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TEXT SCAMS

GENERIC VS. BRAND-
NAME PRODUCTS

STOCK MARKET
SECTORS

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023
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“Be happy when you work, *thankful* when you earn, cautious when you *spend*, shrewd when you save, and *charitable* when you *give*.”
– MATSHONA DHLIWAYO

“It’s not about what we *earn*, it’s all about how we *spend* what we’ve *earned*!”
– STEPHEN MAGNUS

“*Spending* is not the problem. It’s a heart issue. If we truly focus on accomplishing *contentment*, peace, and joy in our Savior’s plan for us, our *spending* habits will fall in line. The things we currently desire will *change*.”
– MARCUS HALL, SPIRITUAL WEALTH: A 40-DAY JOURNEY TO DEVELOPING STEWARDSHIP MINDSET

“Wise *spending* is part of wise *investing*. And it’s never too late to *start*.”
– RHONDA KATZ

“Do not *save* what is left after *spending*, but spend what is left after *saving*.”
– WARREN BUFFET



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Conscious Consumption: How to Be a Responsible Consumer

In an era of mass production, instant gratification, and ever-expanding choices, it's easy to fall into the trap of mindless consumption. But as we become increasingly aware of the environmental and social impacts of our choices, a new wave of mindful consumers is rising. This wave embraces responsible consumption, a conscious approach to purchasing and using goods that prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet.

What does being a responsible consumer mean?

It's more than just buying local or organic. It's about questioning every purchase, evaluating its true value, and making choices that align with your values and create a positive impact. Here are some key principles:

Think before you buy: Is this purchase truly necessary? Will it bring lasting value to your life? Could you borrow, repair, or find a pre-loved alternative?

Choose quality over quantity: Invest in durable, well-made products that will last. This not only saves money in the long run but also reduces waste and supports ethical production practices.

Support sustainable brands: Research the values and practices of the companies you buy from. Do they prioritize fair labor, eco-friendly materials, and responsible sourcing?

Embrace minimalism: Declutter your life and resist the urge to accumulate excess possessions. Focus on experiences and meaningful connections over material things.

Reduce your footprint: Be mindful of your consumption in all aspects of life. Reduce energy use, conserve water, and minimize food waste.

Advocate for change: Spread awareness about responsible consumption in your community. Support initiatives that promote sustainability, ethical practices, and responsible living.

The benefits of responsible consumption:

The rewards of this shift go far beyond personal satisfaction. When we become responsible consumers, we:

Reduce our environmental impact: From resource depletion to pollution and waste, our choices as consumers directly influence the health of the planet. Responsible consumption lessens our footprint and paves the way for a more sustainable future.

Support ethical practices: By choosing brands that prioritize fair labor and responsible sourcing, we contribute to positive changes in the lives of workers and communities around the world.

Live more meaningfully: With less clutter and more intentionality, we free up space for what truly matters – experiences, relationships, and personal growth.

Inspire others: By modeling responsible consumption in our own lives, we can influence the choices of those around us and contribute to a broader cultural shift towards mindful living.

The journey towards responsible consumption is a continuous one, filled with learning, unlearning, and evolving along the way. It's not about perfection but about progress. Start small, celebrate your wins, and don't be afraid to adjust your approach as you learn more. Remember, every conscious choice, every small step towards responsible consumption, adds up to create a ripple effect that can reshape our world for the better.

So, let's break free from the cycle of mindless consumption and embrace a new way of living – one that values the well-being of people and the planet and ensures a brighter future for generations to come. Together, we can build a world where mindful consumption is not just a trend but a way of life. [MS](#)

Heinz Bulos

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How to Save Money on Transportation Costs

By CARLOS GONZALES

Transportation costs can take a significant toll on our budgets, especially in a country like the Philippines, where diverse modes of transportation are essential for daily life. Whether commuting to work, visiting family, or exploring the beautiful archipelago, transportation expenses can quickly add up. However, with careful planning and strategic choices, you can effectively save money on transportation costs.

Public Transportation: An Affordable Choice. Public transportation remains one of the most cost-effective ways to get around in the Philippines. Jeepneys, buses, and tricycles are common modes of public transport, providing an affordable alternative to private vehicles. Many cities have well-established routes, and the fare is generally lower than hiring a taxi or using a personal car. Explore the available options in your area and consider incorporating public transport into your daily commute.

Jeepneys: These iconic Filipino icons offer a vibrant and affordable way to travel. Learn the routes, flag down the right jeepney, and enjoy the lively atmosphere while saving big.

Buses: Air-conditioned buses provide a more comfortable commute, especially for longer distances. Look for discounted rates and explore different operators for the best deals.

Tricycles: These motorized pedicabs are perfect for short trips, especially in smaller towns and barangays. Negotiate fares politely and enjoy the fresh air while supporting local drivers.

Carpooling: Sharing Rides, Sharing Costs. Carpooling is an excellent way to cut down on transportation expenses while contributing to environmental sustainability. Many cities in

the Philippines have embraced ride-sharing apps that connect drivers and passengers heading in the same direction. By sharing rides, you not only reduce your individual expenses but also contribute to reducing traffic congestion and lowering carbon emissions.

