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OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022

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## IN THIS ISSUE

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022

### COVER STORIES

**26** Bang Bang Bangus Goes Boom!  
BY EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

**40** Your Guide to Getting an Auto Loan  
BY EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

**42** Best Money-Saving Travel Tips  
BY RIENZIE BIOLENA, RFP®

### PLAN

**08** How To: Automate Your Savings  
BY JENDEE DE GUZMAN, RFP®

**12** Best Options for Remittances  
BY EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

**14** Versus: FoodPanda Vs. GrabFood  
BY KARLO BIGLANG-AWA, RFP®

**16** Primer: Online Loans  
BY EDMUND LAO, RFP®

**18** My Money Story: Music, Business,  
and Property  
BY MIGUEL MENDOZA  
AS TOLD TO EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO



26



12



14

“*Assets* put money in your pocket and liabilities take money from your pocket.”  
– ROBERT KIYOSAKI

“Never *spend* your money before you’ve *earned* it.”  
– THOMAS JEFFERSON

“Don’t tell me what your *priorities* are. Show me where you *spend* your *money* and I’ll tell you what they are.” – JAMES W. FRICK

“Wealth consists not in having great *possessions* but in having few wants.”  
– EPICTETUS

“He who buys what he does not need *steals* from himself.”  
(SWEDISH PROVERB)

20 My Money Story: Pharma, Death, and Christmas Hams  
BY JAN NICOLA MARFIL-HONORAS  
AS TOLD TO EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

22 My Money Story: Why Insurance Matters  
BY PAM LABRIAGA AS TOLD TO EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

24 My Money Story: Balancing Law and Real Estate  
BY ATTY. CRIS GARCIMO AS TOLD TO EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

INVEST

46 Stock Market 101: How to Invest in U.S. Stocks  
BY EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

48 Real Estate 101: How to Get Your Unit Rented Out Fast  
BY EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

SPEND

50 Best Online Shops for Everything  
BY JANICE SABITSANA



22



50



46

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# 7 Ways to Beat Inflation

The inflation rate in the Philippines has been on an uptrend every month. And Filipinos are feeling the pinch. Whether gas or groceries, recreation or transportation, higher prices are putting pressure on our wallets. What can you do to beat inflation? Here are some tips:

**1. Cut back on expenses.** The one thing you can immediately do is to cut back on your expenses, especially discretionary or non-essential expenses. Review your budget, bills, and credit card statements. You could eat out less, travel closer to home, cancel subscriptions you're not maximizing, or switch to cheaper grocery brands.

It's not just non-essentials. You can also find ways to lower the cost of utilities by cutting down on your energy and water usage. Simplify your menu to save on food costs. Also, check how you lower your insurance premiums.

**2. Grow a vegetable garden and cook at home.** Aside from rent or mortgage payments, food takes up most of our budget. If you like to eat out, consider cooking more at home, even if it means bringing your lunch to work. If you work from home, that's even better. Just resist the temptation of ordering food for delivery.

Another way to save is to grow a vegetable garden. You don't have to raise every plant, just the ones you use most often, like onions, garlic, calamansi, and tomatoes.

**3. Delay major purchases and splurges.** Are you planning to build or buy a house? You should wait a bit longer. Construction materials and interest rates on loans are up. Are you thinking of traveling abroad? Move up your plans or consider domestic travel instead. Airline tickets and hotel rooms are more expensive now.

Will they ever go down? Yes, they can. You know very well that interest rates will eventually go down. So will gas prices, which will have a domino effect on all other products and services, including those from the travel industry. Here's where delayed gratification should kick in.

**4. Pay on installment.** Spreading your cash by paying in installments helps your cash flow. During inflationary times, cash is king. So, you want to keep as much cash on hand as

possible. You may need to make high-ticket purchases, such as buying a new appliance to replace your decade-old one that would cost too much to fix. Make sure it's a zero-percent installment plan.

You can also delay payments by taking advantage of offers from your credit card company that lets you buy now and pay later or make your first payment after a month.

**5. Get a side gig.** Managing the expense side of your budget is just one side. You should also look into increasing the income side. If you can ask for a raise or move into a higher-paying position, that would be great. But if your employer is also cost-cutting and freezing bonuses and salary increases, you need to find other ways to earn extra.

A side gig will help you do just that. You can do so many things online at night and on weekends. There are thousands of remote jobs and online freelancing work you can find. Another alternative is to sell online. You can do drop shipping or become a reseller for other companies. The point is that there is no excuse for not making extra income.

**6. Place your money in high-yield savings.** While you can't match or exceed the current inflation rate in the high single-digit, you can at least minimize the impact. And that's by transferring some of your savings into higher-yield instruments. If you keep your funds in your bank's savings account, you are losing a lot from inflation.

Digital banks, fintech companies, and government bonds are some options that offer decent interest rates of around 5%.

**7. Invest in equities for the long run.** Yes, stock markets worldwide, including the Philippines, have had a terrible year. But you can't deny the long-term historical charts. If you have investment goals that take at least ten years, you should invest in equities. It could be individual stocks or equity funds.

Real estate investment is also a viable alternative to beating inflation, as property prices usually keep with inflation. But to beat inflation, the stock market is your best bet. Don't time the market if you're not trading actively. Just use peso-cost averaging with a broad index fund. You might see short-term losses, but you should be ahead in the long run.<sup>MS</sup>

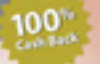
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# How to Automate Your Savings

By JENDEE DE GUZMAN, RFP®

Why do people, on average, fail to save the right amount of money at the right time, especially when a goal is already due? From the perspective of human behavior, our brains were designed to protect us. Thus, by default, we don't want to be on the losing end, and setting a portion of our income for savings is perceived by our brains as losing something. However, there are strategies and brain hacks to solve this problem.

One of the best ways to solve this is to set up an automatic savings program. Here's how it works: before you see your income through your online bank portal or passbook, you already deduct a percentage allocated for savings, so you wouldn't feel that something is missing.

Our brain is already more than two thousand years old. Programming that old is often difficult to tame, so we should take a different approach. That is why an automatic savings

program can work because you don't have to choose to save every time you get your salary. But you do have to decide to set it up. It takes strong motivation and a big audacious goal to make this happen. Whether for a retirement, educational, or emergency fund, it serves as a cue for a future reward.

Here are four easy ways to make sure that you automate your way to savings.

**1. Speak with your banking officer and ask for an automatic savings program setup on your account.**

Call your banker and ask if they can auto-debit your payroll or savings account for a specific purpose, like funding a special savings account or mutual fund. Some banks offer weekly, monthly, or quarterly transfers of a portion of your income to your preferred account.

**2. Set up your automatic savings program through your online banking app.**

Explore your online or mobile banking app. Some banks already include an auto savings feature through their banking app. You can easily set up your savings anywhere and anytime if yours do. If you can set up auto-debit for your bills, why not set up one for your savings? If exploring the bank app is difficult, you can always call the bank's customer service for assistance.

**3. Aspire to be a VIP client of your bank.**

Once you are tagged as a VIP client, you will have more perks than regular account holders. Aside from the fact that you will always be attended to as a VIP every time you are in the bank, you have access to programs, products, and services that may only be available to VIP clients. That includes setting up an automatic savings program. Once a specific amount is credited into your account, a portion can be taken out as savings, another for an investment account, another for a trust account, and so on.

Being a VIP client is something our brain would also love! Since it is a great feeling to be treated nicely, you will work on that goal.

“Explore your online or mobile *banking* app. Some banks already include an auto *savings* feature through their *banking app*.”

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**4. Open an account that is difficult to withdraw funds from.**

Savings accounts are easily accessible, making it easy to withdraw money to buy stuff. Our programming is to make things easier for us, so you will get that money and buy something you don't need. One way to get around this is to use a time deposit account or invest in a UITF or mutual fund, making it harder to withdraw. Or open a passbook account with no ATM card.

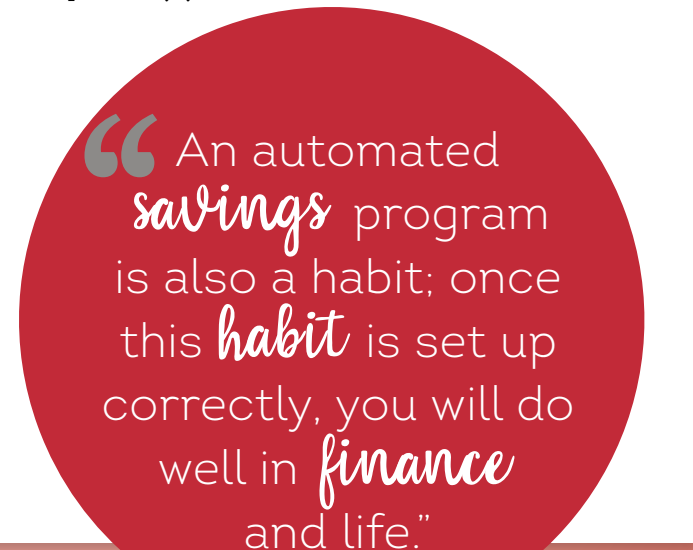
However, use this account for a savings goal and not as your emergency fund because, for emergencies, you need to be able to access your funds from the bank or ATM anytime.

Setting up an automatic savings program can be easy if it has a purpose. Identify why your goal is the goal.

Before anything else, be clear about why saving up for something is necessary. In financial planning, when you start saving or even investing, there is a bigger goal with a price tag. That price tag can only be achieved when you put it in instruments that will give you a profit, and by then, you can say the goal has been completed.

Being clear about what you want gives your brain direction. Every time you are triggered to pull out the funds, you will remember that there is a bigger goal than this temporary feeling of consuming.

If you take action, you are teaching yourself to be automatic in achieving financial or non-financial goals. An automated savings program is also a habit; once this habit is set up correctly, you will do well in finance and life.<sup>MS</sup>



# Philippine Veterans Bank Holds Bike Event to Save Bataan Death March Markers

On its 30th Anniversary, the Philippine Veterans Bank raised funds for the maintenance of Bataan Death March historical markers that had been destroyed, uprooted, and neglected due to drainage and other road projects.

“Philippine Veterans Bank is committed to keeping the memory of our heroes alive in the hearts and minds of Filipinos, so that we may always remember their sacrifices for our country and our freedom,” added Villa-Real.

Bikers from Bataan, Pampanga, Tarlac and nearby provinces pedaled along the Bataan Death March route traversed by the country's heroes some 80 years ago.

The Death March markers serve as a reminder of the route taken by Filipino soldiers who defended the country against Japanese forces during World War II some 80 years ago. About 10,000 brave soldiers died along the route; many of the bodies were never identified or recovered.

