

THE ESSENTIAL FILE



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The **Essential File** is a dynamic database of personal information, accomplishments, resources, and desires. More than a list of assets and account numbers, **The Essential File** also serves as a testimony to what you have built, how you have lived, and the legacy you wish to leave behind.

Organized around the Navigating Abundance “**Total Family Wealth**” framework, **The Essential File** will be of particular use to those you have empowered to manage your affairs should you undergo incapacitation, or upon the need to settle your estate.

“**Total Family Wealth**” is best understood as the summation of three distinct categories of assets that all affluent families are blessed to possess.

- **Ledger Wealth** - your Financial Capital
- **Logistic Wealth** - your Functional Capital
- **Legacy Wealth** - your Family Capital

For more clarification, we encourage you to review; “*What does your Total Family Wealth consist of?*” (Resources #1). All three family wealth categories will be represented in **The Essential File** and therefore deserve your particular attention.

A Dynamic Database

The Essential File is best seen as a living breathing document. Life changes, things happen, progress is made and lost, data becomes obsolete. A commitment to managing and/or updating **The Essential File** in an ongoing fashion will go a long way toward realizing your intended outcomes. Your family and your trusted estate advisors will greatly benefit from such efforts as well.

An Organized Database

The Essential File will be arranged by way of **six parts**:

Part 1 – **My Personal Information**

Part 2 – **My Plans for Later-Life Assistance**

Part 3 – **My Ledger Wealth Vault**

Part 4 – **My Logistic Wealth Vault**

Part 5 – **My Legacy Wealth Vault**

Part 6 – **Resources**

Some encouragement as you begin

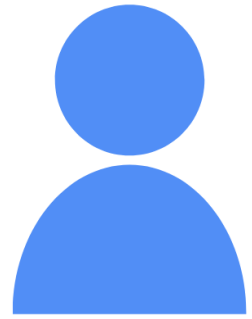
As you build out and maintain **The Essential File**, you may find the following pieces of advice useful:

1. Take inventory - Work through each part of **The Essential File** and identify what is already documented, what is incomplete, or what is missing entirely.
2. Identify gaps - Pay particular attention to Logistic Wealth and Legacy Wealth. These are the areas that families can find challenging to think through and organize.
3. Engage your advisory team - Use **The Essential File** as a tool to help coordinate the efforts of the professionals who serve your family and lean on them for documentation.
4. Review at least annually – Make sure to review **The Essential File** when life changes happen such as births, marriages/divorces, deaths, business developments, large purchases, etc.
5. Safeguard original documents - Use copies of any valuable documents you wish to place in **The Essential File**. Safeguard all original documents in a separate place.
6. Secure it - Store updated versions in a fireproof safe, cloud encrypted file, or safety deposit box. Tell those who need to know where, when, and how they can access **The Essential File**.
7. Be prudent - **The Essential File** will contain a great deal of personal and private information. Be selective regarding who can handle this level of information and who cannot.

We are Here to Help!

Navigating Abundance is all about advancing the pursuit of Total Family Wealth. We created **The Essential File** to be a valuable tool towards that end. If you would like to further explore how you might best apply **The Essential File** to your family's total capital, we would be delighted to speak with you! Simply go to our website www.navigatingabundance.com/contact and fill out our contact form. We would be honored to be a source of encouragement to you.

Part 1 - My Personal Information



The following list of personal information should not be considered exhaustive. Should you choose not to import certain data into this file, be sure to note where that data may be found.

My Marriage and Family (as applicable)

- Full Legal Names
- Date & Places of Birth
- Birth Certificates
- Social Security Cards
- Driver's Licenses
- Marriage Certificates, date, and location
- Divorce Decrees, date
- Parents - mother's maiden name, mother's full name, father's full name, dates, and places of birth
- Children's full names, dates of birth, birth certificates, adoption papers
- Grandchildren's full names, dates of birth, birth certificates, adoption papers, parents' full names
- Death certificates for any of the above

My Community

- Close friends and trusted advisors - contact information
- Home church/synagogue/other - contact information
- Social and Service Groups - contact information
- County Clubs and Organizations - contact information
- Military Member Organizations - contact information

My Medical Records

- Medical Record Websites and Apps including login instructions, usernames, passwords, and PINS
- List of Active Health Conditions

- Health Care Providers - name, phone numbers, areas of practice
- Preferred Pharmacies - phone numbers and addresses
- Medications - reason, dosage, prescribing physician
- Supplements & Vitamins
- Allergies - food and drug allergies
- Dietary Restrictions - any restrictions that must be followed
- Medical History - chronic conditions, surgeries, hospital stays, records
- Family Medical History - ancestral health information for future generations
- HIPAA Release Form
- Medical Power of Attorney

My Passwords and Access

- Cell phone numbers and pins
- Computer login instructions including usernames, passwords, PINs
- Email Accounts including usernames, passwords, PINS
- Multifactor Identification Accounts and Apps including websites, login instructions, usernames, passwords, PINS
- Online Accounts and Apps including websites, login instructions, usernames, passwords, PINS (Amazon, Facebook, shopping, etc.)
- Online Membership Accounts including usernames, passwords, PINS, renewal dates (COSTCO, Cabela's, airline rewards, carwash, tollways, auto club, etc.)
- Credit and Debit Cards, for each card: login instructions, usernames, passwords, PINS, recent statement, automated billing charge, plus front and back copy of each card
- *Note - see "LEDGER WEALTH" for online banking and investment account information*