Carpooling: Team up with colleagues, neighbors, or classmates and share the burden (and savings) of car expenses. Coordinate schedules and routes to make it work for everyone.

Ride-sharing: Apps like Grab and Angkas offer convenient and sometimes cost-effective options, especially for late-night trips or reaching specific destinations. Compare fares and consider pooling rides with others.

Biking: A Healthy and Economic Choice. In recent years, there has been a growing trend toward cycling as a mode of transportation in the Philippines. Biking is an environmentally friendly option and a fantastic way to stay fit. Investing in a good-quality bike may seem like an initial expense, but it pays off in the long run as it eliminates fuel costs and maintenance fees associated with motorized vehicles. Other two-wheel options: scooters and motorbikes, which have become increasingly popular.

Bicycles: Invest in a sturdy bike and conquer your daily commute with exercise and eco-friendly savings. Bonus points for exploring hidden local gems along the way!

Motorcycles: Scooters and motorbikes offer flexibility and convenience, especially in less accessible areas. Ensure proper safety gear and licensing, and compare fuel costs before your purchase.

Explore Alternatives: Trains and Ferries. Depending on your location, exploring alternative modes of transportation, such as trains and ferries, may offer significant savings. In major cities like Manila, the LRT (Light Rail Transit) and MRT (Metro Rail Transit) provide efficient and cost-effective ways to navigate through the urban sprawl. Similarly, ferries are often more economical than air travel for inter-island travel, providing stunning views of the archipelago along the way.

Trains: The Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Metro Rail Transit (MRT) systems offer efficient and cost-effective travel in Metro Manila. Plan your trips around rush hour to avoid crowds and maximize savings.

Passenger Cargo Ships: These ships offer the most budget-friendly option for inter-island travel, especially for longer distances. Be prepared for basic amenities and longer travel times, but the savings can be significant.

Roll-on/Roll-off (RoRo) Ferries: These ferries accommodate vehicles and passengers, offering a convenient and flexible option for island hopping with your motorbike or car. Compare prices between different operators and book in advance during peak season.

Flexible Commute Timing: Beat the Rush, Save on Fare. Traffic congestion is a common issue in many urban areas in the Philippines, leading to longer commute times and higher transportation costs. Consider adjusting your daily schedule to beat the rush hours, allowing you to reach your destination faster and potentially save on fare charges. Some transportation services may also offer discounted rates during non-peak hours, providing an additional incentive to travel during off-peak times.

Regular Vehicle Maintenance: Preventing Costly Repairs. For those who own personal vehicles, regular maintenance is crucial in preventing costly repairs and improving fuel efficiency. Simple tasks like regular oil changes, tire rotations, and proper inflation can significantly impact your vehicle's

performance, saving you money in the long run. Additionally, keeping your vehicle well-maintained ensures a smoother and more fuel-efficient ride, translating to lower fuel expenses.

Take Advantage of Loyalty Programs and Promotions. Many transportation service providers in the Philippines offer loyalty programs and promotions that can help you save money. Whether it's discounted fares, cashback rewards, or special promotions during certain periods, staying informed about these offerings can lead to significant savings. Check with your preferred transportation providers regularly to take advantage of any ongoing promotions or loyalty rewards.

Explore Multi-modal Transportation: Mix and Match. In some cases, combining different modes of transportation can be more cost-effective than relying solely on one. For example, using a combination of buses, trains, and walking to reach your destination may be more affordable than a direct taxi ride. Be creative and explore multi-modal transportation options that suit your specific needs and budget.

Work Remotely: Embrace the Future of Work. The recent rise of remote work has transformed how people approach their careers. If your job allows, consider working remotely to reduce the frequency of commuting. Not only does remote work save money on transportation costs, but it also provides the flexibility to choose your living location based on affordability and personal preferences.

Invest in a Fuel-Efficient Vehicle. If you must rely on a personal vehicle for your daily commute, consider investing in a fuel-efficient or hybrid vehicle. While the upfront cost may be higher, the long-term savings on fuel expenses can make it a financially sound decision. Additionally, many cities in the Philippines offer incentives for eco-friendly vehicles, providing further savings through reduced taxes or registration fees.

Navigating the intricate transportation system in the Philippines while saving money requires thoughtful planning and strategic choices. Whether you opt for public transportation, explore alternative modes of travel, or embrace the benefits of remote work, there are numerous ways to cut down on transportation costs. By incorporating these tips into your daily routine, you can enjoy the convenience of travel without compromising your budget, making every journey a more economical and enjoyable experience. [MS](#)



Generic **vs.** Brand-Name Products: Where to Save and Where to Splurge

By EDMUND LAO, RFP®

A lot of professionals or even students who always go to Starbucks to have their morning coffee do not think about other cheaper alternatives very often. Of course, there are times when a brand-name product is superior. But other times, a generic brand can be better than a branded one.

To help you decide whether to save or splurge, browse the list below before your next trip to the store to avoid buyer's remorse at the store checkout.

Medicines: Save. When it comes to medicines, many consumers feel that the more expensive branded ones are the safest. However, generics are just as good as branded ones. In 1988, Republic Act 6675 was passed into law. This is an act to promote, require, and ensure the production of an adequate supply, distribution, use, and acceptance of drugs and medicines identified by their generic names.

