

IF I KNEW THEN...

In this ongoing series, we ask executives, entrepreneurs and business leaders about mistakes that have shaped their business philosophy.

Michael E. Chadwick

PRESIDENT, CHADWICK FINANCIAL ADVISORS

By Phil Hall



About the company:

Based in Unionville, Conn., [Chadwick Financial Advisors](#) President Michael Chadwick offers financial planning, investment management, and estate and tax planning services.

The Mistake:

My parents were wonderful – my mom was a nurse, my dad was an auto mechanic – but they made some horrible money decisions. They never really budgeted and never made savings a priority.

As a kid, I heard thousands of times, “Michael, we can’t afford that.” That was so deeply ingrained in my brain that I didn’t want that to haunt me for the rest of my life. So I decided to learn how money works.

I began this business in 1994 because our society has no mechanism to teach people about money. The most common financial problems I see among people today are not keeping a score; either they are not paying attention or not making it a priority to step back and see where they are financially.

“I decided to learn how money works.”

The Lesson:

I tell people to think of financial planning as taking a financial X-ray of yourself. You review where you are and need to figure out what targets you want to hit: kids in college, retirement, buying a home, whatever it may be.

But there are many reasons why people have financial stress. I think a big problem is corporate marketing, which has the ability to separate people from their money, especially on fluff items. People buy a lot of things that they don’t really need; and if there are items that are needed, the prices on a lot of things are absurd. People get sucked into the whole name-brand, high-end thing, and that behavior creates problems.

Also, there is very little incentive to save. The government does a very poor job of leading by example because it spends more than it takes in. Eventually, the situation must change because someday the bills will have to be paid.

Photo courtesy of Michael E. Chadwick.