My Home Maintenance

- Utility Providers - account numbers and contact information
- Service Providers - contract and contact information (house cleaning, lawn care, pool, home repair, builders used, etc.)
- Community Association - Contact information, fee arrangements, due dates
- Mortgage Contract and provider contact information
- State and Local Tax information and contact numbers

Part 2 - My Plans for Later-Life Assistance



The following list of personal information should not be considered exhaustive. Should you choose not to import certain data into this file, be sure to note where that data may be found.

We suggest writing down your preferences and plans and then discussing them with your loved ones and advisors.

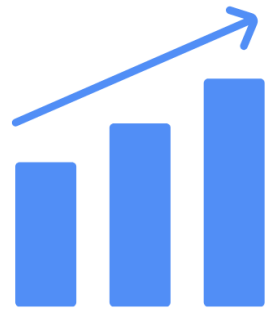
My Assistance Care

- If you would like to remain in your home, who would provide for your care and assistance: a home health care professional, family member, or friend? What level of assistance would you hope to receive?
- Do you have a geriatric care coordinator or team in place?
- Who will oversee your care preferences?
- How do you plan on compensating those who provide your care?
- Have you pre-approved an adult day care program in case it is needed?
- Have you pre-approved a long-term care facility in case it is needed?
- What are your wishes regarding quality-of-life during serious illness?

My Funeral & Burial

- Notifications - names and numbers of those who should know of my death
- Obituary - Information I would like included
- Copy of pre-planned Funeral Directive
- Funeral Preferences (absent of a Directive), such as burial or cremation; secular or religious; and specific music, scriptures, letters, or poems to be read.
- Prepaid Funeral Expenses - funeral home contact information and contract
- Grave Plots - cemetery location and copy of the deed

Part 3 - My Ledger Wealth Vault



My Ledger Wealth Vault contains your **Financial Capital**; a detailed archive of the assets that collectively represent your Net Worth.

The following list of personal information should not be considered exhaustive. Should you choose not to import certain data into this file, be sure to note where that data may be found.

My Financial Statements

- Include your most recent personal net worth statements
- Identify who prepared them and how to contact those individuals

My Tax Returns

- Include your most recent tax return
- Identify who prepared it and how to contact them
- Disclose where or how past tax returns are archived

My Investment Portfolio

- Bank Accounts - purpose of each account, recent statement, institution, account number, online login, PIN, POD beneficiaries, banker contact information
- Investment Accounts - owner of each account (person, joint, or trust); account type (IRA, Roth, Non-Qualified); beneficiaries (individuals or trust); recent statement, institution, account number, online login, PIN, advisor contact information
- Safety Deposit Box - location, box number, key or combination, contents, who else has access?

My Real Estate Portfolio

- List of properties - including ownership, value, equity position
- Copies of Deeds - location of originals
- Copies of Mortgages - location of originals, payment arrangements
- Brokers and Loan Originators - contract and contact information
- Real Estate Attorneys - documents and contact information
- Property Managers - contracts and contact information

My Business Interests

- List of full and fractional business ownership
- Value and Equity Position - for each business interest
- Partners and Managers - contact information
- Business Attorneys - contact information
- Promissory Notes - details, location of originals
- Structured Settlements - details, location of originals
- *Note - see “LEDGER WEALTH” for corporate documents, agreements, succession etc.*

My Life Insurance

- List of policies - purpose, design, owner, beneficiaries
- Carrier and Agent - contact information

My Collections

- List of Assets - appraisals, location, passwords, codes
- Professionals and Experts - contact information for those you work with

My Vehicles

- List of Vehicles - cars, boats, RVs, airplanes, etc.
- Value of Vehicles - including current equity
- Loan info - payment amount, bank contact, auto-debit account

My “Out of Sight” Assets

- Safety Deposit Boxes - location, box number, key or combination, contents, who else has access?
- Hidden Assets - Who will know where to dig? When do you want them to have the shovel?

Part 4 - My Logistic Wealth Vault



My Logistic Wealth Vault contains your **Functional Capital**; a detailed archive of the people, plans, and legal documents you have assembled and formalized to keep your life running.

The following list of personal information should not be considered exhaustive. Should you choose not to import certain data into this file, be sure to note where that data may be found.