Generic medicines are also regulated by the BFAD, ensuring the safety for consumption. OTC medication is required to list the active ingredients right on the box. It must be noted that generic medicines also have the same active ingredient as brand-name medicines and work in the same way, but may look different and contain different non-active ingredients. Generic alternatives are often cheaper than brand-name medicines. Consumers save a lot with generic medicine.

Staples: Save. Staple food products in the supermarket, like flour, sugar, corn starch, pepper, and others, are regulated. The same manufacturers often produce the same product but under a generic brand name. The difference in quality is usually negligible, and most importantly, the price is lower.

Take bottled water as an example. A big supermarket owner has its own bottled water brand (the one with a yellow background), and after taking a look at the label, one can see that the manufacturer is one of the most famous brands in the market. The difference is a much lower price. Consumers can save a lot from this generic brand. The same goes for other items.

Juices: Splurge. Name-brand juices are less likely to contain large quantities of artificial ingredients and excess sugar. Many people enjoy pricier juice products and are willing to pay more than buying the cheaper ones because of their taste. Unfortunately, fruit juice is a more expensive grocery store item, but this is where you should spend more.

Splurging on name-brand juices is more likely to be better and healthier for a consumer owing to its more natural content as well as its pleasantness to our tastebuds. Just choose the one with less sugar content. For sodas, whatever the brand, it is better to avoid and go for fruit juice, which is a healthier alternative.

Diapers: Depends. It has always been a struggle for parents to find the best diapers for their little ones. And with all the different brands out there, it's challenging to know what brand of diapers can provide excellent comfort and protection for our kids.

We have seen the evolution of disposable baby diapers throughout the years. Before we had plastic back sheets, cotton, and tape, and now, we have pull-ups. Taped diapers can be ideal for newborns. It is much easier to use taped diapers for infants because they do not move so much, unlike when they start to crawl. When kids start to crawl, it is recommended to use pull-ups.

Generics or branded? It depends. Sometimes, the branded

ones (although a bit more expensive) last longer than the generics. As per our experience, generic diapers can be used during the daytime, and branded ones are better at night. It is difficult for working parents to be disturbed from their sleep only because the baby is wet due to the poor absorption of the generic diaper. Parents can combine the two to save on cost but need to consider other factors like the comfort of the baby.

Coffee: Depends. Shopping for coffee can be confusing or can be an intimidating experience. You're offered a large variety of generic and brand-name coffees packaged in containers. There is regular coffee, decaffeinated coffee, pre-ground coffee, and whole-bean coffee, to name a few. All of these types of coffees are available in generic and brand names.

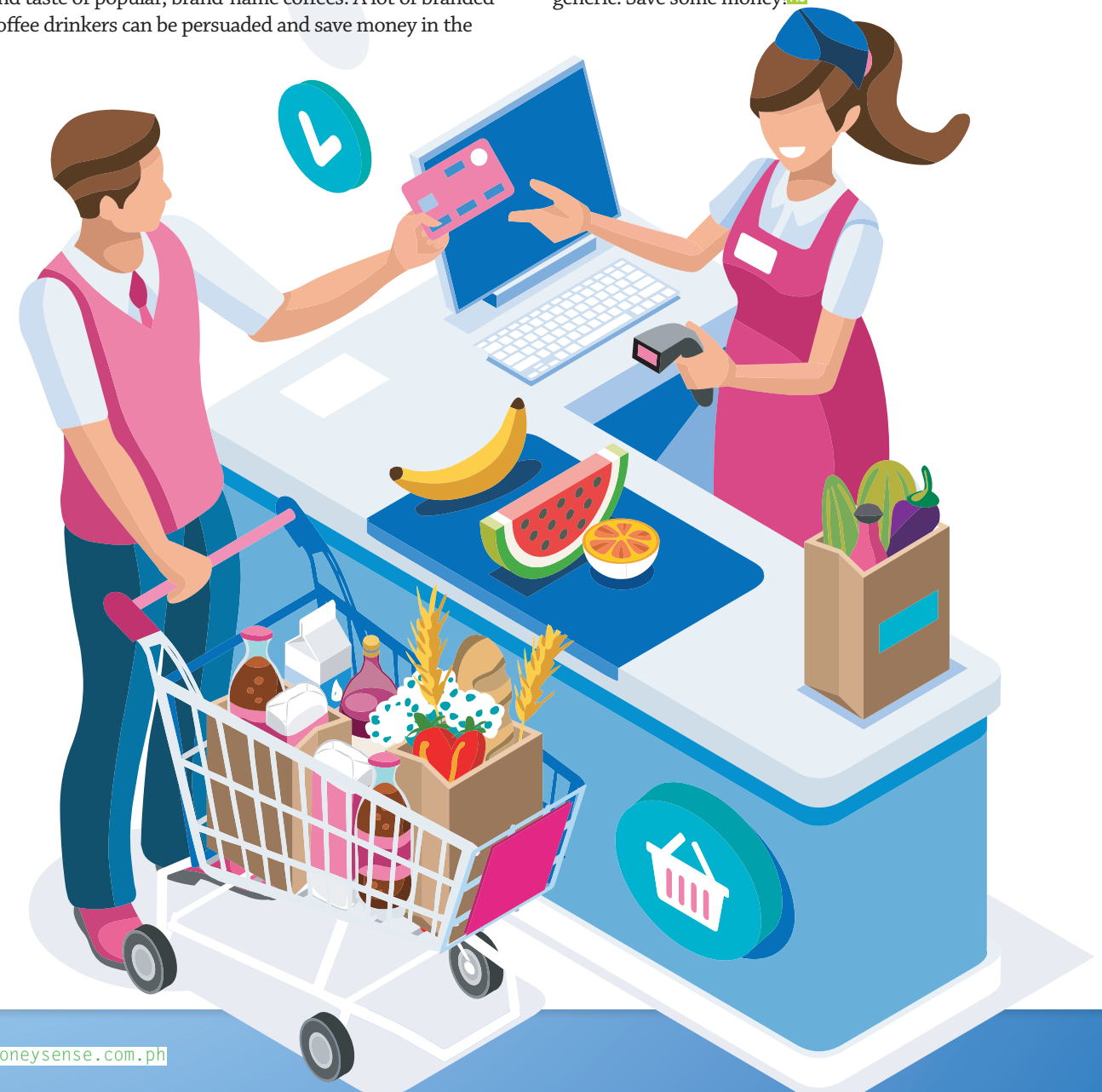
Nowadays, consumers have discovered that the quality and taste of some unbranded coffees may rival the quality and taste of popular, brand-name coffees. A lot of branded coffee drinkers can be persuaded and save money in the