The “Ride for Valor” a non-competitive 160 kilometers long bike ride raised close to P50,000 pesos and monetary pledges for the Filipino-American Memorial Endowment (FAME) to save our heroes' historical markers so that we may remember their sacrifice. The funds will be turned over to FAME, a non-government organization that maintains the kilometer markers of the Bataan Death March from Mariveles, Bataan to Capas, Tarlac.

Around 80,000 Filipino and American soldiers and prisoners of war were forced by the Japanese military to march 69 miles from Bataan to Tarlac during World War II. Only some 54,000 persons reached the camp, and around 20,000 died due to starvation, dehydration, diseases, and the brutality of Japanese captors.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Region 3 gave an assurance that they will find suitable relocation sites for historical markers that will be affected by any road projects of the department. DPWH have likewise repainted the historical markers along the Bataan Death March route.

Due to the success of the Ride for Valor, PVB has announced that It will be holding the bike ride anew In March 2023.<sup>MS</sup>

“We would like to thank all the bikers, sponsors, private corporations and LGU partners for their invaluable support to the recently concluded Ride for Valor. Special thanks to DPWH Region 3 led by Regional Director Roseller Tolentino for their quick action and clarification about the Death March Markers along national roads that will be affected by road repairs,” said Mike Villa-Real, PVB First Vice President.





# Best Options for Remittances

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

Filipinos who work overseas make up a chunk of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2021, our unsung heroes contributed \$31.4 billion by sending their remittances home to their relatives in the Philippines. But what is the best and cheapest way to send remittances to the Philippines? Check out our list of the best options for remittances.

## XE Money Transfer

No other remittance transfer has the breadth of experience than XE does in terms of currency conversion and international money transfers. You may feel secure knowing that you are in good hands because they have been in this industry for more than 25 years.

Here are some notable benefits of using XE to send money to the Philippines:

- XE allows you to transfer from a wide range of countries and well-known international locations, such as the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and many more.
- It offers competitive exchange rates, indicating that the converted amount for the money transfer is higher.
- XE offers cheap, sometimes zero, fees. For instance, your transfer is free if you send more than \$500 from the US. You pay a nominal \$3 charge for amounts under \$500.
- With no transfer caps, XE is a fantastic option for even large-value money transactions.
- XE completes international money transfers quickly. Your funds will be transferred to the Philippines in minutes or as soon as one to four business days.

## Instarem

A fintech startup called Instarem began operating in Singapore in 2014 and has since developed into a recognized name in international money transfers. They only concentrate on cross-border payments and money transfers and work hard to give their clients exceptional rates and inexpensive costs.

Instarem has several benefits, such as:

- Instarem transfers from Australia, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, Europe, the UK, India, and the US.
- With less than 1% FX markup on its rates, Instarem offers highly competitive exchange rates. This merely results in your receiver receiving more money once converted.
- The transfer costs charged by Instarem are apparent, ranging from 0.25% to 1%.
- For many countries, Instarem does not impose transfer restrictions.
- The majority of transactions with Instarem are completed promptly, while the remainder is done within four business days.

## Panda Remit

Panda Remit is a Hong Kong-based fintech startup that has quickly grown its global money transfer services. Their remittance service is entirely online, and you may send money simply and round-the-clock utilizing their mobile app.

The following are the key areas in which Panda Remit excels and seems to be a fantastic option for sending money to the Philippines:

- Most transactions are completed in just two minutes, while the remainder takes between one and three business days.

- With Panda Remit, you can send money to a recipient in various methods, including debit card transfers, bank account deposits, and mobile wallet credits. Additionally, GCash is accepted. Given that GCash is the most widely used mobile wallet in the Philippines, you and the receiver have many options.
- You can save even more money on your remittances with Panda Remit, thanks to special discounts available only to RemitFinder users.
- Due to their extremely low costs, Panda Remit is a cost-effective option to send money to the Philippines and offers exchange rates that are frequently quite competitive.
- Panda Remit is entirely digital and has a user-friendly mobile app that you may use to send money whenever and wherever you are.

## WorldRemit

Another popular option for sending money to the Philippines is WorldRemit. Customers may transfer money to more than 150 nations worldwide with WorldRemit, which has been in the international remittance industry since 2010.

The following are the main justifications for giving

WorldRemit a closer look when you send money to the Philippines:

- You can be confident that nothing will go wrong with the safety and security of your money and information with WorldRemit because they have more than ten years of expertise in international money transfers.
- You can transfer your money from more than 50 countries, including the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Australia.
- With WorldRemit, your initial three transfers are completely free. Take advantage of this fantastic deal to save money on your first three transfers.
- Money transfers with WorldRemit can be completed instantly in one to two business days.
- To finance your WorldRemit money transfer, you have a ton of alternatives, including bank transfers, cards, mobile payments, and Apple Pay.

These are just a few of the best options for international remittances. To ensure that your recipient receives the highest possible payout, do your due diligence to maximize the return on your money transfer.<sup>MS</sup>





# GrabFood vs. Foodpanda

By KARLO BIGLANG-AWA, RFP®

**W**hat is your favorite food delivery app? In the past two years, we have seen how important it is to have food delivery services offered by companies like Grab or foodpanda. Now, which is better for food delivery?

Grab started in the Philippines in 2018 as a ride-sharing app, competing with Uber. It expanded its services into food delivery, mobile payments, and courier services. Foodpanda started in the country around 2014, specializing in food delivery.

So, how do they compare? Let's check how they fare regarding ordering, payment options, delivery, and customer service.

## Ordering

While both have the same business model, they have differences in their procedures for placing and fulfilling orders.

## Foodpanda

1. Enter your location or address, but if it's in the app already, there is no need to do this, and you can move forward.
2. Search by restaurant, cuisine, dish name, or keyword.
3. Choose a restaurant available in your area.
4. Pick the food items you want to order.
5. Proceed to checkout. Enter your exact delivery address, payment method, and phone number.

Your order will be forwarded to the restaurant which prepares your food. The delivery rider will pick up your order at the restaurant and deliver it on a bike or motorcycle.

## GrabFood

1. Choose food from the product section.
2. Provide your delivery address. If it's indicated already, there's no need to do this.
3. Choose a restaurant.

4. Choose a meal and add it to your cart.
5. Tap the place order button to complete your order.

Grab will then match a delivery guy for you. The person will be the one to go to the restaurant, order and wait for the food, and deliver it to you.

## Payment Options

Both platforms have multiple payment options, such as cash on delivery, credit card, debit card, or PayPal. However, this may depend on the specific merchants, so just make sure to check it first before ordering.

## Customer Service

GrabFood and foodpanda have a feature that allows customers to leave a note about their order to the rider. This will enable you to keep in touch with the riders for specific requests or orders. Also, if the rider gets lost, you can guide him in the right direction. Both apps have a pre-order section also that allows you to place an order even though the restaurant is still closed.

The minimum order for foodpanda depends on the requirement of some vendors before an order can be made. On the other hand, there's no minimum order requirement for GrabFood.

## Delivery Tracking

Both delivery apps have a real-time tracking section for the order and delivery. A portion shows the delivery time and if the rider has picked up the food already. You can even view the exact location of the delivery guy on the road.

## Delivery Speed

Both platforms might have some delays from time to time depending on the circumstances, like if it is raining or there's heavy traffic. However, based on the average lead time, GrabFood is faster since it has an average turnaround time of 30 minutes.

## Merchant Application Procedures

If you're interested in becoming a partner merchant, this process will be helpful for you.

## Foodpanda

1. Sign up through the foodpanda website.
2. Upload needed documents and information in the platform and prepare necessary business permits such as Mayor's or business permit, DTI certification, a valid ID, and other necessary certificates.
3. Wait for the contract and sign it.
4. Wait for approval and start the partnership.

## GrabFood

1. Sign up through the GrabFood website.
2. Wait for an email with registration instructions from Grab. Complete and submit the following requirements:
  - a. Certificate of Registration
  - b. Secondary license: either BIR Form 2303 or Mayor's/Business Permit
  - c. Valid photo-bearing ID and specimen signature of DTI-named owner
  - d. Valid photo-bearing ID and specimen signature of authorized representatives,

- e. Articles of Incorporation
  - f. General Information Sheet
  - g. Secretary's Certificate
  - h. Contract
  - i. Photo proof of bank account
  - j. Valid ID of the bank account holder
  - k. Letter of authorization
  - l. Wait for the contract to be sent out.
3. Sign the contract with Grab.
  4. Details will then be verified.
  5. Wait for the final approval of your application.

Some consumers have both apps on their smartphones and order based on which restaurant they want to order from. Although there are overlapping options, some merchants are available in one app only.

In the end, it's a matter of preference and habit. The more you use one app, the more likely it will become your go-to food delivery app.<sup>MS</sup>







# Online Loans and Cash Apps

BY EDMUND LAO, RFP®

For the past few years, we have seen a proliferation of online loans and cash apps. Before, Filipinos who could not qualify for a bank loan would borrow from pawn shops, money lenders, and even loan sharks. But, now that more Filipinos have smartphones and can access the Internet, digital loan channels have become more popular.

Combined with alternative credit scoring methods that don't rely on the standard loan requirements, such as income documents, Filipinos have turned to these online loans for fast cash.

## What is an online loan?

An online loan is a non-traditional loan from a lender (other than the bank) that transacts via the Internet. Online lenders are required to operate with a physical office address, but they generally process applications online via their app or website.

As banks conduct strict credit investigations to check borrowers' capacity to pay, almost 80% of Filipinos cannot apply for bank loans. This can

be why online loans are experiencing rapid growth, owing to the convenience and ease of transactions to secure a loan. However, loan application procedures may vary from one lender to the other.

## Advantages of online loans

Legitimate online loan apps in the Philippines are a good option for emergency needs. Here are some pros for getting an online loan.

- **24/7 online application.** Anybody can apply for a cash loan any time of the day via the Internet.
- **Minimum requirements.** Usually, a government-issued ID is the main requirement to apply for a loan. Just send a scanned copy digitally. Sometimes you will be required to take a selfie while holding the ID.
- **Convenience.** You can start applying for a loan if you have a smartphone—no need to go to their office.
- **Fast approval.** Online lenders do not ask for many documents, so it is easier to be approved.
- **No bank account is required.** A deposit account with a bank is not a requirement, although some online lenders may ask for your nominated bank account where they will send the loaned money. Most of the time, loan proceeds are disbursed through partner remittance centers.