My Advisory Team

Contact information as appropriate:

- Family Consigliere
- Business Attorneys
- Business Partners/Ownership
- Estate Planning Attorneys
- Bankers
- Wealth Managers
- Financial Planners
- Accountants/CPAs
- Trust Companies
- Insurance Agents
- My Philanthropic Advisors
- Cyber Security Firm

My Financial Plans

Current Retirement benefits, Social Security, IRAs, annuities, investment dividends, rental income, business income, mineral royalties, trust distributions, disability benefits:

- Current Income Sources - wages, business income, distributions, investment dividends, rental income, royalties, settlements, deferred comp, trust distributions
- Current Plans and Goals
- Retirement Income Sources - Social Security, IRAs, annuities, wages, business income, distributions, investment dividends, rental income, royalties, settlements, deferred comp, trust distributions

- Retirement Plans and Goals
- Risk Mitigation Plans
- Tax Mitigation Plans
- Estate Tax Plans

My Business Documents

For both family and non-family interests:

- Company Ownership
- Company Documents
- Company Structure and Management
- Partnership Agreements
- Stock Plans
- Business Succession Plans
- Buy - Sell Agreements
- Buy - Sell Life Insurance Policies
- Deferred Comp Plans
- Business Banking
- Business Insurance

My Philanthropic Plans

- Supported Charities
- Ongoing gifting arrangements
- Outstanding Pledges and Endowments
- Established Charitable Trusts
- Active Donor Advised Fund
- Family Foundations

My Personal Legal Documents

- **Will** - copy, drafting attorney, location of original
- **Living Trust / Revocable Trust** - copy, drafting attorney, location of original
- **Irrevocable Trusts** - copy, drafting attorney, location of original

- **Special Needs Trusts** - copy, drafting attorney, location of original
- **Distribution of Personal Property** - Codicil, Trust Addendum, or Memorandum
- **Deeds** - copies, location of originals
- **Financial / Durable Power of Attorney** - copy, drafting attorney, location of original, who has powers, who has copies, effective now or in the future
- **Medical Power of Attorney** - copy, drafting attorney, location of original, who has powers, who has copies, effective now or in the future
- **HIPAA Release** - copy, location of original, who has copies
- **Directive to Physicians / Living Will** - copy, location of original, who has copies
- **Funeral Arrangements Directive** - copy, location of original, who has copies
- **Military Benefits and Discharge** - date, DD #214, DD #256
- **Declaration of Guardianship** - copy, location of original, who is named

My Insurance Portfolio

- **Property and Auto** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, coverage, deductible
- **Umbrella** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, coverage, deductible
- **Toys** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, coverage, deductible
- **Scheduled Personal Property** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, coverage, deductible
- **Health** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, member/group number, coverage, deductible/co-pay
- **Disability** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, member/group number, coverage, deductible/co-pay
- **Long-Term Care** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, member/group number, coverage, deductible/co-pay
- **Dental & Vision** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, member/group number, coverage, deductible/co-pay
- **Prescription Drug Coverage** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, member/group number, coverage, deductible/co-pay
- **Medicare / Medicaid** - agent, policy, card copies, type
- **Veteran's Benefits** - TRICARE ID card, current benefits, local VA office
- **Life Insurance My Life** - agent, carrier, copy, policy number, owner, beneficiary
- **Life Insurance Someone Else's Life** – agent, copy, policy number, owner, beneficiary, carrier

Part 5 - My Legacy Wealth Vault



My Legacy Wealth Vault contains the priceless non-financial inheritance that you hope to leave for your children and grandchildren. This is where you keep your **Family Capital**; the relationships, memories, values, wisdom, traditions, and blessings that you pass on to future generations.

The very nature of its personal impact and generational endurance positions your Legacy Wealth as the greatest asset that you or your family could ever hope to own.

“But Wait - Where’s The List?”

We would all agree that Family Capital is best built over time by the examples we have set, the words we have spoken, the support we have given, and the experiences we have shared. Because of this, **My Legacy Wealth Vault** is not as easily populated as your **Ledger Wealth Vault** or **Logistic Wealth Vault** might be. No, there is more to it than that.

Because one family’s approach to expanding their Family Capital can differ so wildly from another family’s approach, we thought it best not to provide a master list to complete as we did for your **Ledger Wealth Vault** and **Logistic Wealth Vault**. Our purpose here then is to introduce you to Legacy Wealth categories, and to offer some suggestions and ideas to encourage you to build out your own custom **My Legacy Wealth Vault**. In the end, what is most important is that you create an effective legacy wealth plan that would work best for your family.

From Vapor to Paper

My Legacy Wealth Vault is where you will be assembling your Legacy Wealth achievements, along with new ideas and projects that you are determined to undertake. From “vapor to paper” speaks of that magical moment when that which was locked up in your head is now written down in black and white. This simple but powerful act greatly increases your odds of turning dreams into realities, ideas into accomplishments, and intensions into actions. By formally cataloging your past, present, and future efforts, you will gain a greater understanding of where you currently stand and what you would yet like to see in the development of your **Family Capital**.

The Big Idea

We created **My Legacy Wealth Vault** to encourage you to accomplish two things:

- #1. To recognize and organize your current Legacy Wealth progress.
- #2. To consider adding new ideas and projects to your Legacy Wealth approach

Organizing Your Vault

Your Legacy Wealth efforts and ideas can be organized by way of the **Five Family Capital Categories** in your Vault:

- **Your Family Relationships**
- **Your Family Ethos**
- **Your Family Wellness**
- **Your Family Practice**
- **Your Family Philanthropy**

Examples and ideas for what you may wish to gather under each heading are provided.