bargain. You only have to undergo a trial-and-error process. You will never know until you take a chance and try others.

Branded coffees have been around for years, and consumers have grown up with them in their homes. Quite simply, if you want quality and convenience, the big brands are absolutely the way to go. The prices are competitive and well worth it. If you are willing to take a risk and try a different brand of coffee, you can either be pleasantly surprised or sadly disappointed.

When looking for the best coffee, try Arabica, perhaps the most popular type of coffee bean out there. Arabica coffee beans are considered the highest quality and often come with a matching price tag! These coffee products have a sweeter, less harsh taste than Robusta. Still, it depends on the taste preference of the coffee lover.

As long as a generic product offers the same quality, buy generic. Save some money! ^{MS}



Guide to Avoiding Online and Text Scams in the Philippines

By CARLOS GONZALES

Online and text scams have become pervasive in the Philippines, targeting a wide range of individuals from all walks of life. These scams manifest in various forms, from phishing emails and fake online shopping websites to text messages claiming lottery winnings or posing as financial institutions. Scammers employ increasingly sophisticated techniques, exploiting the trust and vulnerability of their victims.

As technology evolves, so do the tactics employed by scammers, making it crucial for you to stay vigilant and informed. Find out the modus operandi of these scammers, red flags to watch out for, and tips to safeguard against falling victim to these insidious schemes.

Financial Scams. Investment Schemes: Get-rich-quick schemes, pyramid schemes, and fraudulent investment platforms promise unrealistic returns, siphoning off victims' hard-earned money. Avoid unregulated platforms and exorbitant returns, and thoroughly research before investing.

Phishing Attempts: Emails and text messages mimic legitimate entities like banks or government agencies, tricking users into revealing personal information or clicking on malicious links that steal financial data. Never click on suspicious links, verify sender addresses, and avoid sharing sensitive information via email or text.

Online Shopping Frauds: Fake online stores advertise non-existent products or deliver subpar goods. Thoroughly research sellers, look for customer reviews, and use secure payment methods. Stick to reputable online marketplaces and avoid deals that seem too good to be true.

Personal Information Scams

Data Breaches: Personal information can be compromised through cyberattacks or leaked databases. Beware of suspicious activities on your accounts, change passwords regularly, and use strong passwords with two-factor authentication.

Social Media Stalking: Oversharing personal information on social media can attract scammers who impersonate friends or family to gain trust and exploit victims. Maintain privacy settings, limit publicly shared information, and be cautious of online acquaintances.



Protecting Yourself Against Scams
Stay informed: Keep yourself updated on the latest scams circulating in the Philippines. Awareness is the first line of defense against falling victim to deceptive tactics. Resources like the National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) offer guidance and updates.

Verify legitimacy: Before responding to any communication, verify the sender's or website's legitimacy. Cross-check information through official channels or contact the organization directly using trusted contact details.

Smishing: SMS text messages mimicking government agencies or legitimate businesses entice users to disclose personal information or pay "fines" for non-existent violations. Never share personal information via text, verify sender details, and report suspicious messages to authorities.

Red Flags to Identify Scams. Recognizing the red flags associated with online and text scams is crucial in protecting oneself from falling victim. Some common indicators include:

Unsolicited Communications. Be wary of unsolicited emails, messages, or calls, especially those claiming you have won a prize or need urgent assistance. Legitimate organizations typically do not contact individuals out of the blue for such matters.

Requests for Personal Information. Legitimate entities do not ask for sensitive information such as passwords, credit card details, or Social Security numbers through email or text messages. Be suspicious of any request for personal information, especially if it seems urgent or unexpected.

Too-Good-To-Be-True Offers. If an offer or deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers often use enticing offers to lure victims into providing money or personal information.