## Disadvantages of online loan

- **Higher interest rate.** There is always a trade-off. For fast approval and process, lenders charge higher rates. This is also due to the lender taking a higher risk to lend money to a borrower as an unsecured loan. Failing to pay on time can take a toll on your finances.
- **Short-term loan.** The term of the loan is usually only 30 days. You may go for an extension but note the finance charges and interest rates.
- **Risk of identity theft.** Since online loans are processed without face-to-face interactions, there's a possibility that you are dealing with an identity thief who can steal your identity through the information provided during the loan application.
- **Harassment on collection.** Many online lenders use debt shaming to pressure the borrower to pay. Lenders often use law firms to threaten borrowers to pay out of fear.

## Best Online Loans and Cash Apps

For this article, let us compare the top five online loan apps on their features:

### 1. GCash

GCash turns your mobile phone into a virtual wallet. You can pay for purchases and transfer money as if you are sending a text message. GCash Loan gives pre-approved access to a cash loan for a maximum of P50,000. There is no collateral needed. You choose payment terms from five to 12 months. The processing fee is 3%, deducted upon availing. The standard loan rate is 1.59% per month.

### 2. Tala

Tala is another online loan app that offers the world's most

accessible digital financial services. Its consumer credit instantly underwrites and disburses loans to customers regardless of their credit history. The maximum loan amount is P15,000, with rates as low as 9% per annum. The loan is approved within five minutes and payable within 21 to 30 days. There are no access fees, processing fees, or hidden fees. You can also pay in advance, and there is no early settlement fee.

### 3. Moneycat

This is a large financial company that operates in the Philippines. The maximum loanable amount is P20,000, sent to the borrower's bank account. It only takes five minutes to fill up the online application form. Once approved, the loan will be available in 24 hours. The credit term is up to 180 days. However, the interest rate for first-time borrowers is 16.67% per month.

### 4. Digidio

This mobile application allows residents of the Philippines to get a quick online loan. Statistically, more than 95% of Digidio users receive positive feedback from the loan company. This is one of the best lending apps. This app is available exclusively to individuals aged 21-70 years old. It only takes no more than two minutes to process an application. The initial online loan can be between P1,000 and P10,000. Loyal and repeat clients can get a loan of up to P25,000. The interest rate on the first loan for new customers is 0%, while it's 11.9% for repeat loans.

### 5. BillEase

BillEase is the flagship product of FDFC, a financial technology company building disruptive and innovative products in retail credit for Southeast Asia. It makes online shopping affordable and convenient by splitting payments into easy installment plans.

BillEase partners with many vendors, such as Lazada, Anson's, Kimstore, Mandaue Foam, Toshiba, and many more. The monthly interest is from 0% to 3.49%. The annual percentage rate (APR) for installment plans ranges from 0% to 41.88%. The service fee can be as high as 10%. The maximum loanable amount is P50,000, with flexible payment terms of two to 12 months.

Loan apps are an excellent tool for anyone to get extra funds. Approval will depend on your financial capability. Just visit the different websites, check their requirements, and learn more about their features and benefits, especially interest rates. Prepare your documents and then apply for a loan on your chosen app.

It is essential to remember that you make sure you pay your loan on time to avoid damaging your credit history. And remember, it's better to save than to borrow. Borrow only when there is a need or if there's an emergency. <sup>MS</sup>



# Music, Business, and Property

By MIGUEL MENDOZA  
as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

**M**usic has always been my passion. At a tender age, I remember performing in front of my family. So, when I had the opportunity to perform live in front of an audience, I took that chance. Around 2006, I joined my first singing contest, Philippine Idol (the first American Idol franchise), where I placed third runner-up.

In 2008, I joined Pinoy Dream Academy Season 2, another reality show competition on ABS-CBN, where I placed second runner-up. I also became a part of The Ryan Cayabyab Singers for a while. Being part of a competition has always been a learning experience for me. I got to know different personalities, and it has put me in situations that advance the learning curve of life.

After graduating from the College of St. Benilde with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Production, I ventured into the behind-the-scenes of live events until I found my first break as a Music Scorer for films, where I was awarded the Best Musical Score at the Metro Manila Film Festival in 2018. I also got my break as a Songwriter and got to work with Regine Velasquez-Alcasid, Jed Madela, Zephania, and other A-list artists. In 2019, I got an Awit Award for Best Song Written for A Movie for "Isa Pang Araw" popularized by Sarah Geronimo.

Alongside my music production, I also had a bar in Poblacion, Makati. Over the heightened lockdown of the pandemic, I ventured into live streaming on Kumu where I was awarded Composer of the Year during the Kumu Live Streaming Awards. I am releasing a new song that I will sing, promoting self-love, self-care, and self-discovery.

**Bouncing Back.** That is not to say that there were no challenges in the music industry. Of course, there were lots! Since I am not directly connected with any outfit, I had difficulty looking for projects and gigs. There were months that I questioned my talent and my worth because no one was hiring me.



My resolution was just to go with the flow of life and ask God for guidance and provision. Some days, I wanted to give up being a musician, but during these times, an opportunity would always be presented out of the blue. And because of these breaks that came out of nowhere, I was able to believe in the talent that I have. I then focused more on the creative side of music, which brought about more opportunities in my life.

During the pandemic, I was struggling to make my business survive. I had a bar and restaurant that I was trying to keep afloat while battling the economic imbalance the pandemic brought. There was a sudden standstill in the nightlife industry. Restaurants were able to adjust since there will always be a

demand for food, but for us in the entertainment and nightlife industry that thrives in social gatherings, we were forced to close down for more than a year. Rent made it harder to maintain the upkeep of the business.

Bouncing back as a businessman, I would say, is having the courage to accept that it is time to let go and shift to another path. What kept me afloat financially was my voice. Singing in an online platform paid the bills and gave my employees the severance pay due to them. The greatest bounce back was regaining confidence that situations can always turn in my favor.

I am very satisfied with my work, as my satisfaction comes from sharing my God-given talent through music. This is also about inspiring people and helping others express themselves through song.

**Learning as a Property Investor.** Apart from all of this work, I am also a property investor. The money I got from Pinoy Dream Academy was the down payment I used to purchase a condominium in a prime location in Makati.

The challenge of investing at a very young age was not having enough on how to go about it. I wasn't exposed to real

estate investors at that time. My family didn't even know at first that I had invested in a condo, and they even got mad at me the first time they found out.

I resolved these things by being open and honest to my family and some trusted friends that I needed help. Humbling yourself is one of the best ways to resolve these situations. My dad helped me process my first home loan, and a friend of mine, Jocel Misa, was the one who introduced me to Airbnb wherein the rent for the property paid for my loan.

The highlights of my real estate investment were learning how to maintain the property. Since I invested very young, I thought the expenses would just end after purchasing the property. Real estate taxes, monthly dues, taxes for common areas, building insurance, and property enhancement were things I had to learn along the way.

Eventually, my parents were able to see that I could put my money into something worthwhile and in a very much bankable investment.

I plan to invest more in property and my music. With everything I have gone through, and I feel this goes for everyone, the best investment is in yourself.<sup>MS</sup>



MY MONEY  
LESSONS

## Saving and Spending

At a very young age, singer and songwriter **Miguel Mendoza** had already invested money in his music and properties. But it took a while before he learned to use them wisely. Here he shares his tips on saving and spending.

**Know your capacity to spend.** There is nothing wrong with buying yourself a Louis Vuitton or a Gucci from time to time if you know it is within your capability and your daily life won't be compromised.

**Educate yourself.** This is not just for books or any online courses, but this involves spending a cup of coffee with people you can learn from. Feeding your mind and spirit with knowledge from people who have made it and want to see you grow can boost the next level of inspiration and productivity.

**Don't spend money to impress others.** You don't always need to go with the worldly trend and get pressured by friends or family that you should have this or that. You must know why you need it and how you will pay for it.



# Pharma, Death, and Christmas Hams

By JAN NICOLA MARFIL-HONORAS as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

I have always wanted to become a doctor. It was all I ever wanted. However, when I got pregnant before my second year of medicine proper, despite being granted a partial scholarship, there was no recourse but to quit school. My parents were already having difficulty sending us to school, and with the added cost of giving birth, it would be more financially challenging.

To augment my income, I tried applying as a pharmacist, but to no avail. This led me to start my professional career as a call center agent at Convergys. Fortunately, one of my accounts there involved personal customer transactions and accountability. We troubleshoot car trouble remotely, called dealerships to verify insurance claims or set appointments, handled lemon vehicle concerns, located roadside assistance, and even extended free oil changes on our judgment if the customer was especially inconvenienced. It was a fantastic starting experience for me regarding professionalism, hitting metrics, and an excellent work ethic.



Although I enjoyed my work at Convergys, I knew it was just a stepping stone to gaining experience. When I was promoted to Communications Coach a little over a year later, I resigned. I knew then that had I accepted the promotion, it would have been difficult to leave.

Still not lost in pursuing my career in the pharma industry, I continued to apply for jobs. One local company offered me the Customer Relations Manager position, and that was where it all started. More than a decade later, I have learned much in this field. I knew this was a career that would never be boring or monotonous and something I would always be passionate about.

**The Growth of Christmas Hams.** But with a growing child and finances very tight, I had to exert tooth and nail to make extra money. Since my parents had already started a business known as ROMA FOODS which was all about selling homemade Christmas hams, I used that brand to get into retail and to carry out my marketing decisions independently. Then, I started ROMA's Homemade Hams with the vision of offering homemade hams free of extenders, preservatives, and MSG. Moreover, I tweaked the recipe a bit to expand the market from those who enjoyed traditional Chinese ham to the younger generation whose taste buds preferred a salty and sweet combination.

[www.moneysense.com.ph](http://www.moneysense.com.ph)

It was challenging because it was my first business. I leveraged social media at that time to create a new network for ROMA's Homemade Hams. I also sent proposals to companies I profiled that gave out Christmas hams to their employees. The first years were baby steps. I was only selling less than 500 hams per season, which was much work for that amount of sales. I was only making enough profit to pay for production and labor, but I knew even then that Rome was not built overnight, so I continued year after year. I was very conservative because I didn't have much capital to play around with to take aggressive risks. I believe I still am to a certain degree.

In 2016, my son Eli was diagnosed with cancer, and I had to take a break from my career and business that year. Our bill during the four months he fought cancer reached millions of pesos. We were helpless, but many people helped—family, friends, government agencies, and netizens. Through everyone's generosity, we explored all possible cancer protocols for Eli at UST and St. Luke's. However, he passed away last March 2017 due to chemotherapy complications.

