

JANUARY 2025

“At our Firm,
Your Estate Plan
is Not Business,
it’s Personal...”



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“Every New Year’s I have
the same question: ‘How
did I get home?’”

- Melanie White

HUGE ANNOUNCEMENT

YES, IT IS THAT BIG OF AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WE ARE USING A FULL PAGE ARTICLE TO LET YOU KNOW!

Believe it or not, November 2024 was the 20 year mark of the Asset Protection & Elder Law Center opening. We’re not sure whether we should laugh or cry! But be it as it may, we want to do either of these options with you! After all, not to be cheesy, we wouldn’t have made it this far without your support!

So please, please mark this calendar date as we would love to have you join us to celebrate this special anniversary... albeit, a bit late 😊

Why: The 20th Anniversary of the Asset Protection & Elder Law Center, aka ribbon cutting for new office

Where: 3187 Red Hill Avenue, #115, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

What to do: Please RSVP at – <https://apel20.eventbrite.com>

We are limited in space, so indeed we would appreciate if you could let us know!

When: February 5th, 2025



COMING IN MARCH...

SEA COUNTRY SENIORS on March 11 @ 1PM.

**City of Laguna Niguel - Sea Country Senior & Community Center
24602 Aliso Creek Road - Laguna Niguel, CA 92677**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back Reader! How was your holiday break? Believe it or not, and we are not saying this superfluously, we are really looking forward to this year! For some reason, this team is filled with optimism, and hope is the best fuel out there if you ask us! Let’s get cracking, shall we? As we step into 2025, being an estate planning firm, it is our duty to inform you that significant changes in estate planning laws are on the horizon. Now, with the new shift in the U.S. presidential administration, new economic policies may impact both your personal and business finances. As always, knowledge is power, so keep in touch with us!

One major adjustment to be aware of is the scheduled sunset of the current estate tax exemption at the end of 2025. If no legislative action is taken, the exemption will decrease, affecting estate planning strategies for individuals and families. We have written about this ad nauseam, but it would be wise to review your estate plans now, reassessing your goals with a financial advisor, and of course... your favorite estate planning attorneys (*hint hint!!) 😊.

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD



As we move into 2025, several key economic changes are expected to shape the landscape, influencing everything from mortgage rates and cost of living to estate taxes and broader economic policies that may be affected by political transitions. While the future holds some uncertainties, there are sound financial principles that can help individuals and businesses stay afloat and even thrive in this evolving environment.

One of the biggest factors impacting consumers in 2025 will likely be mortgage rates. Over the past few years, mortgage rates have experienced significant volatility due to global economic challenges, central bank policies, and inflationary pressures. As we enter the new year, mortgage rates are projected to remain elevated, reflecting broader inflation trends and the Federal Reserve's efforts to manage economic stability.

Higher mortgage rates have a direct impact on the housing market. Potential homebuyers may find it more difficult to qualify for loans or may have to settle for smaller homes as borrowing costs rise. Whatever your financial situation may be, we strongly encourage you to ensure you only undertake a manageable mortgage loan amount, and be ready to sustain it for a period of at least 6 months should your income stream change!

The cost of living has steadily risen over the past few years and shows no signs of slowing down in 2025. Inflationary pressures, driven by a combination of supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and higher energy costs, continue to affect everything from groceries to healthcare. It is likely that consumers will continue to feel the pinch in their day-to-day expenses.

To mitigate these rising costs, individuals and families need to adopt strong financial habits, such as budgeting carefully and seeking out ways to reduce unnecessary expenses. Prioritizing savings, building an emergency fund, and investing wisely must remain your priority. Thus, no new cars, no new toys (except for Christmas 😊)!

As an estate planning firm, no economic discussion would be complete without mentioning the upcoming estate tax change. At the end of 2025, the current estate tax exemption is to sunset into ... the ether 😞. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017 temporarily doubled the estate tax exemption, allowing individuals to pass on up to \$12.92 million (or \$25.84 million for married couples) tax-free. However, this provision is scheduled to expire at the end of 2025, unless new legislation is passed to extend it.

If the estate tax sunsets as scheduled, the exemption amount will revert to its pre-TCJA level of approximately \$5.49 million (adjusted for inflation). This change could have a significant impact on estate planning strategies for individuals with substantial wealth. To prepare for this shift, it's advisable to consult with financial advisors or estate planners (we highly recommend the latter and happen to know a good firm for that! 😊) to reassess your estate plans and consider strategies such as gifting or establishing trusts to minimize potential tax liabilities.

The political landscape is another major unknown heading into 2025. With the upcoming presidential election and potential changes in the administration, economic policies could shift dramatically depending on the outcome. Key issues such as tax policy, trade agreements, and regulations on industries ranging from technology to energy could see significant changes under a new presidency.

