long-term income didn't change one bit—but their *tax burden dropped by more than $200,000* over the life of their plan.

Michael:
These are the conversations that don't happen at firms where the focus is just on portfolio performance. We're here to *orchestrate*—not just allocate.

Howard:
Another place where true planning makes all the difference? Estate strategies. And no, we're not just talking about who gets what when you're gone. We're talking about how to efficiently transfer wealth, minimize taxes, and make things easier for your family.

Michael:
That's why we've partnered with **Wealth.com** to provide clients with customized estate documents—wills, trusts, powers of attorney—drafted based on their financial picture and reviewed with their planning team.

Howard:
Because the sad truth is, many people with substantial wealth have outdated wills or no estate plan at all. And their advisor never brought it up.

Michael:
Or worse, they assume the estate attorney is coordinating with the financial advisor, and vice versa—and nobody's actually looking at the full picture.

Howard:
We integrate it. We know the size of your IRA, we understand your annuities, we've seen your real estate holdings. We're looking at *everything*—so we can help structure trusts, choose appropriate beneficiaries, and make sure your wishes are protected, not just scribbled in a drawer somewhere.

Michael:
We had a client with a $3.5 million estate, all going to three children. His old will left everything equally—but the bulk of his assets were in pre-tax retirement accounts. Two of the kids were in high tax brackets, one wasn't.

Howard:
So equal didn't actually mean *equal*. We restructured the beneficiary designations and created a disclaimer trust so they could equalize after-tax value without triggering unnecessary income tax. That's the kind of thoughtful planning most firms don't touch.

Michael:
If you're thinking, "This sounds great, but I don't want a one-time plan that just sits on a shelf"—good. Because neither do we.

Howard:
Planning is a living, breathing process. Things change. Markets move. Tax laws shift. Family dynamics evolve. Your strategy has to evolve too.

Michael:
That's why we offer **regular reviews**—annually at a minimum, more frequently for complex cases or when life changes demand it. And we don't just revisit your portfolio—we revisit your goals, your cash flow, your insurance, your estate documents, and your tax position.

Howard:
It's not a "set it and forget it" kind of shop over here. We're in the trenches with you, every step of the way.

Michael:
If you've ever wondered what actually happens between meetings, phone calls, or quarterly

reviews with us—this is the part most people never get to see. And it's one of the biggest differences between Silver Edge and the firms we talked about last week.

Howard:
Right. Because what we do here isn't just about meeting with clients and updating a few allocations. There's an entire engine behind the scenes that's constantly turning—research, analysis, team strategy sessions, ongoing education, product evaluation—all aimed at improving outcomes for our clients.

Michael:
Every couple of weeks, we sit down as a team—portfolio managers, planners, even insurance and estate experts—and review *what's working*, *what's changing*, and *what needs updating*. We're constantly reviewing funds, interviewing managers, stress-testing models, and rebalancing portfolios—not just based on market noise, but on *data* and *strategy*.

Howard:
We run tax maps for clients so we can get proactive—"Here's how much room you have in this bracket; here's how to fill it wisely." We look at multi-generational strategies, trust planning, even how clients' businesses or real estate holdings fit into their larger financial picture.

Michael:
And we're talking to fund managers *directly*. Not reading third-party newsletters—we're on Zoom calls with the people running the strategies we invest in. We ask them the hard questions: "Why are you underweight this sector? What's your risk overlay this quarter? How's your conviction changed?"

Howard:
We also dig into insurance and annuity product evolution constantly. The kind of features you see in tools like the Equitable PLUS® ADV didn't exist five years ago—and most advisors still don't understand how to use them correctly.

Michael:
And don't forget estate strategy. When we partner with platforms like Wealth.com, we're not just handing you a tech tool—we're building that plan into your entire financial ecosystem. That's your legacy we're talking about, and it deserves more than a "set and forget" trust from 2009.