That chapter in my life made me realize how important money was in terms of freedom. Before this happened, I always thought that a little extra was enough—that as long as the basic needs were met, then we were fine. We were not. I realized that I had to make more money for my family so we would never be backed into a corner that way again.

Months after Eli died, I decided to re-launch ROMA's Homemade Hams more aggressively via social media and on-site promotions. I rented a place where ROMA's Homemade Hams can be sold so we can also entertain walk-ins. This was my first aggressive risk, and it paid off. The year 2017 was when ROMA's Homemade Hams was put on the map and was consistently recognized year after year as one of the best hams in Manila, even besting the most popular commercial brands.



[www.moneysense.com.ph](http://www.moneysense.com.ph)

## Overcoming Setbacks

Senior Marketing Manager and entrepreneur **Jan Nicola Marfil-Honoras** worked through several financial mistakes. Here are her three pieces of advice for focusing on what's right.

**Be honest with your income capability.** Don't fool yourself into thinking that you can afford this. Make sure you have the money, then spend accordingly.

**Find other "jobs."** If you aspire to have a "certain" standard of living higher than your current one, find additional ways to earn (not borrow) accordingly.

**Surround yourself with people who can inspire you to make wise decisions.** You are the people you surround yourself with. What does success look like for you, and who are the people who will enable you to fulfill your positive purpose?

I rejoined the pharma industry last 2018 and decided to make ROMA's Homemade Hams a seasonal offering, operating from September to Chinese New Year only. So now, we are purely home-based, so that I can be more efficient in both.

**Adding Extra Income.** Two years after the pandemic and with the economy opening up, I have much to be grateful for. I have been working for Bayer as a Senior Marketing Manager since 2019. I am fortunate they allow employees to have businesses on the side, as long as it does not present a conflict of interest.

I also opened a nail, waxing, and lash salon named Sip 'N Polish last 2019 with a partner, which miraculously survived the pandemic and is in its third year now. Beauty will never go out of business in the Philippines. I am in my ninth year with ROMA's Homemade Hams, and I can say that we are still growing. Big plans ahead!

I am working and praying hard to open a physical store. I am confident ROMA's Homemade Hams is ready to have a physical footprint. I also intend to re-introduce our empanada line, which I discontinued last 2018. It is a vast undertaking requiring significant risks, so we will take that jump only when we are ready financially and logistically (but we have our hearts set for next year, hopefully!).<sup>MS</sup>





# Why Insurance Matters

By PAM LABRIAGA as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

**A** graduate of Mass Communication majoring in Broadcasting from Centro Escolar University, I also studied law for a few years while working in the banking industry. My first job was as a researcher for a TV network.

I loved the job because I got to do my passion. However, my salary was insufficient because I traveled daily from Makati to Quezon City. Afterward, I worked as a fraud risk analyst in one of the major banks in the world for many years. I was satisfied with the company because the salary was sufficient, but I was looking for more time with my family. So, I job-hunted and started my business, but I failed. Then in 2018, I met my Unit Manager, who introduced me to the life insurance industry.

At that time, I was only looking to buy insurance for my dad. When I saw my manager in a magazine, I looked him up on social media, and he agreed to meet me immediately. At first, I was not fully committed to the business because I was doing it half-heartedly. But again, I lost my parents and spent a lot of money due to hospitalization expenses and medicines. That's when I decided to make this a business and advocacy.

**Doing Business While Managing Personal Issues.** Working in the insurance industry naturally had its ups and down. But perhaps one of the most unforgettable moments I had was when I closed 203 policies in two years. I did most of the meetings in the hospital while my mom was confined. I hid my background, but of course, I got interrupted by doctors or nurses from time to time. This part was difficult because I had to work double time even if I knew my mother was not doing so well.

I always believed God gave me his hardest battle because

He knows I'm strong enough to overcome anything. My mom was constantly getting hospitalized. She also suffered from Covid 19, so I spent much time in the hospital while prospecting, selling, and training my team. But I did not let that stop me. I was an only child, and I only had myself to depend on. I prayed so hard. It worked every time.

Two years after the pandemic, I'm now an Agency Manager of P&M Financials under Inlife. I manage a team of managers and finance professionals whose role is to spread financial literacy and education to every Filipino. I believe that despite what I have been through, I have the most fulfilling line of work because I get to market to the entire Philippines while at the same time securing and saving lives. It makes me feel very honored to serve them and offer financial products and financial education, tailor-fitting what they need and can afford.

In the near future, I plan to build a massive agency that will provide all types of insurance and financial needs, whether life or non-life, to every Filipino. Our vision is to put up offices all over the Philippines to cater to every Filipino's concerns and needs.

**Awards and Valuable Life Lessons.** In the process, I have also reaped several awards: Million Dollar Round Table qualifier and a GAMA Global leader awardee. I was also consistently number one in sales nationwide for two consecutive years in my previous company. I had iPad and Apple Watch incentives and won a trip to Istanbul, Turkey, and Rome, Italy.



My reputation as a reliable agent who delivers was greatly enhanced by receiving these business awards from reputable third parties. That final statement is important to reiterate. Even if customers aren't aware, award-winning individuals are routinely perceived as more trustworthy and sincere.

But the worth of business awards goes much beyond name recognition or customer volume. And as I have learned, it has made me a whole new person.

I have learned that time is the most valuable commodity in my line of work. Find an opportunity that gives you financial security but never compromise time because once it is gone, you can never buy back time. Practice what you preach. You'll never lose your light by lighting others. Be a servant leader. You build yourself by building others.<sup>MS</sup>

## MY MONEY LESSONS

### How to Save

Agency Manager **Pam Labriaga** has some advice and pointers for those who want to spend and save, especially during these trying times.

**Follow the 10-20-70 rule.** 10% tithes (Should go to church); 20% savings, investments and insurance; 70% is the only amount you spend on everything else.

**Build a solid foundation.** Build a solid financial foundation for your financial well-being: healthcare, life protection, and emergency fund. Even if you have millions of investments without healthcare, one critical illness can make you start all over again.

**Live within your means.** Don't spend what you don't have! To start, list your income and expenses for a month, compare and see if you are living within your means.



# Balancing Law and Real Estate

By **ATTY. CRIS GARCIMO** as told to **EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO**

**M**y parents were tailors who specialized in custom-made barong tagalogs and coats. Seeing their customers—mostly lawyers and judges—in their barong and coat creations made me want to follow in their footsteps.

So, despite the meager income of my parents, they still supported me in law school. Aside from supporting my legal education, they also supported the studies of my two brothers and some of my cousins from the province. Sometimes, they had to pawn their jewelry to pay my tuition fees. My parents' hard work, faith, love, and support motivated me to finish law school and pass the bar exam.

After taking the bar examination and waiting for the result, I learned that one of my friends was a team leader in a realty business. I got curious and joined his team for a few months until I passed the bar. It was just a brief stint, but it was my first exposure to real estate.

**Law and Real Estate.** After passing the bar, I was hired as an associate lawyer at Fortun Narvasa & Salazar (FNS). I directly reported to Atty. Gloria Fortun, the Special Counsel of the Cavite Branch of FNS. A seasoned family, property, and litigation lawyer, she was kind and generous in mentoring me as a young lawyer. I was trained in dispute resolution, family law, and property law.

I worked for nine years in FNS until I was hired as a legal counsel by PA Properties and Development Corporation, a developer and construction company in Laguna. At that point, I decided to specialize in property law and real estate services. I also passed the board exam for real estate brokers in 2016. However, it was only in 2019 that I decided to integrate real estate services into my legal practice when I started my law and realty offices in Cavite.



HiveScout Realty is a full-service realty firm in Imus, Cavite. We advocate for property investment, green living, and wellness residences. We also provide real estate services such as real estate documentation, due diligence, property listing, settlement of estate, and title transfer assistance. It was established as an integrated service area to my real estate law practice. I learned from real estate that we should not rely on one source of income.

My responsibilities were challenging since I was starting a law office and realty company at the same time. But eventually, it helped us in building the business. We gained the trust of our new clients since they learned that I was also familiar with real estate laws as a practicing lawyer.

We faced many challenges in the industry, including the shift to digital marketing during the pandemic. Our online presence and being searchable via Google helped us during that time. We received inquiries for properties, consultation, due diligence, title verification, and real estate

documentation. We also accommodated virtual tours, teleconsultation, and video conferencing upon request of our clients.

Amid the pandemic, we were able to assist an international company that was urgently looking for a warehouse lot in Cavite. During the pandemic, I was also invited as a resource speaker by a local broker's network, where I discussed property investment. I was also interviewed for Property Report about self-care space, wellness residences, donation of properties, and mortgage redemption insurance.

It is also unforgettable that our broker liaison officer and property specialist have invested in real estate during the pandemic. He was a former construction supplies and hardware attendant.

In the near future, aside from being locally rooted and globally connected, I hope to teach property and sales in law school and eventually write a legal pocket guide to real estate and sales.

**Not Just One Income.** Recently, I also became an international Realtor® member. The National Association of Realtors is the professional organization of real estate agents and other industry professionals in the US and abroad. The Realtor® is a registered collective membership mark that identifies a real estate professional who is a member of the National Association of Realtors and subscribes to its strict code of ethics.



## Getting into Law & Real Estate

**Atty. Cris Garcimo** transitioned from law into real estate smoothly. Here are his tips and advice for people who want to do the same.

**Study the craft and always add value.** You must be willing to learn and be trained. Real estate is a specialized profession.

**Look for a mentor.** Whether you can find him in a support group or professional network, having a mentor who already has the experience can guide you step-by-step.

**Be locally rooted and globally connected.** Have friends oversea or from outside your network. You never know; they can be an open door.

It is always an honor to assist a client in their journey, whether as a homebuyer, seller, or a company with a property requirement. It is fulfilling to know that they will turn to you as a professional, guide, or someone familiar with the requirements and intricacies of a real estate transaction. There is demand for township development—accessible, convenient, and connected. People have more awareness about wellness and self-care. A dwelling place is not just a property investment but also an investment in well-being.

In my years as a layers and real estate practitioner, I have learned that one should not rely only on one source of income. Additional sources of revenue are essential. However, it must be integrated into your primary core skills or line of practice to add value to your clients and services.

In my spare time, I try to meditate. Having a space to create and meditate helps us to become more balanced. In my case, it helped me cope with burnout, the pandemic, and the loss of my brother in 2020. I light incense, arrange a mini garden or ikebana, write tanaga (an indigenous form of Filipino poetry), and play the bamboo flute for sound and breathing meditation.<sup>MS</sup>



# BANG BANG BANGUS GOES BOOM!

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

Asia CEO Awards Entrepreneur of the Year Mike Canlas and his wife Lucci tell the story of how they went from zero to almost 100 bangus stores in two years







**B**ig. Crispy. Boneless. Bangus. In different flavors. Who would have thought the lowly milkfish would be the start of a fast-growing and award-winning food empire?

