

## Citation and Resource Guide

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### After-Tax Dollars in Traditional IRAs

- For the income limits on deducting contributions to traditional IRAs for 2016 and 2017, go to [www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/ira-deduction-limits](http://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/ira-deduction-limits).

### “Combo” Products for Long-Term Care Coverage

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services explains the pros and cons of using life insurance to pay for long-term care at <http://longtermcare.gov/costs-how-to-pay/using-life-insurance-to-pay-for-long-term-care/>.

### Defined Benefit Plans for (Very) Small Companies

- The IRS spells out points to consider when thinking about a defined benefit plan at [www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/choosing-a-retirement-plan-defined-benefit-plan](http://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/choosing-a-retirement-plan-defined-benefit-plan).

## Practice Development Tip

### Turn Tax Prep Into College Prep

When you meet with clients during tax preparation season, you'll probably meet with some who have teenaged and pre-teen children. Other clients will have grandchildren in that age group. During those meetings, you can combine traditional tax planning with some new wrinkles in planning for college financial aid.

For starters, urge parents to have their students fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when he or she is in his or her senior year of high school. That's true even for parents who are “sure” that their child won't qualify for need-based aid from the FAFSA formula. Some colleges will require a FAFSA submission as a condition for merit-based (academic) grants, even if there is no need-based aid forthcoming. Besides, with costs at some colleges so high now, even relatively affluent families may qualify for some need-based aid.

Remind parents that the FAFSA can be filed as early as October 1 of the preceding year, for the next school year, and that the numbers to be reported will be on the just-filed income tax return. In October 2017, for example, students can submit a FAFSA for the 2018–2019 school year, with the family's expected contribution to college costs based on income reported for 2016.

FAFSA and tax planning should begin early, ideally, no later than when a student is in the ninth or tenth grade. If a student will be starting college in, say, 2020, and the FAFSA will report income from 2018, it may be advisable to avoid additions to income next year. Instead, some parents might want to implement transactions such as capital gains, retirement plan distributions, and Roth IRA conversions in 2017, rather than waiting.

How will grandparents be affected? If they want to help, they might put money into a 529 college savings plan for their grandson or granddaughter, for tax-free investment income and possibly tax-free distributions. Grandparent-owned 529 accounts aren't reported on a FAFSA as family assets. Distributions from grandparent-owned 529s *will* reduce potential financial aid, but that may not be an issue once the student files the final FAFSA. Assuming that occurs in, say, October 2021, based on 2020 income, a grandparent could begin to distribute funds from a 529 account in 2021, and possibly avoid any decrease in financial aid.

If you can help clients obtain more financial aid for their families, the results can be just as meaningful as income tax reduction.

## Online Marketing Tip

### How to Market Your Firm for \$100 Per Month

Big-budget marketing might just not be in the cards for your smaller firm, now or ever. That doesn't mean you should toss the marketing baby out with the bath water. Rather, budget to spend a little each month to help keep your firm top of mind with your target market, top industry, and geography. Here's how.