Howard:
All of this is to say—you might only talk to us a few times a year, but behind the scenes, we're working on your behalf constantly. And not just your account—we're focused on your *outcomes*. That's what separates strategy from service.

Michael:
And if you're listening and thinking, "I've never seen anything like that from my advisor," then let's have a conversation. We'd love to show you what financial planning can look like when it's built around *you*, not a platform.

Michael:
Alright, let's keep the momentum going with a few more questions from our South Florida listeners. These are the kinds of things people ask us in meetings every week—so if one of these sounds familiar, you're not alone.

Listener Question from Linda in Delray Beach:
"I have a plan from a robo-advisor that shows I'll be okay. Isn't that enough?"

Howard:
Thanks, Linda. "Okay" is a pretty low bar for something as important as your life savings. Robo-advisors use algorithms based on averages. They don't know you just sold a property, or that you're planning to help fund a grandchild's education, or that your spouse has a health concern.

At Silver Edge, we go beyond projections. We build living strategies. We stress-test income under different market conditions. We coordinate with your tax professional. We look at your estate documents. A robo can't do any of that. It's not that they're bad—they're just limited. Planning deserves more than autopilot.

Listener Question from Frank in Boca Raton:
"I just inherited money. Should I wait before doing anything?"

Michael:
Great question, Frank. The answer depends on what kind of inheritance it is—cash, investment accounts, real estate, retirement accounts? Each has different rules and implications.

For example, if you inherited an IRA, the SECURE Act now forces most beneficiaries to deplete the account within 10 years. That's a tax time bomb if you're not careful. We can help you structure withdrawals to minimize the impact, maybe even blend in some charitable strategies if that fits your goals.

If it's a taxable account, you may have a step-up in basis—which is a great planning opportunity. Bottom line: You don't want to just park the money in a savings account and ignore it. But you also don't want to make decisions without a coordinated plan.

Listener Question from Carla in Wellington:
"How do I know if my current advisor is actually doing planning?"

Howard:
Carla, this is one of my favorite questions. Here's how you know:

- Have they asked to see your **tax return**?
- Have they discussed **your will or trust**?
- Did they bring up **Roth conversions**, **RMDs**, or **Social Security timing**?
- Do they proactively schedule **review meetings** based on life changes—not just calendar dates?

If the answer to most of those is no, they're probably managing your investments, not planning your future. A real planner gets in the weeds with you—not just when the market's hot or when it's time to rebalance.

Listener Question from Julian in Parkland:
"What's the point of planning if the market's going to do what it wants anyway?"

Michael:
Julian, I get where you're coming from. Markets are unpredictable. But planning isn't about predicting the market—it's about **being prepared** for whatever it throws at you.

Let's say the market drops 20%. Do you have cash set aside, or a structured product that buffers some of that downside? Do you have an income plan that doesn't force you to sell low? Do you have the right tax strategy to take advantage of the dip?

That's the power of planning. It doesn't remove risk—it organizes your financial life in a way that keeps you from having to react emotionally. That's how wealth is preserved and grown over time.

Listener Question from Terri in Weston:
"I'm retiring next year. Should I move everything to conservative investments to be safe?"

Howard:
Terri, this is a classic and totally understandable instinct. But here's the problem: Retirement isn't the finish line—it's the start of a new financial phase that could last 30+ years.

If you move everything into conservative investments too soon, you risk losing purchasing power to inflation—and running out of money down the line. Instead, we like to use **bucket strategies** or **segmented income planning**. That means allocating your money across different time horizons—short-term income, mid-term growth, and long-term longevity planning.

We may use structured annuities, RILAs, or buffered equity strategies to create safer growth—not just cash and bonds. Let's make sure you stay "safe" without sacrificing the upside you'll need to keep up with your life.

Listener Question from Daryl in Jupiter:
"I'm in a 60/40 portfolio and it's been a rough ride. Is there a smarter way to allocate?"

Michael:
Daryl, the 60/40 model has been the standard for decades—but it's showing its age. When stocks and bonds fall together, which we've seen in recent years, the model doesn't offer much protection.