And yet, Bang Bang Bangus is fast approaching 100 stores in just over two years. Even more astounding, this all happened during the 2020 pandemic lockdowns.

The chain of kiosks is the brainchild of Mike and Lucci Canlas, who thought of the concept while eating at a restaurant to celebrate their child's birthday. They happened to order a big boneless bangus. This struck a chord in Mike, who thought of starting a take-out kiosk offering only bangus.

Most street-food take-out stalls in the Philippines sell lechon manok, fried liempo, and pork barbecue. No one specialized in fried bangus. Mike and Lucci saw an opportunity.

They also knew they had to put a twist on the concept. After all, milkfish is not everyone's go-to take-out food. First, they decided to offer deep-fried crispy bangus, not grilled. Second, it has to be huge for sharing. Third—and this is genius—they came up with different flavors, including salted egg, inasal, spicy pares, and—believe it or not—cheese.

But before they could open their first kiosk, originally scheduled on March 27, 2020, the entire country went on lockdown on March 15. The couple had already started construction in a space they found in Project 7, Quezon City when the Philippines—and the entire world—stood still.

### A Second Chance

To say that this was a setback is an understatement. Mike and Lucci had been running 88 Ville Communications, a full-service agency handling corporate events and brand activations. From when Mike launched it in 2008 until the pandemic, they had around one or two projects a month from some of the country's big corporations.

Before the lockdowns in 2020, they even had several huge events. But all that changed in an instant.



“All our events were canceled,” Mike shares. “We had to close our business because we weren’t earning. We became nervous because we didn’t know what was in store for us. We thought the pandemic would last only for a few months, but when it went on and on. I said to myself that this was something different.”

Looking back, they were thankful that this unfortunate event happened. If it didn’t, they wouldn’t be able to come up with their most successful business venture.

### Power Couple

Mike had always been an entrepreneur. Fresh out of college and armed with a degree in Communication Arts from Colegio de San Juan de Letran, he decided to venture into entrepreneurship by investing in a camera to lend to college students for their school work and short films. He also bought a computer so that he could edit videos and films. And while he was managing this business, he worked as a freelance director in different TV shows including ChinoyTV, ABS-CBN’s Cge TV, and Studio 23’s Where’s Tony.

His classmate, Lucci, on the other hand, got employed as a writer for a major daily and different magazines. Later, she added graphic design to her skill set through YouTube tutorials and went freelance.

When Mike started 88 Ville Communications, Lucci soon worked freelance for him in some projects. When they got married in 2014, 88 Ville went into high gear.

Lucci had to decide to team up with Mike full-time. She shares, “It was difficult for me since I had to turn away from all my consultancy work. But at the same time, I knew I had to support my husband. I gave Mike and the company all my talents to make it work.”

Mike adds, “I have learned that when you start a business, you need to be full-time. It’s more difficult to make it work if you’re half-hearted or just doing this for additional income. You have to give everything, whether this will work or not.”

Mike and Lucci were yin and yang, and they balanced each other. Lucci quips, “He was the visionary, and I was his secret weapon.”

### Overcoming Challenges

The couple brought their dynamics into Bang Bang Bangus. While Mike experimented with recipes, Lucci was in charge of the branding.

When the lockdown happened, they didn’t let this deter their spirits. Instead of languishing on their delayed opening, Mike and Lucci further studied their product concept and honed their skills. “It was the perfect opportunity to improve,” says Mike.

They also refused to give up their dream of opening their kiosk. “We needed to build credibility because our brand and products are new. We wanted our customers to see how the food was prepared because people were very cautious about safety during the pandemic. And that, I believe, were the reasons why we wanted to have our physical store,” says Lucci.

### Off to a Rocky Start

When their first store was finally about to open in June 2020, they made their first major—and costly—mistake. Since it was their first time in the bangus business, the couple didn’t know how to handle fish storage. It was only later that they realized that fish was quick to spoil. Their only recourse was to throw P100,000 worth of fish.

Ever the optimists, for Mike and Lucci, this was a no-brainer, considering that they want to provide excellent products to their customers. “If that didn’t happen, we wouldn’t be able to find the best fish supplier—world-class and top quality,” Mike points out. “We took this opportunity to test our products. We changed what was negative into something positive.”

Another challenge they faced was introducing their brand into the market. Since they were the first in the country to offer fried bangus infused with different, unique flavors, they had a somewhat difficult time getting into the culture of the Filipinos to eat flavored fish.





And they admit they have a hard time introducing their product into the market. Mike shares, “Many are curious about what Bang Bang is all about. “We want this to be an alternative to ordinary take-out food such as chicken or pork.”

Thankfully, their skills and experience in graphic design, writing, and video production came in handy. They were able to create buzz through social media.

**Franchise Growth**

A week after opening their first store, together with some friends, they opened another kiosk in Project 8, Quezon City. In November 2020, they opened their first franchise in Pasig City.

By January 2021, an investor, Don Soriano, who saw their video ads on social media, decided it was a promising venture and infused fresh capital. Bang Bang Bangus was incorporated as Kitchen 77 Food Creations. “We had enough fuel to bring us to where we are,” Lucci explains.

Their growth was rapid. When the funds came in, they put up three new stores, a head office, and a commissary. Eventually, they placed other company-owned stores in key cities including Cebu, Davao, and Pampanga. Along with ten company-owned stores, they brought in more franchisees, growing their store network to dozens in the past two years. This includes new store openings in Tagaytay, Boracay, and El Nido, Palawan. By the end of the year, they hope to hit 100 stores.

From a crew of two, the couple is now managing 42 employees. They also opened a bigger office space in Project 6.

Having carefully studied franchising, they launched Bang Bang Academy for their franchisees, where they conduct trainings and sessions on different practical topics that may help improve their ways of doing business. Topics include customer service, graphic design, and they also invite motivational speakers. During



these sessions, some franchisees share their best practices and the head office also give updates and announcements such as new products, projects, and collaborations.

Bang Bang developed its own software to streamline the ordering process for its franchisees so that everything would be seamless and more efficient.

**Rewards and Recognitions**

Soon, Mike and Lucci’s success with Bang Bang Bangus attracted attention—a lot of it. They have appeared on several TV shows, such as Unang Hirit, and media outlets like ABS-CBN News.

In 2021, Mike bagged first place at the NextGen in Franchising Philippines Competition organized by Franchise Asia, which honors new players in the industry. He won over 36 other contenders who were franchise entrepreneurs 35 years old and below.





“One of the first challenges they have had with their business happened three days before their opening in June 2020. Since it was both their first time in this bangus business, they didn't know how to manage fish—it was only later when they realized that among meat products such as pork and beef, fish was the easiest one to spoil.”

The following year, Mike was hailed as Entrepreneur of the Year by Asia CEO Awards, an award-giving body dedicated to promoting the nation as a leading regional business center. He bested ten other innovative CEOs and entrepreneurs to clinch the title.

“It was surreal,” Mike shares on his win. “I could not believe it. I felt extreme joy when they called out my name. I felt immense gratitude to God because I couldn't do this without Him, and that all glory belonged to Him alone.”

He adds, “Receiving this award made me realize how powerful God is. I am not a chef. I didn't even attend a formal business school, yet here I was. I promised God that when I win, I will give my testimony of how He is as a true Giver, and that was what I did on that stage. It was a powerful experience.”

For Lucci, being part of the Magic 11 finalists—or what is known as the Circle of Excellence—was already a feat in itself. “We didn't expect to be part of the Circle of Excellence, let alone this,” she says proudly. “It was a magical moment for both of us.”

Before the event, Mike felt pressured, more so when his name was announced because everyone looked at him with congratulatory awe. “We needed to excel more,” he says. “We needed to surpass our achievements for this year.”

The couple plans to expand outside the Philippines, as some potential franchisees from countries like the United Arab Emirates have reached out to them. Mike reveals that this was their goal from the get-go. Another brand under Kitchen 77 Food Creations is also in the works.

### Working as a Couple

The success of Bang Bang Bangus stems from Mike and Lucci working together in solidarity. Their relationship deepened as their business grew. While running a company naturally has ups and downs, they are fully committed to their partnership. In addition, communication and trust play a pivotal role as these contribute to their working relationship.

It also helps that both have the same background in education and interests. “Being creative practitioners for more than a decade trained us to think of ideas which were never thought of before,” Lucci explains. “Mike was able to think of first-of-its-kind products and unique business strategies, and I was able to work on the branding and visuals of the brand.”

She adds, “As Steve Jobs pointed out in his Stanford speech, you can only connect the dots moving back. And 88 Ville was an important dot as it allowed us to work with franchisors and glimpse into how corporations market their products. So, when the opportunity to be on the client side arose, we were equipped with these experiences.”

“Since college, we've been trained to think out of the box,” Mike says. “This helped us to find creative solutions to problems brought about by the pandemic. However, we need to be strong inside the box too, so we continue learning about business and get experts to solidify our operations.”

When it comes to them running the business together, Lucci says, “Ecclesiastes 4:9 says that ‘Two are better than one, because they have a good return of their labor.’ And while this could also be achieved by business partners, being a couple in business makes this an automatic truth. It was very challenging at first because there





# Asia CEO Awards

THE REAL DEAL

“Receiving this *award* made me realize how powerful God is. I am not a chef. I didn't even attend a formal *business* school, yet here I was.”







are times when we have different opinions, but remembering that this is a blessing—to brainstorm whenever we feel like it, to get excited together, to have the liberty to hold and comfort each other through challenging moments, these are the perks that outshine the challenges.”

“Being a couple in business makes us not just husband-and-wife but friends and business partners as well,” she adds. “While we raise our children, we can also enjoy a cerebral, emotional, and spiritual relationship.”

Lucci says, “Trust is very important. I think that what worked for us is that we’ve set our roles from the start. Apart from being my husband, he’s the CEO and my boss. He’s my authority, and I continuously pray for him to make wise decisions. So, in the end, even if I think otherwise of a decision, I let him have the final say because submission to authorities is His command.”

### Secrets of Success

Despite their success, Mike and Lucci believe in learning how to spend and save. For them, their lifestyle has not changed a bit. And when they do spend, they spend on manpower, equipment, and what is needed for the business. Or they spend on experiences for their family. Lucci also spends on household items and stuff for the house.