Poorly Designed Websites. Fake online shopping websites may have poorly designed interfaces, grammatical errors, or URLs that differ slightly from legitimate sites. Always double-check the authenticity of a website before making any online purchases.

Pressure Tactics. Scammers often use high-pressure tactics, creating a sense of urgency to prompt quick decision-making. Be cautious if you are pushed to make immediate payments or disclose sensitive information.

Secure software and connection: Ensure strong antivirus and anti-malware software is installed and updated regularly. Use encrypted connections on public Wi-Fi networks and avoid downloading unauthorized applications.

Use two-factor authentication: Enable two-factor authentication on your online accounts to add an extra layer of security. This helps protect your accounts even if your password is compromised.

Be skeptical of unsolicited offers: Exercise caution when receiving unsolicited offers or messages, especially those promising financial gains or prizes. If it sounds too good to be true, it likely is. Verify information through trusted sources, and avoid responding to unsolicited messages or calls. If unsure, it's better to err on the side of caution.

Educate and share: Share information about scams with friends and family to collectively create a more vigilant community. The more people are aware, the harder it becomes for scammers to find victims.

Report scams: If you encounter an online or text scam, it is crucial to report it to the appropriate authorities. You can report scams to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the Cybercrime Division of the Philippine National Police (PNP), or the Anti-Cybercrime Group (ACG).

As technology continues to advance, so does the sophistication of online and text scams in the Philippines. Awareness, skepticism, and vigilance are key components in safeguarding against these deceptive practices. By staying informed, recognizing red flags, and adopting proactive measures, individuals can navigate the digital landscape with confidence, ensuring that their online experiences are secure and free from the clutches of scammers.^{MS}





Awakening the Core Senses

By CULVER PADILLA as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

I initially wanted to become an actor, but when I joined a cheer-dancing competition back then, my eyes were also opened to the allure of fitness. While gracing the pages of magazines and strutting down runways, I found myself spending more time at the gym, not only to maintain the physical appearance required for my modeling and acting gigs but also because I genuinely enjoyed the process.

The rhythmic clang of weights, the adrenaline rush of a good workout, and the sense of accomplishment that followed each session became addictive. I realized that fitness was more than just a means to an end; it was a lifestyle.

When I had an opportunity to work in Dubai as a lifestyle specialist, I grabbed it. This meant that I was responsible for assessing and evaluating an individual so we could properly incorporate a workout regimen into his routine. I came back home to the Philippines armed with new knowledge and

resources, and this propelled me to share that gift with others. Thus, in 2021, while economies around the world were slowly opening, we launched Awaken Fitness Center.

At the Core of the Programs. Awaken Fitness Center in Metrowalk, Pasig City, is not your run-of-the-mill gym. It's a place where anyone, such as athletes, both aspiring and seasoned, finds solace in the pursuit of excellence. Unlike many fitness centers that primarily focus on functional training, Awaken recognizes the diverse needs of athletes and fitness enthusiasts. Our facility offers a comprehensive array of workouts and training modalities that cater to various athletic goals.

Functional training remains at the core of our programs, emphasizing mobility, balance, and strength. But what truly sets us apart is our dedication to awakening muscles that often remain dormant in traditional workouts. We believe the key to athletic excellence lies in discovering and harnessing untapped potential.

Our trainers specialize in designing routines that challenge the body in unique ways, helping athletes reach new heights in their performance. From obstacle course training that enhances agility and endurance to specialized yoga classes that improve flexibility and mental focus, Awaken provides a holistic approach to fitness. Our state-of-the-art equipment and facilities cater to a

wide range of sports, such as strength and conditioning, making us the preferred destination for athletes seeking to push their limits.

The birth of Awaken Fitness Center was not without its challenges, of course, and it was a risk that required courage, determination, and adaptability. The most significant hurdle we faced was, undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opening a fitness center amidst a global health crisis might seem counterintuitive, but it was a risk we believed was worth taking. The economic impact of the pandemic added another layer of complexity to our journey. The uncertainty of the times made securing investments and funding a challenging task. However, our unwavering belief in the vision of Awaken and the transformative power of fitness fueled our determination. We navigated through financial constraints with careful planning, optimizing our resources to create a fitness center that was accessible and appealing to athletes of all levels.