For more clarification, we encourage you to review; *“What does your Total Family Wealth consist of?”* (Resource #2).

Do not Get Overwhelmed!

We all know that the hardest part of any significant project is getting started. As you read the following examples and ideas offered under each of the **Five Family Capital Categories** it could be easy to become overwhelmed. Please do not let that happen. **“Rome wasn’t built in a day” as they say, and neither will your Legacy Wealth Vault.** Just jump in, pace yourself, and soon you will be encouraged by your progress!

The Three Questions

We believe your motivation will remain high if you ask yourself these three questions throughout your interaction with the material:

- #1. “What am I currently working on that already falls under this example?”
- #2. “Should I think about adding this idea to my Legacy Wealth strategy?”
- #3. “Have I clearly documented my past, present, and future Legacy Wealth projects and ideas yet?”

There, you’ve got it! Now let’s begin.

Category One - Family Relationships

The big question . . .

“What can I be doing to encourage more love within my family?”

Step One

Identify what you have already done and are now currently doing to deepen your **Family Relationships** through the promotion of:

- Acceptance
- Belonging
- Healthy Communication
- Conflict Resolution

Step Two

Document your efforts and then deposit them into your **Legacy Wealth Vault**

Step Three

Consider adding some of the following **Family Relationship** suggestions and ideas to your **Legacy Wealth Vault**:

#1. Become Fluent in “The Five Love Languages”

Familiarize yourself with “**The Five Love Languages**” concept

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Meaningful Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

Identify the top two “love languages” each family member speaks. Then draft an action plan designed to speak into the hearts of each consistently and effectively of your loved ones using their preferred “love languages.”

Be intentional. Dedicate yourself to the effort. Make commitments on your calendar to effectively deliver on your plan.

#2. Memorialize your “Words of Affirmation”

Words of affirmation are powerfully delivered both by the tongue and by the pen. Therefore, it is best to approach this as a *both-and* opportunity, not an *either-or* opportunity. The unique advantage of written affirmations is that they can be read repeatedly, long after you are gone. This is what we mean by “memorializing” your affirmations. A handwritten note can become an instant heirloom in our hyper-tech world. A more formal “**Blessing Letter,**” privately written to each of your loved ones, is a wonderful way to express your pride, share your hopes, and impart encouragement for you family members to live out their best lives. See; [“8th Grade Mile Marker”](#) and [“How to Write a Blessing Letter”](#) (Resources #3, #4).

#3. Schedule “Quality Time” Retreats

Work to find a time and place to gather, reconnect, and unplug from the world. Fabulous things can happen when you do! Try to develop a family attitude of “this is just what our family does this time of year” and keep the tradition going. Think of cruises, ski trips, Europe, etc. A family cabin on the lake or hunting property could be a great use of some of your **Ledger Wealth** funds, as they almost always payout “quality time” dividends.

#4. Give “Meaningful Gifts”

This has little to do with buying affection, and a lot to do with understanding how the right gift can speak into the heart of a child or grandchild. Some may be deeply touched by receiving an heirloom brooch or watch. For others, it could be a first edition of their favorite novel, a down payment on a house, or a pledge to pay for educational expenses for the sake of a dream. Thoughtful gifts may be just the right way to send the message you want them to hear. If you listen, you may discover that what you thought was important to your children and grandchildren, really was not. (On a personal note, my daughter “has her name on” the Bible I preached out of for 20 years and our old family Nativity Set. Who knew?)

#5. Look for “Acts of Service” Opportunities

Caring enough for someone that you would be willing to go out of your way to help them is usually very well received. The less convenient for you, the greater the message can be. Offering to take the grandchildren for the weekend, help remodel a property, or getting your hands dirty in the yard all qualify. Yes, you are very busy and can comfortably afford to hire out these needed services as a gift to your loved ones, but then you would be missing an opportunity. The best “acts of service” are the projects and experiences that you undertake together with the recipient.

#6. Do not Avoid “Physical Touch”

Simply put if you are not a hugger you may need to learn. This simple act may be the greatest way to reach a certain child or grandchild.

Category Two - Family Wellness

The big question . . .

“What can I be doing to support the personal fulfillment of each family member?”

Step One

Identify what you have already done and are now currently doing to improve your **Family Wellness** through the promotion of:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Spiritual Health
- Vocation/Calling
- Education

Step Two

Document your efforts and then deposit them into your Legacy Wealth Vault

Step Three

Consider adding some of the following **Family Wellness** suggestions and ideas to your Legacy Wealth Vault:

#1. Mental Health

Mental Health conversations can be uncomfortable in that they get very personal, very fast. Prayer, wisdom, grace, and timing are all key elements behind every intercession. The good news is that the stigma placed upon mental health has been greatly lifted in recent years, and resources have improved as well. Proceed with caution – but do proceed.

#2. Spiritual Health

Spiritual Health is more “caught than taught.” Consistently practicing a healthy spiritual life or spiritual habits can often be contagious to those around us. Often the best way to encourage Spiritual Health in your family is not to preach, but to faithfully live it out yourself.

