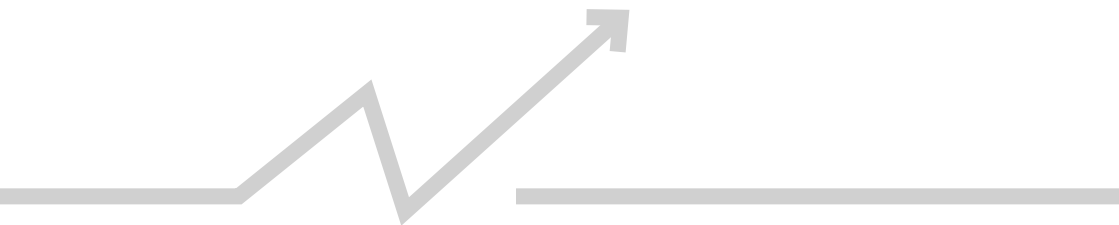


THE ULTIMATE GAME PLAN FOR YOUR FINANCIAL SUCCESS





THE ULTIMATE GAME PLAN FOR YOUR FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Achieve your goals and dreams through
safe and structured financial planning



MARK SCICLUNA



BDL Publishing

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(+356) 2138 0351

www.bdlbooks.com

First edition, 2024

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Typesetting and design © Book Distributors Limited



This publication was made possible thanks to the
financial support of APS Bank plc.

ISBN: 978-9918-21-341-2

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my beloved and wonderful wife, Stef. You are the heart and soul of my life's journey, and I am forever grateful to you. Together, we've faced challenges head-on, celebrated sweet victories, and learned invaluable lessons along the way. Your unwavering support, boundless encouragement, and enduring love have been my constant source of strength and inspiration. You motivate me to strive for greatness every day, and I am profoundly grateful for your vital role in my life.

To my brilliant stars, Jamie and Emilia. Watching you grow is a joy and an ongoing education for me. Remember, make every financial decision with a dash of adventure and a sprinkle of humour, knowing that your best moments are yet to come. Keep shining brightly!

To my parents, Stephen and Joyce, you were my earliest and most dedicated teachers who instilled in me a deep understanding and appreciation of finance. From your invaluable advice to your remarkable money management skills, you've shaped my perspective in ways I could never have imagined.

This publication was made possible thanks to the financial support of APS Bank plc. Their support not only provided the necessary resources but also underscored the importance of fostering additional knowledge within the field of personal finance. APS Bank plc's dedication to this publication highlights its broader commitment to community development and the advancement of valuable research. I am deeply grateful for their unwavering commitment to this project.

I am also immensely grateful to BDL Books for their unwavering support throughout the publication process. Their expertise and resources have also been invaluable in bringing this book to life.

And to you, ambitious and determined readers, the courageous souls who come from all walks of life and are eager to embark on the journey towards financial freedom. No matter where you are starting from or what challenges you may face, your unwavering spirit and commitment to achieving greatness through financial independence inspire me. Embrace every lesson, every setback, and every triumph, for they are all stepping stones on your quest for financial freedom.

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FOREWORD

Daymond John, an American businessman, investor, and television personality, known investor on the ABC reality television series *Shark Tank*, stated: **Make sure you have financial intelligence... I don't care if you have money or you don't have money... you need to go and study finance no matter what.** I could not agree more.

As an economist, I got used to charts, technical terms and mathematical models to explain finance management, which usually is not easy to transmit to readers which do not have a university degree in such topics. This is challenging for a number of individuals, as they wish to appropriately manage their finances for families and themselves but may get lost in the ever-complicated personal finance landscape. Technical books on the subject may make it more difficult for one to get around. Here, a local author comes in to “transform” complex financial concepts into something easily understandable by everyone.

In first reading the draft book by Mark, I was captivated by the simplicity with which he reaches out to the reader to explain the importance of gradually building one's wealth and the implications of not doing that. He favours an approach where individuals manage their finances on a day-to-day basis, highlighting the importance of “Motivation” and “Passion” in embarking on this voyage, the backbone of success. Mark facilitates this by setting out a simple plan outlining the steps one needs to take to achieve this goal and the issues one needs to be mindful of. He also provides simple definitions for technical terms which help the reader navigating through the outlined concepts.

What interested me most in reading this book is the merging of the traditional (simple budget concepts we are thought at a young age) with the modern, as he uses traditional tried-and-tested concepts of wealth management and merges them with the modern, more “complicated” financial landscape.

Wish for the reader to make best use of this tool to build and manage their wealth. As Mark said *“Passion, the love for what one does, fuels motivation and is essential for achieving worthwhile goals.”*

Raniero Cosaitis Polidano

Regulatory Development Manager

Regulatory Compliance

APS Bank plc

Raniero Cosaitis Polidano graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Economics in 2007 and later obtained a Masters of Arts in Economics from the University of Malta in 2009. Raniero worked for the Central Bank of Malta for almost 12 years in the Financial Stability Department in the areas of risk assessment, microprudential and macroprudential policy and crisis management. Mr Cosaitis Polidano joined the Regulatory Compliance Unit within APS Bank plc in recent years.

PREFACE

My journey towards writing this book on personal finance started when I was still figuring out how to achieve financial well-being. Like many others, I faced significant financial struggles throughout my life, contending with mounting debts, unexpected expenses, and the overwhelming feeling of being trapped in the disheartening financial rat race.

Surprisingly, increasing my income did not solve my financial problems; instead, it fuelled an upgraded lifestyle, heightened consumption, increased reliance on my employment, and intensified my regret of not living a more fulfilling life. The breaking point came when I found myself waking up at night, burdened by stress over my financial situation.

It was during these challenging moments that I recognised a stark absence of structured practical advice for handling personal finance in a safe and structured manner, despite having spent decades studying and working in finance. This realisation prompted me to embark on a mission – not only to overcome my own financial hardships but, if I'm successful, to empower others with the knowledge and tools to make informed financial decisions. Now, having experienced a measure of personal success, I feel compelled to share the insights gained along the way. This book is a testament to my commitment to sharing valuable lessons and providing a comprehensive and practical guide based on the lessons learned.

Throughout this journey, I've woven together my pre-existing knowledge with the valuable lessons I've acquired since embarking on this mission several years ago, creating a unified and comprehensive guide within these pages. The diverse sources of

information encompass academic books and papers, personal finance and psychology literature, selected articles, blogs, internet searches, podcasts, lengthy conversations, and a myriad of other sources.

With the aim of empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds, especially those struggling with personal financial challenges or seeking to enhance their financial knowledge and habits, this book reaches out to a broad audience, including young adults, professionals, parents, retirees, students, and more. Regardless of your current financial situation, this book is meticulously designed to offer practical and accessible guidance, helping you navigate the intricacies of money management, make informed decisions, and ultimately achieve greater financial well-being.

Therefore, dear reader, now is the time for you to understand what wealth is, define or redefine your financial targets, and jumpstart your dreams, particularly if you fall into either one of these categories:

- You're struggling to make ends meet, living from hand to mouth.
- You can't afford to cover an unexpected expense with your current savings.
- You feel like you're destined to be poor or that you're part of an inferior class.
- You're bringing home a decent income, but your net worth doesn't reflect your hard work and dedication.
- You fear that you'll be working until the day you retire, struggling to pay off debt and unable to retire in a dignified manner. Your finances are spiralling out of control, and you're ready to take back the reins.

If any of these scenarios hit close to home, then it's time, dear reader, to get your financial life in order. This book should serve as your ultimate guide to safely and efficiently accumulating wealth, transforming your dreams into reality!