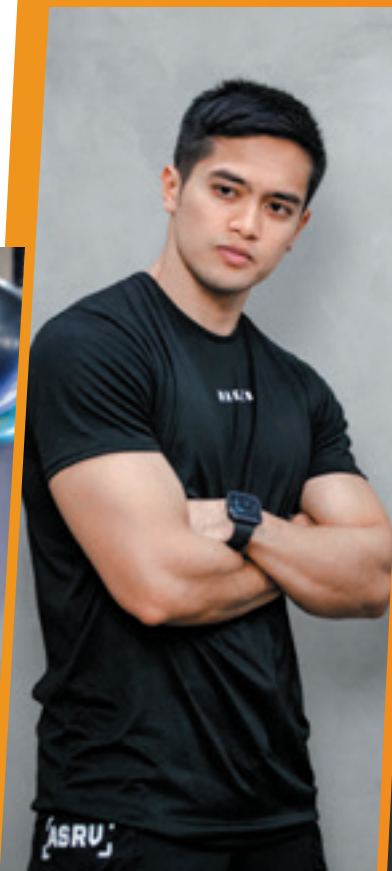
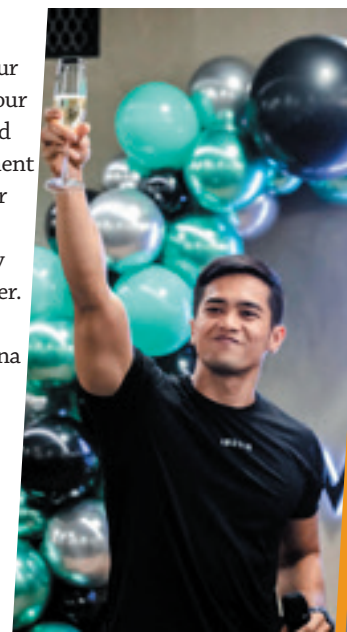
Another was perhaps because we needed to always be relevant and up to date. To do this, I join webinars and trainings from time to time. I also go out of the country at times to check the latest fitness trends, workouts, and regimens.

Expanding Fitness and Knowledge. At Awaken Fitness Center, our vision for the future is incredibly exciting. We're committed to enhancing the fitness experience for our members, and that includes plans for expansion in key areas such as Quezon City, Alabang, and either BGC or Makati. Our goal is to create a larger and more diverse fitness space that accommodates a wider range of workout preferences and goals. Keep in mind that our goal is not to widen but to deepen.

Furthermore, we understand the importance of staying up to date with the latest fitness equipment and technology. We want to upgrade and add more tools. In line with this, we're researching state-of-the-art gym equipment that will enhance the effectiveness of our members' workouts and make their fitness journey even more enjoyable.

By investing in new equipment and expanding our facilities, we aim to provide our members with a dynamic and motivating fitness environment that helps them achieve their fitness goals while fostering a strong sense of community within Awaken Fitness Center.

We may also put up a sauna in the future – everything about wellness will be there and there for the taking. **MS**



Jumpstart Fitness

Awaken CEO and Head Coach **Culver Padilla** shares tips on what you can do to jumpstart your fitness journey – and how to start your own fitness gym.

Be aware of your motivation. You should be aware of why you want to do this. You should know your purpose and your intention. Ask yourself a series of questions, activate your senses, and stay in the present mode. You can also do this by observing other people.

Start small. Instead of joining your friends on a 5K run, you can start walking or running around your neighborhood first. Slowly ease in. Do everything gradually – your body will thank you for it. The same way with putting up a fitness business – start with a small space, and from there, branch out when necessary and when needed.

Be consistent. When you set an exercise routine, you need to be consistent. This will build trust in yourself and in others.

Chewing My Way To The Right Path

By KYLA PECOLERA as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

After finishing a culinary internship at Gaylord Texan Resort in Texas, USA, I started an online business with my college friend, Peninna. We created a sleepwear brand called Rivah. It was a brand that combined both comfort and style. We opted to create something that was breathable with skin-friendly fabrics. But that business didn't take off as we had expected, and upon reflection, I believe we failed because we lacked the power of effective marketing and brand visibility.

My second venture was the most challenging one. It was when I opened a small fast-food franchise of Monster Wings. Launching a food franchise venture was very fulfilling and exciting as it catered to the culinary and entrepreneurship world I truly love.

I had to experience managing the overall operations—daily and monthly financial reports, budgeting, and even conducting training for our newly hired kitchen staff. However, after a month of smooth operations, the pandemic happened. With the constant adjustments in government guidelines and quarantine classifications, we were forced to rely solely on takeout and delivery. Staff layoffs and adjusted work hours also became necessary so that I could keep us afloat. It was a struggle to find the creativity to survive during the pandemic. Shortly after, I decided to close it down.

Amidst the pandemic, I created Chew Chocolate. It was on days when we spent most of the time in the kitchen experimenting with this and that for our family to try. I always say that Chew was a blessing in disguise during this pandemic. It was originally created for our family and close friends to try, only to realize it was meant for so much more.



Adjusting and Improving. My first few months in the business were all about adjustments and improvements. In our early attempts, we had to repeatedly modify the recipe's proportion. I opted for truffles to have a firm consistency where you can enjoy the melt-in-the-mouth feeling without being mindful of proper storage temperature. Compared to other truffles, ours can be kept at room temperature without melting for hours, preserving its premium quality over time.

Since starting Chew as a fun attempt, one of the challenges was that we weren't prepared as much with the branding and its overall appearance. I must say that our production process during the first year really lacked efficiency. We only had a cardboard outline as my guide in making cuts that were more precise, which was also done manually by hand. We settled with a pre-formed box with a logo sticker as our packaging.

At first, we struggled to keep up with the fast-paced trends. And by trying to keep up, we had to step up. I had to redo our branding and finally got our packaging customized.

I chose a white pull-out box for our Nama chocolate, something clean and minimalist. From rebranding, I also needed extra efforts to cater to our market. I reached out to influencers, artists, and even media platforms so we could send PR packages for online promotions and features. From cutting the chocolates manually by hand to finally getting a chocolate cutter and designing our own website, creating my own collaterals, doing product shoots with my brother in our makeshift studio, and doing everything from scratch, we did it all. It humbles me to see our products featured on different media platforms like Rappler, ABS-CBN, Preview, and more.

