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What Are the Top Traits for Financial Planners?

By [Matt Ackermann](#)

April 4, 2011

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Financial expertise and personal character are the top qualities Americans look for when selecting a financial planner, according to the First Command Financial Behaviors Index.

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In a survey of middle-class Americans who work with a financial planner, 75% picked "knowledgeable" and "trustworthy" as the most important attributes they seek in a planner. "Honest" ran a close third at 70%.

"These results underscore the unique combination of economic and emotional assistance delivered by financial planners," said Scott Spiker, CEO of First Command Financial Services, Inc. "Through their specialized knowledge, planners are delivering a sense of security to consumers as they work through their personal

economic challenges. And as financial coaches, they provide the type of personalized, one-on-one service that helps consumers develop the financial behaviors they need to pursue their long-term goals and life-time dreams."

According to the survey, which polled 1,000 consumers between the age of 25 and 70, the top attributes consumers look for are: knowledgeable (75%), trustworthy (74%), honest (70%), many years of experience (59%), willing to listen (52%), positive word of mouth or referral (51%), confident (48%), personal relationship (46%), understanding (44%), and patient (34%)

Notably, the cost of planning services did not make the top 10. Just three of 10 respondents picked "low

price for services" as the most important attribute to look for in a planner.

"Financial planning is not a commodity that consumers shop for based on price," Spiker said. "Rather, it is a profession built on personal relationships with people you trust. Consumers are willing to pay for planning services when they feel the planner has the technical know-how and the moral fiber to help them pursue their long-term financial goals and lifetime dreams."

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