

EMBRACING THE MARKET ROLLERCOASTER

FrontGate Wealth Management not only survived the peaks and valleys of the 2020 pandemic market—they optimized the ride.



In his 27 years as a financial advisor, Chris Slajchert, CLU®, ChFC®, CASL®, RICP®, has weathered many financial storms, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 2008 mortgage meltdown. But none were as wild and quick as 2020.

“The 2020 market was a complete rollercoaster,” he says. “Before COVID-19, we were at the top of a 10-year bull market. In March 2020, the bottom fell out with a steep 34% drop. Then it came back 39% at the end of the second quarter” (Russell Investments, 10/7/2020).

Slajchert and his team didn’t panic. Neither did their clients, who had been prepared to withstand unexpected situations such as this. When the unprecedented happened, FrontGate clients were ready—financially and emotionally.

“We saw the market rollercoaster as an opportunity,” says Slajchert. “We attacked it, and we came out ahead.”

FrontGate advised retiree clients to forgo quarterly withdrawals, if their budget allowed, to take advantage of the government’s waiver on mandatory distributions. If a client’s budget required the withdrawal, they used their distribution “bucket” with the most profitable earnings.

For clients still accumulating wealth, FrontGate recommended supercharging their contributions to qualified plans and other portfolio “buckets” to capitalize on low markets. It’s part of the strategy FrontGate calls the “V-shaped recovery.”

“The V-shaped recovery is largely about emotions,” says Slajchert. “When a client’s financial plan is set up properly, they can ride out the bottom of that ‘V’ during a market downturn and can have ammunition in the bank to make the best of the situation when the market comes back up.”

A well-diversified portfolio is key to V-shaped success. “We’re not looking to hit home runs every year, but if you buy quality

investments and consistently aim to hit singles, doubles, and triples, we believe you’ll be rewarded in the long term,” says Slajchert.

Planning to Succeed

Each FrontGate financial plan is uniquely complex and accounts for not only a client’s current financial standing, but also the financial direction they hope to go in.

FrontGate examines three key areas: risk management (including insurance, wills, and emergency cash), wealth accumulation (such as investments and capitalizing on employer benefits), and a wealth distribution strategy (understanding income needs, tax strategies, and social security benefits). The team also coordinates with other members of a client’s professional team, such as attorneys, analysts, or CPAs, to ensure all financial bases are covered.

“Most importantly, we get to know a client and their family so we can understand what’s most important to them—because it’s their plan, not ours,” says Nick De Lorenzo, a financial advisor at FrontGate. “We analyze their factors using our planning software, then present a plan of recommendations to achieve their goals. It’s important to remember that planning is an evolution, not a one-meeting solution.”

Regular reviews are implemented to update clients’ plans as their lives change—whether accommodating a new home purchase or strategizing retirement distribution through a turbulent market.

“We strive to build loyalty and consistency with our clients and within our own team,” concludes Slajchert. “We want to see our clients grow, and we celebrate when they reach their financial milestones.”



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