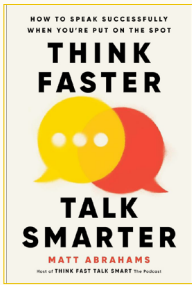
While it's impossible to predict exactly how political changes will affect the economy, maintaining flexibility and staying informed about potential policy shifts can help individuals and businesses navigate uncertain times. Diversifying investments, staying nimble in business operations, and being prepared for policy changes are all smart strategies for managing this uncertainty.

As always, we encourage to budget and plan. Get rid of debts as much as you can, and don't get drowned in daily news. Keep your eyes on your business and your family, the rest will work itself out. And when in doubt, call us! Have an amazing Thanksgiving and an even better Christmas! We will remain open for a significant portion of the time, so don't hesitate to contact us for any of your financial and legal needs!

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On the business front, a new administration will often implicate new policies, which can impact everything from tax rates to regulations. Staying adaptable and well-informed about potential changes will help your business remain resilient. Consider diversifying your investments and keeping a close eye on tax implications as new legislation unfolds. However, with Trump, it is safe to say it will likely be business friendly.

Amid these transitions, the goal of achieving financial freedom remains steady. Building wealth and securing a stable financial future requires consistency: budgeting, saving, and investing wisely. By setting clear financial goals, managing debt effectively, and living below your means, you can navigate any economic shifts and move closer to true financial independence. We know, we know, we keep preaching the same message! Nobody ever said being responsible was 'sexy', but stay with us, and we'll make it fun. Let's make 2025 our breakout year People!



MATT ABRAHAMS- THINK FASTER, TALK SMARTER: HOW TO SPEAK SUCCESSFULLY WHEN YOU'RE PUT ON THE SPOT

This book sure would have been helpful when we started our career! This is an invaluable resource for anyone looking to improve their ability to communicate effectively in spontaneous situations. Drawing on his extensive experience as a Stanford lecturer and communication coach, Abrahams provides readers with a practical toolkit to navigate the anxiety and unpredictability of impromptu speaking.

Abrahams begins by addressing the most common barrier to effective spontaneous communication: anxiety. He introduces readers to a variety of strategies to manage nerves, such as deep breathing and mindfulness exercises. By helping readers calm their minds and bodies, he sets the foundation for more confident and composed speaking.

One of the book's strengths is its accessibility. Abrahams uses a conversational tone that makes complex psychological concepts easy to understand and apply. He enriches the text with anecdotes from his own experiences and those of his students and clients, which serve to illustrate his points in a relatable and engaging way. For example, he recounts how one student overcame the fear of being called on in class by using specific anxiety-reduction techniques, demonstrating the effectiveness of his methods.

The core of Think Faster, Talk Smarter is the "Think Fast, Talk Smart" methodology, which is comprised of six steps: Calm, Unlock, Redefine, Listen, Structure, and Focus. Each step is designed to help readers build their spontaneous speaking skills in a structured manner. The "Calm" step involves techniques to reduce anxiety, while "Structure" teaches readers how to quickly organize their thoughts. This method provides a clear, actionable roadmap for improving impromptu communication.

Real-world examples and case studies are woven throughout the book, providing practical insights and inspiration. Abrahams shares stories of clients who have successfully applied his techniques, such as a CEO who learned to connect with her team more effectively by managing her speaking anxiety. These narratives not only illustrate the success of the methods but also offer readers tangible examples of how to apply the techniques in their own lives.

Abrahams excels at balancing theory and practice. He delves into the psychological and physiological aspects of anxiety and communication, but always ties these concepts back to practical application. The book is rich with exercises designed to help readers practice and internalize the techniques. For instance, he suggests practicing the "ABC" method (Acknowledge, Breathe, Center) before speaking to calm nerves and enhance focus.

Despite its focus on practical techniques, the book is engaging and thought-provoking. Abrahams poses reflective questions and exercises at the end of each chapter, encouraging readers to think critically about their communication habits and consider ways to improve. For example, after discussing the importance of listening, he prompts readers to evaluate their listening skills in spontaneous situations and identify areas for enhancement.

Think Faster, Talk Smarter: How to Speak Successfully When You're Put on the Spot is an essential read for anyone looking to improve their spontaneous speaking skills. Abrahams provides a perfect blend of theory, practical tools, and real-world examples, making the book both informative and actionable. Whether you're a seasoned professional or someone who often finds themselves at a loss for words, this book offers valuable insights and techniques to help you communicate more effectively.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO MAKE 2025 THE BEST YEAR EVER!