1. **Local listing.** This is a free service on Google, Bing, and Yahoo. So, be sure to take the time to complete your firm's local listing for each location you have. List your top services and be sure to mention an industry section you want to focus on. To see an example, search for CPA Firms in any city. You will most likely see several examples.
2. **Complete a buyer persona activity.** This doesn't cost anything, but it does take a little time, possibly 30 minutes. To get a free, downloadable template, search for "buyer persona guide" or "buyer persona template". That activity is meant to help you focus on your ideal customer's behaviors, traits, pain points, and more. Knowing who "your people" are will help you focus your monthly marketing initiatives.
3. **Segment your client email lists.** If you don't have an email service provider, consider MailChimp (\$10 per month) or Constant Contact (\$20 per month) to organize your client email list into segments, and to add new email subscribers to existing lists. Segmenting your email lists helps you to target messages to specific audience members. For example, if you offer individual and business tax services, your message to each audience group would be very different. With a segmented list, you can choose the emails that would go to each at specified intervals.
4. **Connect website forms to email.** If you have a WordPress website and already use a paid email program, like MailChimp, add a form plugin to the site (such as MailChimp for WordPress) that costs around \$79 annually (less than \$7.00 per month!). This automatically connects your WordPress forms to your MailChimp account so you can see what people are downloading, clicking on, and subscribing to. Then you can add those new subscribers to your email list segments.
5. **Boost Facebook posts each month for as little as \$5 per day.** Only boost posts on your Facebook account that point back to your website. Avoid boosting content that goes to someone else's website. For example, if you have a new blog post on your website, boost that post to a geographic region, or audience interest. Be sure to use a call to action, such as "Learn More." And, identify the goal for the boosted post, i.e., website clicks.
6. **Sponsor LinkedIn posts.** Sponsored LinkedIn posts are similar to Facebook posts for company pages. You can sponsor LinkedIn content for as little as \$5, but that may not reach a very large audience. Consider a budget of \$20 for a sponsored post that drives traffic back to your website. You will be able to choose the geographic region, company size, industry and more to target this post to show up on people's news feeds.
7. **Set up a HARO (Help A Reporter Out) account.** This is free, and it aligns you with high-profile publications—basically free publicity. Each day you'll receive a list of questions reporters are seeking content responses. You can choose by industry or specialty. When you submit a response, it may be included in the reporter's online story. In some cases, stories are carried on sites like Entrepreneur, finance blogs, money magazine, and more.
8. **Be a guest blogger.** Guest blogging is another great way to reach new audience members. Though this is a free opportunity, it does take time to write the blog. However, if you follow a simple blogging formula with a headline, two sub heads, and three bullets under each subhead, and a call to action, you may be able to crank out content

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quickly. Be sure to work with only reputable companies to share your content. Chambers of Commerce often look for guest bloggers too.

9. **Host community workshops.** If you have a business community service provider, such as SCORE, consider hosting free workshops for their members. This gives you an opportunity to get in front of people who need your services and to demonstrate your knowledge or specialty. This works well for people who are comfortable speaking in front of groups.
10. **Create and use a monthly blogging schedule to help you stay on track.** Write and post one blog each month. Then share the blog on your social media channels. Be sure to include hashtags your target audience would use for the type of content you're sharing. Though this doesn't cost anything to do, it does take time. Use the same formula from item 8.
11. **Participate in Facebook and/or LinkedIn groups.** You can share relevant company content in those groups to help spread the word about you as well as your brand. Identify the groups that resonate with your business goals, for example, expanding our presence in the distribution market in the Philly area. Then join distribution groups in the Philly area on both Facebook and LinkedIn. Monitor your posts and others to see who's commenting on your stuff and identify posts you can comment on. This is free to do, but does take time.
12. **Run a text ad campaign.** Text ads on Google or Bing for under \$40 per month can help you reach those searching for services you offer. You can run as few as one ad or up to several on this budget. Some pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns can be done for pennies per click. Work with a skilled PPC professional to help you set up your first campaign. And, if you have a Gmail account, you may be able to get free advertising in a one-time promotion.

As you can see, there are many things that can be done for under \$100 per month. Some of it takes time, while others take money. Consider mixing your efforts at first to see what works best. Then, capitalize on the best bang for your buck.

Of these dozen ideas, which will you begin leveraging in 2017?

## Practice Development and Management Resources

from the AICPA

For more information or to order, log on to [www.cpa2biz.com](http://www.cpa2biz.com) or call 888.777.7077.

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[Item no. PPM1307HI—AICPA Member \$119.00, Nonmember \$149.00]

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■ Reduce stress and make the most of your staff's time and skills with this hands-on guide to improving your tax season. Filled with checklists, sample letters, and worksheets to help keep your clients happy while effectively managing workflow during the busiest time of your year.

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