At Silver Edge, we go beyond traditional allocations. We use **non-correlated alternatives**, **hedged equity**, **private credit**, **tail risk hedges**, and **structured products** to build what we call **hyper-diversified portfolios**. We're not constrained by cookie-cutter models. Every client portfolio is designed to perform in a variety of market conditions—not just the textbook scenarios.

Michael:
Before we wrap, we want to touch on something important—because not having a financial plan doesn't just mean you're unprepared. It means you may already be *paying a price* and not even realizing it.

Howard:
That's the silent danger, Michael. With no clear strategy, you could be overpaying taxes every year… drawing from the wrong accounts… missing optimal windows for Roth conversions or gifting… or unknowingly setting up your heirs for a mess down the road.

Michael:
And it's not always dramatic. Sometimes it's just death by a thousand small cuts. A mistimed RMD here. A capital gain that could've been offset. A trust that's outdated. A missed opportunity to lock in gains or protect downside.

Howard:
One client we worked with had been paying capital gains tax on interest income from a muni bond fund they thought was "tax-free." Nobody had reviewed it. Nobody caught the mismatch. We repositioned those assets—no more surprise tax bills.

Michael:
Another couple thought their Social Security strategy was optimized. Turns out, a staggered filing with a back-door Roth conversion strategy would've added nearly $80,000 in lifetime

benefits. That's not just a spreadsheet number—that's a few years of travel, or a safety net for their kids.

Howard:
And the common thread? They weren't being ignored. Their advisors were polite, friendly, even communicative—but they weren't planning. They were babysitting investments, not building a roadmap.

Michael:
That's why we're passionate about what we do here. Because planning isn't optional. It's not just for the ultra-wealthy. It's for anyone who wants to make the most of what they've built.

Howard:
And it's never too late to start. We've helped clients in their 30s map out aggressive savings plans. We've helped retirees fine-tune their drawdown strategy. We've even helped estate executors clean up inherited messes.

Michael:
Wherever you are in your journey—getting started, mid-career, preparing for retirement, or managing a legacy—we can help you turn uncertainty into strategy.

Howard:
And now, more than ever, you need a plan. With markets in flux, interest rates rising, and tax policy on the move, the best thing you can do is take action—not someday, but now.

Michael:
As we wrap up today's conversation, here's what we hope you take away: real financial planning is more than numbers on a spreadsheet or a colorful pie chart. It's about clarity. Intention. Strategy. It's about taking the moving parts of your life—your income, your taxes, your investments, your goals—and weaving them into something that makes sense.

Howard:
And not just today, but over the long arc of your life. A proper financial plan is adaptive. It evolves with you. It asks questions before the market changes, before your family dynamic shifts, before Congress adjusts the tax code again. Because when you plan ahead, you're not scrambling—you're steering.

Michael:
Too many people are out there reacting—hoping their portfolio holds up, hoping their withdrawals work out, hoping their advisor calls them back in time. At Silver Edge, we don't leave your future up to hope.

Howard:
We build around it. With precision, with attention to detail, and with the kind of partnership that means we know your name, your story, and your strategy.

Michael:
If you're listening today and thinking, "I'm not sure I have a *plan*—I think I just have an account," let's talk. We'll walk you through it. No pressure. No hard sell. Just a real conversation about where you are and what's possible.

Howard:
Give us a call at **561-300-0090**. You can visit us online at **www.silveredgefg.com** or send me a direct email at **howard@silveredgefg.com**. We offer free consultations—virtual or in person—and we always welcome second-opinion portfolio reviews.

Michael:
Your financial life deserves more than automation. It deserves insight, strategy, and a team that actually shows up. That's what we do at Silver Edge.

Howard:
Thanks again for spending part of your Sunday with us. We'll be back next week with another round of clarity, strategy, and—hopefully—a few light bulb moments along the way.

Michael:
Until then, take care of yourself—and your plan. This is *Financial Edge*.