“We belong to the generation of early Millennials. It takes a lot of prayers and willpower to keep fighting when challenges arise,” Mike says. “My advice to young businessmen like me is to listen to the older generation of entrepreneurs and believe in the power of habit and momentum. There is nothing like honest-to-goodness hard work. When you feel you’ve done your best, raise the bar even higher. It may seem tiring, but it is the only way to make the previously difficult things, easier.”

Lucci agrees, “There was one time when we tried not to listen, but we ended up spending more. We should always learn to look back and



listen to the people who have been there before us. Our advice is whenever mistakes or failures arise, *bangon ulit—wag namnamin ang defeat.* “

“The story of Bang Bang is a story of the power and goodness of God,” Mike concludes. “And we always give our best in everything we do because we know that every moment in this business is a testament to this. Our mistakes continuously humble us, and we are given a pat on the back for our victories. But the bottom line is that we are mere instruments He chose to activate at the most challenging times of our lives—and we are so grateful for this.” **MS**



# Your Guide to Getting an Auto Loan

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

Purchasing a car is something that many Filipinos aspire to do. Many adults say you're on the correct path to becoming an adult once you have your first pair of wheels. But to buy a car, you will need—of course—a considerable amount of cash.

The most affordable vehicle in the market right now costs more than P500,000. Even if you have so much money saved up, you won't be able to spend it all at once. Because, sure, you are an adult with responsibilities and expenses to pay.

It's a good thing that there are several vehicle financing options available in the Philippines that let you purchase your dream car. Here are ways to get yours without having to break the bank.

**Option 1: Bank Financing.** You can get a car loan from a bank or other lending institution. Often referred to as a car or automobile loan, you get a loan for a particular sum. You pay monthly installments, which include the loan principal and interest, usually between 12 and 60 months.

**Best if:** you have a solid credit history with the bank and want to finance a car.

**Pros:**

- You have plenty of options, as most banks offer auto loans
- Interest rates are 4% to 5% lower than for dealer financing.
- It builds your credit history with your bank, opening up opportunities to qualify for other loans in the future.

**Cons:**

- Banks typically demand a minimum down payment of 30%, so you still need substantial cash out. This is higher than for dealer financing.
- It's harder to qualify for. And there are more requirements to submit, so your loan application may take more time and effort.

**Option 2: Dealership Financing.** This is another common alternative to financing a car purchase. It's also a lot more convenient than borrowing from a bank. Essentially, you sign a contract promising to reimburse your dealer for the loan amount plus interest. The loan is processed, and your payments are collected by a bank or lender that is a partner of the dealer.

**Best if:** you don't think you'll qualify for a bank loan or don't have complete documents to submit.

**Pros:**

- Faster approval and processing time and fewer requirements to qualify.
- Lower down payment than bank financing.
- Car dealers offer car financing options from partner banks and lending companies.

**Con:**

- Higher interest rates and hidden charges, as both the car dealer and its partner bank have to earn from the loan.

“You can get a car *loan* from a bank or other lending *institution*. Often referred to as a car or *automobile* loan, you get a loan for a particular sum.”



“The most *affordable* vehicle on the market right now *costs* more than P500,000.”

**Option 3: Credit Card.** Technically, you can buy a car with your credit card, but only if your credit limit is large enough. Some car dealers may arrange this transaction, but the issuing bank must approve it. Others have tie-ups with credit cards, offering 0% installment over a few months. Not all auto dealerships will accept this credit card car financing method.

**Best if:** you can't get bank or dealer financing and if you have a high enough credit card limit.

**Pros:**

- Imagine the credit card points you can earn!
- There's no need for a loan application.

**Cons:**

- The interest rates and late payment charges for credit cards are high, so expect to pay a lot if you miss payments.
- The repayment period is very short, so you can't spread out your loan in small installments.

**Option 4: Home Equity Loan.** This is not common practice, but you can borrow against the equity of your property to buy a car. It's not the most advisable option, but it is an option.

**Best if:** you have built sufficient equity in your home or other real estate property, are a responsible borrower, and want to take advantage of lower rates.

**Pros:**

- It's likely you'll pay for a lower interest rate from a home equity loan than an auto loan. It's less risky for banks, so they're willing to charge a lower rate.

- You are more likely to get approved as the value of your home as collateral is much higher than a car.

**Cons:**

- There's a longer loan application process, and you must submit more documents.
- You're risking your home if you can't pay for your auto loan down the road.

**Option 5: Personal Loan.** You can use a personal loan for any purpose, including buying a car. And some banks are aggressive in offering personal loans, partly because of the higher interest rates. With a personal loan, you don't need to put up collateral. And if you're considered a valued client by a bank, you can easily qualify.

**Best if:** you are a valued or preferred bank client and don't want to put up collateral.

**Pros:**

- Faster loan application, approval, processing, and release. No down payment or collateral is required.

**Cons:**

- Higher interest rates than a typical car loan, though lower than a credit card.
- Shorter repayment periods, usually two to three years.

It takes a lot of preparation, comparison, calculation, and saving money to finance a car. One last reminder: To avoid any hassles while your automobile is on loan, ensure that your vehicle is insured and that your car gets regular maintenance. This means that you must always use your car wisely so that it will go a long way. <sup>MS</sup>



# Best Money-Saving Travel Tips

**R**evenge travel is in full swing. After almost two years since the COVID-19 pandemic started, economies now have been more open and with that, travels, both local and international.

From the pre-pandemic lockdowns, when people were practically prisoners in their own abode, we have already seen the resumption of traffic and movement where people seem to get out of their virtual caves for the first time.

Savings and pent-up spending have been held off for the longest time, and now that life is back to normal but in name, it would be good to be reminded of some practical tips and advice while travelling. Here are 20 tips for planning, during, and preparing for your next travels.

## PLANNING

**Plan ahead.** When travelling, planning is key. It is the linchpin of everything. Know when you want to travel, where you are going, which airline you're taking, where you will stay, which places you want to go, what are the things that you want to buy, and where you want to eat.

Having these clear in your mind will give you an accurate idea of how much you shall be spending for each and, if it fits your budget or not. With these in mind, you can already look out for discounts and promos for your airfare, accommodation, theme parks, and restaurants.

**Plan your itinerary and purchases.** An efficient itinerary is a cost-effective one. Prepare a list of your to-go's so you can chart the flow of your days, travels, and movement. You can concentrate on a particular spot and contiguous areas so you won't be running to and from, wasting precious time, fare, or gas.

Prepare also a list of the things that you need to purchase. That will act as your control mechanism to stick to your list and your budget. Moreover, having that checklist will enable you to cross out the items that you already purchased. That way, you don't need to go back for any items that you may have missed buying in the absence of one.

**Go for group tours.** Group tours offer a cheaper way for travel. You are able to visit popular places—or your preferred ones—on schedule and without the hassle of researching and determining the best way to move around. This saves time, effort, and energy on your end, enabling you to cover more destinations than you would have otherwise done yourself.

Group tours also provide a more convenient way to move around. With them, you can also share expenses in rooms, dining, and experiences.

**Consider going off-season.** This may sound counter-intuitive, but going off-season is cheaper. During this time, promos and discounts abound as tourist attractions and fares make-up for less income. Accommodations are cheaper and there are more bargain deals.

Going off-season means fewer people, so that means you get to enjoy the sights better, unharried and, take your social media pictures and videos at your leisure.

**Try staying with friends or relatives.** Friends and relatives offer practically free accommodation. Of course, you help with some house chores, treat them every so often, or offer to give some money as recompense for the “trouble,” but, adding them all up, it is still cheaper than staying in a hotel, most especially for extended periods of time.

If you plan to travel internationally, look up your network of friends and relatives where you can subtly ask if they can host you for a day or two during your trip.

**Know when it's sale period.** Sale periods are best for airfare, accommodations, theme parks, and shopping. Buying on sale makes you save money and thus, stretch out your budget for even more purchases, experiences, or savings.

**Try deal apps like Klook.** Use the Klook app to look for accommodations and destinations at a discount. Apps like this enable travelers to save money and even choose tickets to experiences that interest them.

**Familiarize yourself with the transport system.** Being familiar with the public and private transport system will minimize getting lost and thus, spending more money and time to go back where you should be. In Hong Kong, for

example, the public rail and bus system are so efficient that you can go wherever you want, fast. Los Angeles, on the other hand, doesn't have as many options, so going around may require you to spend more on Uber.

That being said, know the cab system as well, so you can already download the app that can help you get the ride needed to go around. You can also download the app of the destination's rail system so you know where your accommodation is located and what train you should ride to go to your target destinations.

**Don't forget the tipping culture.** In some countries, tips are a social courtesy, if not an imperative. Therefore, be familiar with the rate of tips you should give, so you can be a gracious tourist.

**Be familiar with the currency and comparative prices.** If you plan to go shopping abroad, familiarize yourself first with how much these items cost locally. Some branded bags and shoes, for instance, are way cheaper if you buy them in outlet stores abroad, rather than locally. With that, buying them abroad means saving money for you.

Know also the movement of your destination country's exchange rate versus the Philippine Peso, so you know when it is a good time to buy cheaper and thus, have more money when you travel.

**Use money changers to buy foreign currency.** Usually, money changers offer a cheaper way to buy foreign currencies than banks and airports. Exchanging money through them will stretch your local currency and therefore, have more value.

## DURING

**Carry cash.** Cash is king when traveling. While charging with credit cards may be more convenient, they cost more, as they charge you with assessment fees and currency conversion fees—as much as 2.85%. Carrying too much cash, on the other hand, is also risky as it is prone to loss and theft. Therefore, planning out your purchases, budgets, and allowance in advance will enable you to determine the amount of cash that you need, minimizing the risk.

**Look for deals online for your planned purchases.**

A lot of items that are available locally are available internationally as well, most especially branded and designer ones. If you have a hit list of the things that you want to buy, look them up on the Internet and take note of their prices. Then, look up the outlets and merchants at your destination and see if they have upcoming sales or even their regular prices. Here, you can already have an idea where you can buy the items cheaper and thus, know where to save money.

**Check the servings.** In the US, servings are typically larger than what we have in the Philippines, and they are good for two already. Thus, ask your friends and acquaintances on the size of servings in your destination; you can even surf the Net for this. If you know the serving size, you would avoid over-ordering and not waste money on food that would not have been eaten and thrown away.

**Stick to your budget.** Budgeting is everything. In traveling, there is the heightened temptation and slippery slope of buying things that are new, enticing, and relatively cheap. If you don't adamantly stick to your budget, then chances are, you will go overboard and spend much more.