#3. Vocation/Calling

Many movies have been made and novels written surrounding the drama of a son or daughter choosing their own path verses joining the family business. This dynamic tension is sure to

produce excellent entertainment, but equally sure to produce damaged families in real life. Being “fearfully and wonderfully made” guarantees that not all our children and grandchildren will be like us. What an honor and blessing it is to be able to encourage and support each family member to become all that they were created to be!

#4. Education

Education is one of the greatest ingredients in success. However, knowledge without wisdom will not go nearly as far. Our ultimate goal is not to develop very smart people; our ultimate goal is to develop really great people. Seek out institutions that align with your values and share with your loved one why this is an important consideration. Should your child or grandchild be required to work while taking classes? Should they share in their own tuition costs? Are grades a standard by which support is determined? Do you fully support a career in the “trades” if that is the path that they choose?

Category Three - Family Ethos

The big question . . .

*“What can I be doing to encourage more APPRECIATION
within our family?”*

Step One

Identify what you have already done and are now currently doing to build your **Family Ethos** through the promotion of:

- History/Roots
- Stories
- Core Values
- Traditions

Step Two

Document your efforts and then deposit them into your **Legacy Wealth Vault**

Step Three

Consider adding some of the following **Family Ethos** suggestions and ideas to your **Legacy Wealth Vault**:

#1. Family History/Roots

This is where your family pride begins. The truth is we all stand on the broad shoulders of our ancestors, so much so that we believe that you cannot begin to know where you are going until you know from where you have come. As it turns out, success has a lot to do with context, and your Family's History/Roots is a prime source for this.

In time, many of your family members will come to realize this and will seek you out for a greater understanding of their heritage. But why wait? Here are some ideas that you could be using now to instill a spirit of appreciation for the past.

- **Take a Trip to your ancestral county.** Do it right - make it meaningful, purposeful, and unforgettable.
- **Encourage the genealogist in your family.** Capture and share the interesting facts that they may uncover with the rest of the family.
- **Do not let your family history die with you.** We apologize for saying it so directly, but often this is exactly what happens. Many have inherited hundreds of pictures of relatives that they know little about, even down to their names. Tragically, there is no one left to ask. Start

writing down who these relatives were, the things that they have done, and how and where they lived. Connect this kind of information to their photos. Context will bring meaning.

- **Digitize ancient media.** If your family members do not have 8mm movie projectors, slide projectors, and video tape machines, there are companies in the business of digitizing your treasures into modern storage formats. This is a great way to preserve priceless, fragile media for generations to come, as an added bonus, your tech savvy family members will be much more likely to access it as well.
- **Publish a Coffee Table Book.** Again, there are companies that will help you create a family history book that you would be proud to display. Include many pictures. Leave it out on a table, and your children and grandchildren are sure to leaf through it.
- **Compile “Great Moments in *Smith* Family History.”** Write about some of your family’s significant events, epic decisions, challenging times, successes and setbacks, achievements and awards, military service, and business origins. Future generations will come to treasure your effort.

#2. Family Stories

Since the beginning of time, elders have been using stories as a preferred way to explain the world, pass along values, and build family pride. A good story can powerfully grab a heart and then move right in as a permanent resident of a soul. Human beings are simply hardwired to love stories! It is a wise move to incorporate them into your **Legacy Wealth** approach.

- **Be sure to retell the family stories that have been passed on to you.** What a legacy you will be carrying on!
- **Everybody has a “Hero Story”** whether they know it or not. Tell of your own escapades of life: the funny, the tragic, the triumphant, the lessons learned, and the road you have taken. The topics are endless and the telling of them is not complicated. Simply identify what you think your family should know about your life experiences and tell them about them.
- **Holidays and big life events are great story telling opportunities!** A father tells his son the same wedding day story that his father told him. Every New Years Eve the patriarch delivers the traditional family story told that inspires optimism. On Thanksgiving the patriarch delivers the traditional family story told to instill gratitude. Too boring and predictable? Some may think so, but we promise you they will never forget the hearing of it.
- **Record important stories for future generations.** Here again is the opportunity to use media to memorialize important family stories in a way that will ensure that they will be retold long after you are gone.

#3. Family Core Values

Belief systems are what drive behavior, actions, and decisions (especially when parents and grandparents are not looking). Here are a few ideas you may want to consider as you strive to raise morally grounded children and grandchildren.