Today, we try our best to sustain good brand visibility by creating new flavors and new best-sellers. One of my most humbling experiences with Chew was when we collaborated with Daiso Philippines. For about a year, our products were available at Daiso Robinsons Magnolia. It felt so surreal. Who

knew it could happen? To see how much it grew over time, people started to recognize our brand.

Never Alone. With everything we're blessed with today, my biggest takeaway is that you are never alone in your journey. I couldn't have done it if it weren't for the people who helped me create the brand – my family and my friends. There is a sense of fulfillment every time I witness my own learnings and growth. It is humbly satisfying to be able to see myself learn new skills and overcome challenges that I never knew I could've handled. The best feeling I get for being an entrepreneur is the security and contentment in knowing that my passion is my purpose and that I am doing work that truly matters to me.

There is so much to look forward to. We can't wait to launch our Chew Chocolate Dessert Bar, which could come as a chocolate bar or a giveaway corner. We also aim to expand our market outside Metro Manila, for our chocolates to be available nationwide. Since our product is a bit sensitive to temperature, we're still in search for the right courier that could preserve the quality of our product on transit.^{MS}



Toughing It Out

MY MONEY LESSONS

Founder **Kyla Rivah Pecolera** never gave up on her dreams of making it big – even during tough times. She shares her secrets on putting up a chocolate business.

Be teachable. Being teachable in the business industry means continuously growing, adapting, and innovating. Amidst the constant change in today's trends and the evolving world of business, staying open to new ideas is important to navigate your next strategy to stay relevant in today's market. Keep yourself updated!

Keep your passion and dedication with you. As an aspiring entrepreneur who has faced setbacks with two failed business ventures, Kyla has reminded herself that every successful one has obstacles along their journey. And these setbacks are not a reflection of your capabilities but rather opportunities for my growth and learning. What's most important is that passion and dedication are your driving forces. With both present, you will be able to adapt and innovate.

Surround yourself with a strong and supportive network. It is important to surround yourself with a strong support network of mentors, fellow entrepreneurs, and friends and family who can boost your confidence and provide guidance and encouragement. They, too, will serve not just as mentors but also as inspirations.



Revolutionizing Delivery Management

By NICO LUCIANO as told to EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

I never saw myself as an entrepreneur at a young age. But I had my early training with our small family businesses, which all failed. Often my grandma would always involve me in all her ventures. I used to do it to be obedient and help her out, but since I got some monetary rewards from her, I eventually tried it as a side hustle during the summer break from school.

Eventually, I wanted to pursue a career in the food industry, but nobody wanted to hire me, so I tried working for multinational companies and dreamt of climbing the corporate ladder. I achieved it at such an early age as I became the youngest director in multiple roles for a startup based in New York with operations in the Philippines, Australia, and the European Union. At the same time, I was also doing weekend

projects and venturing into the e-commerce space since I realized I didn't have any urge to stay as a corporate slave for the long haul.

However, when my father passed away, I was left with little motivation to work – which caused my superiors to let go of me. After that, I started looking for jobs in the local market and local startups and landed some freelance gigs for different business owners. This was the time when I made a risky move to start my own business venture. It was also a blessing that while working for other people, I met some amazing people who eventually became my business partners. So I quit my job to focus on RideRadar.

Launching and Growing RideRadar. RideRadar is an aggregator of multiple delivery and logistics providers in the Philippines and Southeast Asia to help businesses and people have a singular platform to find, compare, and book the best or cheapest delivery options across different providers seamlessly according to their exact delivery needs.

Based on its name, RideRadar functions as a “radar” for all types of rides best available in your area. We conceptualized this way back in November 2019, as I had a few stints with Uber. We wanted to solve the nightmare of commuting in Metro Manila, so the idea of aggregating different rides and ride-sharing providers into one app came to fruition. But when we were supposed to release our beta version, lockdown happened in March 2020, and due to the pandemic, it made us pivot our model to become an aggregator of logistics instead.

Despite the unfortunate event of the pandemic and the uncertainties it brought, we still saw some amazing shifts that made us really invest all our resources to make it happen. When we realized that RideRadar could get even bigger than we thought, we remained committed to bringing it to life and continuing to help it grow.

Conceptualizing and launching our business venture came easily. However, when we pivoted to being in the logistics category, almost nobody wanted to partner with us and be one of our delivery partners. It was also difficult to figure out if their API could work with the platform we have built. Fortunately, we were able to find ways how to make things work.

Being a nobody, I can only rely on my hustling skills and ability to build a strong relationship with potential partners. We started with small local players and worked with them closely to figure things out, and eventually, we just continued providing value to their services while also solving issues for our initial and small clients.

RideRadar is still new in its operations. Sometimes, we didn't have any transactions for days or weeks, and our early tech wasn't working well. But we continued to keep on improving and listening to our clients. We eventually launched



Starting a Business

MY MONEY LESSONS

RideRadar CEO **Nico Luciano** gives tips for those who want to start their own business in this industry.