Know how much your budget is and have a compilation of the receipts so you are aware of how much you have incurred at any point in time. Do it daily, if possible. That way, you remain conscious how much you are still within budget or how much you have already exceeded.

Don't forget to also set the pace of your buying. If you are staying for an extended vacation—say, one month—then don't buy all things on the first week. Chances are, you will still go to a lot of places and see a lot of things that you may want to buy. Finishing your budget early can subject you to overspending if you see compelling buys later on.

Moreover, excess purchases can lead to excess baggage, which, in turn, costs money.





**Look out for the baggage policy and your baggage weight.** Excess baggage cost money, and this can range from \$7 to as much as \$200. So, if you have been buying wantonly, you are not just exceeding your shopping budget, but also potentially incurring more expenses by way of excess baggage.

To avoid, this, you can bring a portable weighing scale, so you can monitor the weight of your baggage at any point in time. You can also use the hotel's weighing scale, in this regard, for balikbayan boxes. If you know the status of your baggage weight, then you'll know when to stop buying—which also acts as a control mechanism to stick to your budget.

Being familiar with your airline's baggage policy is also a good strategy. That way, you know how many hand-carry and laptop bags are allowed per person. With this, you can maximize how many each person can carry, and what to put inside each carry-ons.

**Check and double check your things and flight details.** Leaving precious valuables not only make them prone to loss and theft, it can also mean significantly more expenses by way of communication and transportation expenses.

The use of hotel safes keeps valuables secure, but if you departed already for your flight and left them there, then you would have to go back for them, incurring more expenses commuting or worse, rebooking your flight if you miss it because of this. Moreover, you can also incur more expenses in contacting your hotel or accommodation over the things you may have left.

So, check your valuables like your passport, wallets, credit cards, jewelry, or watches if they are with you already. Check also the safe where you may have put other valuables in. Make sure that it is empty, so you won't have to go back for them.

Double check also your flight details—the time, terminal etc.—so you won't miss it. Doubly make sure if your flight is in AM or PM, in order to avoid errors. Allow for contingencies like traffic or passenger congestion going into the airport most especially during peak seasons, and adjust your time accordingly. It is better to be very early in the airport than be stressed, rushing and running after your flight. Besides, missing your flight will cost further money and thus, more expense on your end.

**Don't get hungry.** Airport food is expensive, around 10% to 15% more than outside. It is always practical to eat and be full prior your flight. That way, you won't need to buy expensive food along the way. You can also bring some snacks that are high in fiber so it can make you fuller for extended periods of time.



**PREPARING FOR THE NEXT ONE**

Use cards that give frequent flyer miles. For those that are into traveling, incorporate your lifestyle into a credit card that give flyer miles. Auto-charge your bills as well as your other purchases into it so you can get rewards, build them up, and use them for your next travel.

Just a caveat though: make sure that you are not buying on credit. Meaning, use your credit card if you already have the same amount to pay your bills and purchases. Otherwise, the cost will far exceed the benefit, and is not a wise financial decision anymore.

**Have a multi-year travel plan.** We all have dream travels and destination. So you have ample time to prepare for them. It is like making a calendar of your daily activities. Except in this case, you are plotting them in years, instead of days or months. This "hitlist" would be your guide in your financial goal-setting and thus, setting aside money that is needed for these travels.

**Budget early, and grow your money.** After making your multi-year travel plan, you already can incorporate saving for them from your regular payroll. If that's not enough, you can save from your bonuses and other extra monthly pays.

You can put your money in a high interest-bearing savings, time deposit account, or a higher-return fund. The return earned can help in funding minor expenses such as taxi fares, airport fees, or even some shopping expenses.

Goals in the short-term (1-3 years) can be done through simple straight savings. Goals for the long-term, on the other hand, can still be invested and so requires a lesser amount from you due to the higher growth rate of investment instruments. It is important, though, that you consult with a financial planner that can help you in determining how much you should be setting aside regularly or one-time and where, so you can make your travel dreams come true. **MS**



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# How to Invest in US Stocks

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

Do you want to buy stocks of Apple, Tesla, or Netflix? You can only buy them from US-based stock exchanges such as the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and NASDAQ. And for this, you will need to open an account with an international stock brokerage.

The good news is that it's easier than ever to buy stocks in the US. There is a proliferation of online stock brokers to choose from. Here are the steps in the process of opening an account:

## 1. Identify a legitimate stock brokerage

The first step is to choose an international broker that will serve as the middleman. Take note that not all online brokers accept international clients, including those from the Philippines. Any stockbroker that accepts clients from more than one country and offers trading access to global stock exchanges is considered an international broker. However, some international online brokers are limited to residents of the US, Canada, Australia, the U.K., and Europe.

“Any stockbroker that accepts clients from more than one country and offers trading access to global stock exchanges is considered an international broker.”

So, make sure you look for a broker that is regulated and licensed to do business in the Philippines. Check each broker's website for this information or do a Google search. The following stock brokers can be used by Filipino investors who want to trade US stocks:

### Interactive Brokers

Interactive Brokers charge low commissions for US stocks. Investors can trade US stocks, bonds, funds, currencies, futures, and options at extremely cheap rates using only one account as a consequence.

For expert investors and aggressive traders, there is Interactive Brokers Pro. The IB SmartRouting System, which offers \$0.47 per 100 shares price movement, is available to traders. Interactive Brokers are available in 33 countries and 135 marketplaces.

### TD Ameritrade

TD Ameritrade offers trades without commission. Additionally, investors have access to a platform and products that don't have any additional costs or requirements for deposits or trades.

TD Ameritrade is available for both long-term investors and aggressive traders. With the platform's cutting-edge tools and features that provide investors with the knowledge they need to make wise selections, you can manage your portfolio, conduct stock research, and place trading orders using the interface. Experts with extensive knowledge, live streaming CNBC, and current quotes support the information.

### Mitrade

The simple and user-friendly interface offered by stock CFD broker Mitrade satisfies the requirements of both active traders and short-term investors. The primary (CFD) products include currency exchange, US equities, indices, commodities (such as gold and oil), and virtual currencies. These are the basic international financial markets covered.

You can take advantage of low-cost investments because of their zero cost, transparent low spreads, and low overnight interest rates.

Other options include Saxo Bank, eToro, Capital.com, Charles Schwab, XTB, and many more.

## 2. Complete your requirements

To buy and sell US stocks, you don't need to be a resident of the US or even be physically there. You can easily open a US brokerage account through this online international brokers. Here's how to sign up for an account:

- Visit the website of your chosen stockbroker and sign up. Find a trading platform that gives access to US equities, then register. Make sure to complete your profile by including factual information.
- Provide personal information. In compliance with Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Know-Your-Customer (KYC) laws, you will also need to provide personal identity information in order to activate an overseas trading account. The broker will authorize your account and allow you to continue with funding after your identification has been verified.
- Fund your trading account. There are several ways to add money to the account. These include wire transfers, PayPal, direct debit from your bank, and credit cards. Choose the approach that works with your account.

Once you open and fund your account, you can start trading.

## 3. Consider fees and taxes.

Every investor must be aware of the tax repercussions of purchasing US equities. If you are not a US citizen, do not possess a green card, or do not reside in the US, the majority of stock trading accounts will categorize you as a non-resident alien. However, the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) may still be required to withhold taxes from a portion of your revenue from your stock trading account.

You can earn the following revenues if you have a US brokerage account:

- Capital gains—gains from the sale of stocks/ETFs and options at a profit
- Dividend—distributions from ETFs and companies.
- Interest—income from fixed income instruments and un-invested cash

If you were in the US for fewer than 183 days during the tax year, capital gains are not subject to tax. All other taxes are levied at a 30% rate or in accordance with applicable tax treaties.

So, choose your international online brokerage and trade wisely. The US stock market may be tremendously alluring, but study and research more before divesting your funds into another market.<sup>MS</sup>





# How to Increase Your Property's Value

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

People who decide to sell their home naturally want a great price for it. Unfortunately, the majority of individuals are unaware that they can negotiate a better bargain if they know how to raise the value of their home.

There are various ways to raise the value of your property if you want to sell your home for the highest potential price.



"Property buyers always ask the proverbial question: Is the property I'm investing in going up in value?" says Carl Dy, property guru and President of Spectrum Investments. "It is important that the area you invested in will develop and thus go up in value."

According to him, there are at least six ways to increase your property's value. Here are some of them.

## 1. Fix up your place.

You must clean up your property and repair what needs fixing. In addition, make it as hassle-free as you can for potential buyers who want to move in quickly. Add smart devices if you must.

The long-term financial gain would result from making necessary repairs and improvements. Although making improvements to your house might first appear expensive, the advantages far exceed the cost. This situation benefits you and the buyer in equal measure.

## 2. Make sure your property stands out.

You must not only prepare your home for possible buyers but also make it stand out. Making your place look like a premium property is one way to achieve this. You can do this by displaying artwork, including objects made of various materials and textures that feel luxurious, and purchasing large area rugs.

You can also add accent walls, live plants and flowers, and antiques. To make your bedroom appear ultra-premium, you could even add statement pieces like a vanity with organizers and a nice nightstand.

## 3. Speak to your target audience.

It's essential to communicate to your target demographics while trying to market your homes. Many individuals forget to include it while putting their marketing plans together. It's simple to ignore, yet it's essential.

Once you've determined your target market, you'll be better able to understand the aspirations, wishes, and challenges of the property buyers. Consider your target audience's age, interests, gender, education, income,



location, occupation, and marital status to acquire a better understanding of who they are. Then, promote and decorate your property in light of their characteristics.

## 4. Polish your front door.

Don't ignore the front door if you want to raise the worth of your home since prospective buyers almost definitely won't. In actuality, a lot of folks decide immediately upon entering a home they are evaluating.

In addition, the satisfaction of potential purchasers can be greatly increased by a functioning doorbell. Installing an overhang is another option since it looks good and serves a purpose. People can be shielded from the sun or rain by a simple awning. Make sure that the door is repainted and re-vinyl-ed. If the front door doesn't already have one, adding a peephole can be a nice finishing touch.

## 5. Improve efficiency.

Insulation is crucial if you want a straightforward method to boost your home's value and efficiency. Start by inspecting your garage, heaters, doors, windows, and pipes. Add a suitable sealer, such as silicone caulk for window seams, if you notice any minor leaks. Your home's energy consumption can be decreased by insulating your water heater and pipes.

Also, consider adding solar panels to your home's energy resources for a greater impact on efficiency. Although they

have high installation and maintenance costs, they pay for themselves through lower electric bills.