- **Practice what you preach.** Like spiritual belief and practices, core values are more “caught than taught.” You do not want to be “saying one thing and doing another” in this category.
- **Gather your family together to create a “Family Mission Statement.”** Core values can be handed down from on high, but resistance can often ensue. Better is to draft a “**Family Mission Statement**” together, enshrining agreed upon Core Values as the result of a family discussion. Ownership of the process will produce better ideas, unity in acceptance, and a commitment from the whole tribe to follow through. See; [“An Overview on Family Mission Statements”](#) (Resource #5).
- **Look for opportunities to exercise your Core Values.** Once you have identified what your Core Values are, look for opportunities to apply your values as a family project. For instance, if Kindness is a Core Value, then gather up your grandchildren and pass out cold bottled water to strangers on a hot summer day in the park as a “random act of kindness.” (We have done it before; what fun!). If Protecting the Environment is a Core Value, then go back the following weekend to pick up those empty water bottles strewn all over the park. The goal is reinforcement through application.
- **Publish an “Ethical Will.”** This is a powerful non-binding/non-legal document by which you express your thoughts to succeeding generations. While a “Blessing Letter” is specifically written to each family member, an Ethical Will is generally addressed to the entire family. It is another opportunity to say what you need to say, pass along life lessons, outline core values, and express your hopes and dreams for the family, etc. What would you give for the chance to read an Ethical Will written to future generations 80 years ago by your great-grandfather? Even more precious would be witnessing your great-grandfather reading that Ethical Will directly to you. He did not have that option, but with technology you do! See; [“It’s Not Just About the Valuables”](#) and [“Ethical Wills – A Very Personal Example”](#) (Resources #6, #7).

#4. Family Traditions

Traditions create a sense of security, consistency, and belonging. The memories created by these routines promote family well-being and closer family ties. Traditions do not need be expensive or elaborate to be meaningful and memorable, (think of baking mom’s famous lemon meringue pie recipe every year for the 4th of July, or boiling maple syrup every spring at a cousin’s farm). Sadly, traditions can be rather fragile. Work hard at keeping your current family traditions alive and look for opportunities to launch new traditions should your family’s needs and circumstances change.

Category Four - Family Practice

The big question . . .

*“What can I be doing to encourage more UNITY
within our family?”*

Family Practices vary wildly due to the makeup, size, complexity, and personalities of the tribe. Add a significant family business or two into the mix and there will be even more to figure out. Knowing our limitations, we offer the following suggestions with all humility. Even so, if the goal is healthy communication, decision making, and general unity within the family, and if we can all agree that human beings and family workings have more in common than not, we should be able to encourage one another.

Step One

Identify what you have already done and are now currently doing to build your **Family Practice** through the promotion of:

- Family Meetings
- Family Governance
- Family Trusts
- Family Treasury

Step Two

Document your efforts and then deposit them into your **Legacy Wealth Vault**

Step Three

Consider adding some of the following **Family Practice** suggestions and ideas to your **Legacy Wealth Vault**:

#1. Family Meetings

Whether you're flying in a facilitator from Zurich for the weekend or just gathering everybody together after church to talk through an issue, family meetings should be structured in such a way that family members can be heard and respected; group decisions worked through fairly; and family unity encouraged.

- **Haphazard leadership need not apply.** If it is worth doing right, it is worth leading right. Your posture, planning, organization, and agenda all need to be solid. Seek out the assistance of other family members if you could use it.

- **Agendas should be clearly communicated in advance.** The last thing you want is someone feeling surprised by any topic.
- **Issues could be half-solved by just showing up.** Because every member of the family has their contribution to give and value to bring, when a family member goes missing, the Family Meeting suffers. When the Family Meeting suffers the outcomes are less than desirable. Do all you can to encourage participation.
- **The goal is not unity of thought, but unity of spirit.** You will never get all of your family to agree all of the time. Encourage the freedom to disagree, but only if done “agreeably,” as in respectfully. Descent does not have to be registered in a divisive, demeaning way to be heard. In fact, that almost guarantees that it will not be heard.
- **Meeting notes should be taken and meeting summaries delivered.** This is the best way to ensure that the meeting outcomes were understood by all who attended. Having a record of past discussions and decisions will become invaluable in the future. See “[Designing an Effective Family Meeting](#)” (Resource #8).

#2. Family Governance

Family Governance refers to the formal way by which authority is structured, decisions are made, and family businesses are organized. Some families will need to develop a sophisticated **Family Governance** system which may include advisory boards, committees, legal agreements, compliance officers, and bundles of attorneys and accountants. Other families will not need to go nearly that far.

Of course, we cannot unpack all of the above for you in this format. What we can do is offer you this statement for your consideration,

“Family Governance rules overseeing family organization and administration must be written down, understood, agreed upon, and adhered to if family unity is hoped to be maintained.”

If you agree with this statement, may we ask,

- #1. Are you making a good faith effort to achieve this?
- #2. Is your governance system clearly understood and accepted by all family members?
- #3. If you see room for improvement in an area, when will you begin?

See “The Family Council Handbook” and “Complete Family Wealth” (Resources #11 and #13).

#3. Family Trusts

Trusts are the instruments of choice for assuring plans come to pass. Specific types of Trusts are matched to specific types of objectives; so once again, we feel limited in what we are able to unpack for you in this format. See “Family Trusts” (Resources #12).

That being said, we still have a solid suggestion for those interested in increasing the effectiveness of the trusts they already have already drafted: attach a **“Grantor Letter.”**

Articulated in every Trust is **WHAT** the grantor wishes to have happen as well as **HOW** the grantor wishes their desires to be carried out. This is all well and good, but what about the motive behind the creation of the Trust? **WHY** did the grantor feel it was necessary to create such a Trust in the first place?