As the new year begins, people always see it as a time to set ambitious goals, envision a better future, and embrace fresh starts... as it should be! However, many make the mistake of focusing solely on their goals, only to lose motivation as the year progresses. The key to making the most out of a new year isn't just about setting goals but rather effective systems to achieve them, maintaining flexibility when balance feels out of reach, and valuing relationships as the foundation of a fulfilling life.



Consistency and the Power of Systems - Setting goals is important, but systems are what turn aspirations into reality. Goals provide a direction, but systems create a process for progress. Remember the saying "anything measured gets improved". For instance, if your goal is to get fit, the system might be a structured exercise routine, a meal plan, and weekly check-ins with a friend or coach. By focusing on the daily habits and routines that support your goals, you build momentum, making it easier to stay consistent even when motivation wanes.

Consistency is the backbone of success. Small, regular efforts compound over time, leading to significant results. Make consistency your priority, and let the results follow naturally. The more you focus on your systems—your habits, routines, and processes—the more likely you are to achieve your goals.

Accepting the Imperfection of Balance - Many people approach the new year with the idea of achieving perfect balance in their lives: work, family, health, hobbies, and personal growth all equally in harmony. The truth is, balance is rarely a constant state. Life is dynamic, and certain areas may require more focus at different times. Sometimes, work will take precedence, and other times, family or personal well-being will come first. With that knowledge, it is easier to navigate through the lulls life throws your way!

It's important to accept that balance isn't always achievable and that's okay. Instead of striving for perfect equilibrium every day, aim for balance over the long term. Acknowledge that there will be times when you need to pour more energy into one area of your life, and that's part of the natural ebb and flow.

Prioritizing Relationships: The Foundation of a Meaningful Life - Amid the pursuit of goals and consistency, it's easy to lose sight of what truly matters: relationships. At the end of the day, the quality of your relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and your community is what defines a meaningful life. No achievement, wealth, or success can replace genuine human connection.

Invest time in the people who matter most. Create moments for shared experiences, deep conversations, and acts of kindness. Whether it's scheduling regular family dinners, catching up with friends, or making time for your partner, prioritize relationships in your weekly routines. Remember, no matter how busy life gets, the people around you deserve your attention and care. Being an estate planning firm, for better or worse, we have witnessed deaths in many instances. It never fails, it is the people in the end that matters.

Systems and Relationships Go Hand-in-Hand - Building effective systems can also help you maintain meaningful relationships. Just as you set routines for professional or personal goals, consider creating habits that foster connection. This might mean setting aside time each week to check in with a loved one, planning regular gatherings, or even creating a family ritual that strengthens bonds. Consistency in relationships—being present, reliable, and engaged—is just as crucial as consistency in pursuing your goals.

Making the Most of the New Year - To get the most out of the new year, focus on building systems that make progress a daily habit, rather than relying solely on big goals. Embrace the reality that balance will come and go, and learn to adjust without losing sight of what's most important. And above all, prioritize the relationships in your life, because they are the true measure of success and happiness. Let's do the necessary to create an intentional, well-lived life!



ASSET PROTECTION & ELDER LAW CENTER
FOUNDED BY PHANCAO & SHAFFER, LLP



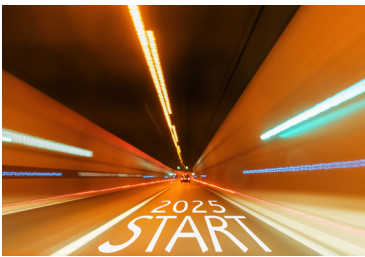
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As we kick off 2025, let's set the tone for a year that's both fun and productive. This year is a chance to strike that perfect balance between achieving our goals and enjoying the moments that truly matter. Stay focused, but don't forget to make room for light-heartedness (is that even a word? We'll take a chance, feel free to correct if we're not grammatically correct!).

Whether it's scheduling a family trip to reconnect with loved ones or setting aside time to reach out to a friend you've lost touch with, prioritize the relationships that enrich your life. These moments are just as important as any professional milestone.

No matter where you stand politically, the commitment to hard work, personal growth, and meaningful progress remains the same. The challenges and opportunities of a new year don't hinge on a political outcome but on our determination and resilience. This is a time to press forward with energy and optimism. As you may know if you've been with us for any stretch of time, you may have noticed we have grown quite a bit as of late! Believe us when we say we have had our growing pains, that making payroll hasn't always been a walk in the park! But truth be told, everyone of us feel blessed to work with one another. And with that feeling of fostering a family first business office, both internally and outwardly, we believe great things are ahead of us! And because you've been with us thus far, you are definitely coming along for the ride!

Once again, grazie mille for your incredible loyalty to us, let's conquer this year together! Here's to making 2025 our best year yet!