## 6. Create more space.

The best approach to increase the value of your property is by adding an extra room. This might also be one of the more expensive solutions, depending on how you go about the process.

You can approach this in two ways: first, by creating visible space, and second, by creating physical space. If you just want to invest a little amount of time and money in the process, virtual staging utilizing still images of your house is a terrific approach to improve visual space.

For instance, without increasing the square footage, a room might appear larger by adding additional visual space. This is a terrific trick to use if you're selling your house to make it seem bigger to potential buyers. Increase the sources of natural light, add additional mirrors (such as one or two huge mirrors), and clear the area of any debris to create the illusion of a larger space. Simple furnishings and lighter drapery can also help you achieve this.

"These suggestions will assist you in achieving your objectives, regardless of your financial constraints or desire for the greatest gain in house value," Carl concludes.<sup>MS</sup>



# Best Online Shops for Everything

By JANICE SABITSANA

Shopping online is becoming increasingly popular in the Philippines, with more people taking advantage of the convenience and variety online stores offer. But where do you begin? With so many options available, it can be overwhelming to figure out which shop offers the best products, prices, and customer experience. To help make your search easier, we've rounded up some of the top online shops in the Philippines for everything you need. Let's take a look at what they have to offer!

## GENERAL MERCHANDISE

### Lazada

Lazada is one of the most popular online stores in the Philippines. With its wide selection of products, from fashion and home décor to electronics and appliances, you can find almost anything you need here. It also offers competitive prices and convenient payment options like cash-on-delivery, making it an excellent choice for budget shoppers. Plus, it provides free shipping for orders over a certain amount and offers regular discounts, so you can always get the best deals.

### Shopee

Shopee is another top shopping site in the Philippines that offers a wide range of products. It has an easy-to-use interface, making it accessible to users of all levels. You can find everything from clothes and accessories to furniture and home appliances here, with prices starting at just 50 Pesos. Shopee also provides free shipping vouchers, daily flash sales, and discounts to help you save even more.

### ShopSM

ShopSM is the online shopping platform of The SM Store, the largest department store chain in the Philippines. Timeless favorites from Men, Women, and Kids' fashion to beauty products and must-have essentials for your home can all be found in one place. ShopSM not only delivers your packages right to your front door, but they also offer a FREE "Click and Collect" service if you would rather pick up your items from one of their physical stores. Simply select your preferred branch at checkout, and they'll have your items ready. Either way you choose, you can pay through credit card or cash-on-delivery. If you're already an SM Advantage Card, SM Prestige, or BDO Rewards cardholder, you can earn points at ShopSM, just as you do in-store. At ShopSM, they've got it all for you—even online!

## FASHION

### Zalora

Zalora is the go-to destination for fashion-conscious shoppers in the Philippines. With its vast selection of clothing, footwear, and accessories for both men and women, it's perfect for anyone looking to update their wardrobe. Plus, with regular sales and discounts, you can always find great deals on the latest trends.

### Shein

Shein is a global leader in fashion and is quickly becoming one of the most popular online shopping sites in the Philippines. From tops and bottoms to dresses, shoes, and accessories, Shein has it all when it comes to fashion. It also offers excellent product discounts, so you don't have to break the bank to stay stylish.

### Seek the Uniq

Seek the Uniq is a homegrown Filipino brand specializing in high-quality, stylish clothing for all occasions. Whether you're looking for something casual and everyday or formal wear for special

events, Seek the Uniq has everything you need. Plus, with its unique designs and quality fabric, you can be sure to find pieces that will turn heads.

## BEAUTY

### Beauty MNL

Beauty MNL is your one-stop shop for all things beauty, from makeup and skincare to haircare and body care. It also carries a wide range of products from local and international brands. You can find everything you need for your beauty regimen in one place.

### Sephora PH

Sephora is a renowned global beauty retailer and has finally made its way to the Philippines. Here you can find an array of international brands such as Benefit, Fenty Beauty, Anastasia Beverly Hills, and more. The store also carries various products from local brands, making it the perfect place to pick up all your beauty essentials.

### Human Nature

Human Nature is a local beauty and wellness brand specializing in natural and organic products. You can find everything you need for your daily routine, from skincare to haircare. All their products are free from synthetic chemicals and fragrances, making them an ideal choice for those looking to switch to green beauty.

## GROCERIES

### Metro Mart

Metromart is the perfect app for those who want to shop quickly and efficiently. Using your location, Metromart provides a tailored list of stores nearby so you can receive your items as soon as possible! In case you're in a rush, it also has an express store. Metromart is the only app that has S&R, so you can get your hands on those exclusive products you love. When you spend a minimum amount, your delivery fees are waived. You can add items to your cart without worrying about top-up prices. They offer the same price regardless of this new type of convenience.

### Puregold Mobile

There's no denying that Puregold is one of the most popular grocery stores in the Philippines. But with that popularity comes some pretty long lines! To make life easier for their loyal customers, Puregold created a mobile app with SALLY, your shopping ally. You can ask SALLY questions or scan items for assistance while shopping. Plus, Puregold delivers as soon as possible, so you don't have to wait forever for your groceries. The more you use the app, the more it knows your preferences and suggests products you might enjoy. If you'd rather not have your groceries delivered, you can opt for pick up in-store at any of Puregold's branches.



Janice Sabitsana is a graduate of the Registered Financial Planner program and is currently completing her certification. For more personal finance tips, visit her blog at [www.thepinayinvestor.com](http://www.thepinayinvestor.com) and Pinay Investor YouTube Channel.



**Session Groceries**

Session Groceries is a new grocery service in the Philippines that promises farm-fresh produce delivered to your door. With many Filipinos working from home, there has been a growing demand for convenient, reliable delivery services. Session Groceries aims to fill this need by partnering with local farms and producers to provide fresh, seasonal produce to customers directly. The app is easy to use and offers a variety of payment options, making it a convenient option for busy families. The company's focus on quality and customer service makes it a promising choice for those looking for an alternative to traditional grocery shopping.

**GADGETS****Poundit**

Poundit is the perfect place for tech lovers to get their hands on the latest gadgets. Their vast selection of products offers the highest quality items at competitive prices. Whether you're looking for a phone, laptop, tablet, or gaming console, Poundit has everything you need. Plus, they have a wide range of accessories, like cases, covers and styluses, so you can truly customize your tech experience. They also offer deals and discounts regularly, making it easier to stay up-to-date with the latest trends in technology.

**Kim Store**

Kim Store is the perfect destination for gadget-savvy shoppers. They have a wide range of products, from smartphones and laptops to home appliances and gaming systems. It doesn't matter if you're looking for an upgrade or just something for fun. Kim Store has it all at unbeatable prices. Plus, their customer service is top-notch, so you can trust that your purchase will be delivered quickly and safely.

“Shopping online has never been easier, thanks to these *fantastic* sites! Whether you're looking for new clothes or gadgets at *low prices* or want better deals than what's *available* offline, there's a store here for everyone!”

**Henry's Camera**

Henry's Camera has been a staple of the local community for nearly four decades, providing quality service and products to photographers nearby. From digital cameras, film cameras, and lenses to accessories like tripods and flash units, Henry's Camera Shop has it all. With a wide selection of products from top brands like Canon and Nikon, you won't have to look elsewhere for your photography needs. In addition, Henry's Camera Shop offers classes and workshops to help you develop your skills and expand your knowledge of the industry. Whether you want to learn more about digital or traditional film photography, there is something available at Henry's Camera Shop for everyone.

**BABY ESSENTIALS****Babymama**

Babymama is a one-stop shop for all your baby's needs. From diapers, clothes, and toys to feeding supplies, Babymama has it all. The store also offers free delivery with no minimum purchase amount. With prices that are lower than most stores, you can be sure to save money here! Plus, they carry eco-friendly and sustainable products from trusted brands. Whether you're a first-time parent or an experienced one, Babymama's selection is sure to meet your needs.

**Mothercare**

Mothercare is the go-to store for all things baby related. Whether you're looking for car seats, nursery furniture, or even maternity wear, Mothercare has it all. The store also offers advice for parents and regularly holds seminars to educate them about caring for their children. If you have questions, the friendly staff is always on hand to help you. With its wide range of products, Mothercare is an ideal choice for busy moms looking for everything baby-related in one place.

**Kleenfant**

Kleenfant is an online store that specializes in eco-friendly baby products. They offer a range of non-toxic, organic, and sustainable items such as diapers, wipes, toys, and clothing. This store's commitment to high quality and safety standards sets it apart from other shops. All the items here are free of harsh chemicals, and the company is dedicated to providing quality products that are safe for children and the environment. Plus, they offer free shipping on orders over a certain amount, so you don't have to worry about additional costs.

Shopping online has never been easier, thanks to these fantastic sites! Whether you're looking for new clothes or gadgets at low prices or want better deals than what's available offline, there's a store here for everyone! So don't be afraid to explore your options and take advantage of all these sites offer. Happy shopping!<sup>IMS</sup>

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# BPI encourages Filipinos to save money with BPI Ipon Nation

The Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) continues to take steps towards financial inclusion with "Ipon Nation", the bank's newest multi-leg on-ground activation movement which aims to encourage Filipinos to save by bringing banking closer to them.

"Increasing our touchpoints is integral to realizing our goal to provide both unbanked and underserved banked Filipinos with better access to our deposit products and services that meet their needs. 'Ipon Nation' is created to enhance their financial literacy and show them that BPI is a reliable partner that will assist them in achieving financial goals," said Ma. Carmina Marquez, Head of Deposits, BPI.

The first featured product of BPI Ipon Nation is Todo Savings, a digital savings account powered by BPI's wholly owned subsidiary, BanKo. Todo Savings can be

opened by clients in as fast as five minutes through the BPI BanKo mobile app. This high-yield deposit product offers an interest rate of 4% per annum or over 60 times more than a regular savings account. It only requires one ID for account opening and has no maintaining balance requirement and dormancy fees. Clients are only required to have a minimum deposit of P1.

"Todo Savings eliminates the common barriers to saving money in a formal bank account with its convenient and affordable features. Being an entry point to formal banking, Todo Savings aims to help our clients develop the habit of saving and to empower them to reach their #IponGoals," said Rodolfo Mabiase Jr, Head of Financial Inclusion and Microfinance Solutions, BanKo.

Last October 22 and 23, BPI's Ipon Nation was in SM MOA Seaside, the program's pilot location. The second event happened in Market Market BGC last November 12 and 13. And because of the success of the second leg, the BPI Ipon Nation will be coming back to Market Market on December 10 and 11 for another run.<sup>MS</sup>



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