A **“Grantor Letter”** is a non-legal, non-binding document that the grantor of a Trust would write **to explain the reason WHY the trust was written in the way it was.** Both trust officers and beneficiaries could greatly benefit from this context.

A **“Grantor Letter”** can be a powerful way to share what is in your heart and to explain some of your consideration behind the drafting of the Trust. Imagine a beneficiary being disappointed with some of the provisions you have established. A **“Grantor Letter”** would provide them context, in a personal way, which could serve to lighten their angst — or then again, maybe it will not. At least the loved one would understand your **WHY** behind the way the Trust was written. Are you legally bound to “explain yourself” in this manner? Certainly not. Are you keenly interested in promoting more unity within your family? Certainly so. Consider **“Grantor Letters.”** See [“The Value of a Grantor’s Letter of Impact”](#) and [“Grantor’s Guidance Letter”](#) (Resources #9 and #10).

#4. Family Treasury

It is commonly said that “money is the root of all evil.” However, the Good Book clarifies that having money is not the problem, but rather it is “the love of money” that creates all sorts of problems (1 Timothy 6:10). Let us determine not to do that.

Whether you have money, your money has you, or you are somewhere in between, we can all agree that family money can often be the root of discord, anxiety, and hurt feelings. Families with resources have a lot to consider before feeling “right” about making a gift or writing a loan to a member. The process is often drawn out, complicated, and because it is family, emotional. Enter the **Family Treasury.**

A **Family Treasury** can be an effective way of stewarding wealth as a team. Utilizing a board comprised of select family members and/or counselors, a **Family Treasury** can oversee the management of family investments; the creation of Treasury rules and processes; the handling of

gifting and writing loans; and the promotion of financial education plans for the rising generation. By relying on a group for these types of tasks, oversight is shared and lifts the burden of responsibility off the shoulders of one person. A well-considered **Family Treasury** can be a great asset for the preservation of family harmony. See sections of “The Family Office” (Resource #14).

If you feel that a **Family Treasury** arrangement is not a good fit for your family at this time, we encourage you to at least make your opinions known regarding how funds are to be gifted or loaned out to family members. Once your family understands, be sure to be consistent in your application.

Category Five - Family Philanthropy

The big question . . .

*“What can I be doing to develop a heart of generosity
within our family?”*

Here at Navigating Abundance, **we believe that one of the greatest contributions you could ever make to the advancement of your Total Family Wealth would be to ignite a spirit of generosity deep within the hearts of your children and grandchildren.** Do that, and your grand pursuit of **Total Family Wealth** will be far more joyful and productive.

Step One

Identify what you have already done and are now currently doing to build your **Family Philanthropy** through the promotion of:

- Joyful Giving
- Personal Engagement
- Family DAF
- Family Foundation

Step Two

Document your efforts and then deposit them into your **Legacy Wealth Vault**

Step Three

Consider adding some of the following **Family Philanthropy** suggestions and ideas to your **Legacy Wealth Vault**:

#1. Joyful Giving

Generous people at their core are grateful people. Generous people often appreciate how blessed they are and look for ways to help others with their wealth. Since their worldview does not revolve around self, they strike out each day with an, “it’s not about me” philosophy. They act out of an “abundance posture,” not a “scarcity posture.” Their glass is always “half full,” never “half empty.” They are beautiful, positive, well-grounded souls; chances are, you would really like to be like them.

Now, practically speaking, can you imagine how much more progress you would be able to make in improving your family relationships, wellness, ethos, and practice if most of your children and grandchildren approached the world in this way? Or the effect this attitude might have if carried over into your family business, family office, and your family’s “relationship” with money?

#2. Personal Engagement

“Yes, of course, I want a family that exudes generosity. How do I go about encouraging this?”

Once again, it starts and ends with you. If you are not regularly speaking about the importance of gratitude, stewardship, and benevolence, your family will struggle to catch the vision. Worse, they will completely lose interest if you do not apply your own sermons in very practical and personal ways: leaders both show and tell.

Look for ways to engage your children and grandchildren in “hands-on” benevolence opportunities as soon as they may be able and never look back. What you are trying to develop is an ongoing lifestyle of giving. As a start, ask about the causes they may be interested in and look for creative ways to get them more actively and personally involved. Here is a short list of ideas to do just that:

- **Make a Family Rule of 10% goes to charity.** Whether from allowance, gifts, chores, jobs, Facebook Marketplace, or whatever revenue they may receive, benevolence always gets the first slice.
- **Find items where 100% goes to charity.** You have likely done something like this as a child: opening a lemonade stand with a friend to collect funds for a cause you both cared about. Do you remember how that made you feel? Encourage your kids to experience that same joy.
- **Do not just write a check, get in the car.** Boots on the ground; face-to-face; hand-to-hand, be there! Move your family out of their comfort zones and into a world where others could really use a hand up. Whether this is through mission trips, soup kitchens, or Habitat for Humanity, the opportunities are endless. This is the ultimate “personal engagement,” and it can truly transform the hearts and minds of the givers.
- **Make charitable giving a tradition.** There are many charitable options that can become traditions. For example, commit to packing one hundred holiday boxes together as a family for those stationed overseas. Enclose a note of thanks and some pictures drawn by the kids. This is one of those family traditions we spoke of that could be carried out every December, year after year.
- **Let the kids pick a charity.** Part of charitable giving is making sure you are giving to charities which your family shares values with. What better way to get the kids involved than having them research a cause that is important to them. This not only helps a charitable cause, but also teaches your children, or grandchildren, and the important lessons of research and due diligence. You may just want to keep a budget in mind, as you may find that your children and grandchildren are more charitable than you think!

#3. Family Donor Advised Fund

A **Donor Advised Fund (DAF)** is a charitable giving fund administered by a 501(c)(3) charity. It allows donors to make tax-deductible contributions for the current tax year and recommend grants to qualified charities out of their fund at a future date/tax year. Your donations can be invested, and gifts to charities out of your DAF can be made anonymously. Tax planning strategies include donating highly appreciated stock and, in some cases, businesses or business interests. Here are a few additional reasons why you might want to establish a DAF for your family:

- **A DAF is simpler.** Charitable giving can have its complexities. Using a DAF as your primary charitable vehicle avoids the burdensome administrative layers and significant costs associated with running a Family Foundation. Simple can be better!
- **A DAF promotes generational giving** and provides a great opportunity for practicing family philanthropy together. Work with your children and grandchildren to make it personal by creating a name for your family DAF such as “The Smith Family Super Duper Giving Fund.” Engage them as much as possible in the recommendation of grants.
- **A DAF can accept gifts from all family members.** For many reasons, it is important that your children and grandchildren feel ownership in the fund. Let them feel the joy of contributing to the fund and knowing that they played a part in making the grants possible.
- **A DAF can be a great source for family traditions.** As we previously emphasized in “Family Ethos,” you should always be on the lookout for ways to establish new family traditions. What if every Christmas Eve, Hannukah, New Year’s Eve, etc., your family selects a cause or a group to encourage during that time of year? “This is just a tradition which our family always practices” is a wonderful tradition to instill in your children and grandchildren!

One Final Thought

“Do not despise these small beginnings...”

When you started reading about your **Legacy Wealth Vault**, we encouraged you to bring the thoughts from your mind and put them on paper. This “vapor to paper” process should be understood as just that, a process. Perhaps you have started a business before or have taken over the family business over the years. If that is the case, then you understand that many things in business do not happen overnight; often, these things start as small beginnings and grow larger than we had ever imagined possible.

Developing your **Legacy Wealth Vault** will take a significant investment into your family and your legacy. We want to remind you; your family is worth it. Of all the investments you will make throughout your lifetime, your **Legacy Wealth** is the most valuable. It truly is the “asset” that pays unyielding dividends. Start with the small “wins” and build up to the larger items. Take your time on developing your **Legacy Wealth Vault**. Consider how this is not something which you can “set and forget.” This is a living document, and as all living things need to be cared for and nourished, so too does your **Legacy Wealth Vault**.

Considering that this is a lot of work, you may find yourself needing encouragement from time to time. All the best athletes understand that while they have talent, they do not develop and maintain that talent alone. We want to encourage you in the same manner as a coach would an athlete. You can find more information and more inspiration on our website, <https://navigatingabundance.com/>.

There you will find podcast episodes, resources, and information on what it takes to develop your family’s **Legacy Wealth**. We would encourage you, if you find yourself needing a more hands on approach, to go to <https://navigatingabundance.com/contact/> and fill out our contact form. We would be honored to take part in the process of securing your legacy.

Yours in the pursuit of TFW,
Chris Tanke

Part 6 - Resources



Online Resources¹

- #1. **Total Family Wealth** – Navigating Abundance
- #2. **Legacy Wealth Amplified** – Navigating Abundance
- #3. **“8th Grade Mile Marker”** – North Point Community Church
- #4. **“How to Write a Blessing”** – Kristin Privette
- #5. **“An Overview on Family Mission Statements”** – UBS
- #6. **“It’s Not Just About the Valuables”** – Family Business Magazine
- #7. **“Ethical Wills – A Very Personal Example”** – Blum & Savlov
- #8. **“Designing an Effective Family Meeting”** - UBS
- #9. **“The Value of a Grantor’s Letter of Impact”** – Cumberland Trust
- #10. **“Grantor’s Guidance Letter”** – Lobb & Plewe

Print Resources

- #11. Eckrich, Christopher J, and Stephen L McClure. *The Family Council Handbook: How to Create, Run and Maintain a Successful Family Business Council*. New York, Ny, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- #12. Hartley Goldstone, et al. *Family Trusts: A Guide for Beneficiaries, Trustees, Trust Protectors, and Trust Creators*. Hoboken, New Jersey, Wiley, 2016.
- #13. Whitaker, James E. *Complete Family Wealth*. S.L., John Wiley & Sons, 2021.
- #14. Woodson, William I, and Edward V Marshall. *The Family Office: A Comprehensive Guide for Advisers, Practitioners, and Students*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2021.

¹ If you are viewing this document in print, we suggest you visit <https://navigatingabundance.com/resources/> to download the digital copy. This will allow you to follow the embedded URLs throughout this document.