Be prepared. Be prepared to say, “I’ll figure it out,” and don’t be ashamed of it! It’s quite impossible to know everything upfront and always have a readily available answer. At some point, you really must figure things out and find the most logical resolution.

Listen. Learn when to shut up and just listen! There will be smarter and better people than you, and that’s okay. If you shut up and listen to them, you can learn valuable insights and information that can only be attained through their experiences.

Take a break and pray. Never forget to take a Sabbath rest and pray to God for guidance. Shut off from business activities during this day so you can recover, get some rest, and recharge.

our business dashboard in January this year, and our transactions never reached zero. We were already growing at about 20-30% in our weekly transactions.

A Bright Future Ahead. Because of our commitment to our clients and customers, we were hailed as the Most Innovative Young Startup of the Year in 2022. This award came as a surprise. We were very busy working on our technology and the business when we received the news that we were nominated for the award. I didn’t expect much from this since we had other things to focus on, and I also thought it might be hard to be selected since there were a lot of amazing startups across the region. But what I was proud of was that the judges were able to see the value we bring to the community and the innovation we are bringing to the table.

RideRadar was also accepted into a global accelerator program in Israel called MassChallenge Israel, the only Filipino and non-Israeli startup that also won in the startup competition. This became a catalyst for our investment and other growth.

With so many achievements and our purpose intact, the future looks exciting! We have some other features and categories that we wanted to activate based on our product roadmap, which we believe can bring more business opportunities and growth to RideRadar. We are hopeful and positive that we will be able to bring RideRadar to other countries, too. My personal milestone is to see to it that RideRadar eventually expands and grows in Southeast Asia as well as in the rest of the world. **MS**

Trading Places

The many roles of stock trader, IT consultant, and book author Charmel Delos Santos

By EXCEL V. DYQUIANGCO

It's rare to be successful in multiple domains, but Charmel Delos Santos makes it seem easy. A highly experienced IT consultant in the corporate sector for many years, she became a full-time investor in the stock market. Now, she balances both endeavors. On top of that, the former beauty queen is also a book author, public speaker, and, most importantly, mom of three teens.

The transition from coding to charting may seem like a leap, but it was a natural evolution for Charmel. She recognized the need to diversify her skills in a world where technology evolves at breakneck speed. What started as a curiosity about financial markets gradually transformed into a passion for deciphering the language of stocks.

"When you approach an average individual, someone who isn't immersed in specialized knowledge, they can grasp certain business concepts simply because they engage in commerce as consumers," she says. "Every purchase represents participation in the commercial landscape, whether as a buyer or a customer. Expanding on this notion, my





career in information technology took flight, drawing from my background in business analysis. Over the course of my career, I've worked across diverse industries such as telecommunications, government, education, construction, finance, and healthcare. This discipline has allowed me to contribute meaningfully to various sectors."

She continues, "My journey into IT began at a young age, coinciding with my involvement in the family's export business. This early exposure provided insights into foreign exchange (forex) markets. I initially ventured into trading within the forex domain while working at a forex trading firm. Given the fast-paced nature of forex, I later shifted my focus to stocks. Stocks presented a more tangible application of my understanding of business dynamics. Unlike the swift movements of foreign exchange, the stock market offered a space to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics of businesses, further enhancing my trading acumen."

Charmel, thus, embraced the challenge of financial markets with the same logical mindset she applied to debugging code. She delved into the intricacies of trading, learning not just about financial ratios and market indicators but also the subtle art of market psychology. The analytical skills honed in IT seamlessly translated into decoding market patterns and anticipating price movements.

An IT Specialist Turned Stock Trader

Starting her journey in information technology, Charmel embarked on an intriguing path intertwined with her family's export business during her formative years. "In those early days, I found myself immersed in the intricacies of handicrafts, a venture spearheaded by my mother," she says. "Engaged in exporting our products to various countries, my youthful curiosity led me to delve into the world of international trade dynamics, exploring the nuances of what we had to offer and understanding the complexities of global trading."

Fueling her passion for social sciences, this experience served as a catalyst, broadening her perspective on the import/export business and international trading dynamics. Transitioning into IT, she assumed the role of a business analyst. Driven by her entrepreneurial spirit, she integrated this mindset into her professional endeavors and secured a position in the nascent stages of the computer age.

"In those early years, where the computer landscape was still in its infancy, I not only delved into business analysis

but also found myself involved in programming for sales," she says. "This diverse experience allowed me to build a robust foundation, merging technical proficiency with a keen understanding of business processes and data intricacies. It became the cornerstone of my career, shaping my approach to technology application in the business realm."

She adds, "Continuously keeping a watchful eye on market trends, I found a natural extension of my interests in the financial domain. Despite the advice that one doesn't necessarily need an extensive understanding of these intricacies, I discovered a genuine fascination for the subject. I often share with others that it wasn't required knowledge but rather a personal interest that led me to explore the complex and ever-evolving intersection of IT and stock trading."

When those transformative years brought her a whole new perspective on stock trading, she embraced this industry tightly. She admits she has learned so much in many ways, especially regarding emotions.

"Effectively managing your emotions in business, particularly in the context of trades, plays a pivotal role in determining your financial success," Charmel explains. "While it is commonly emphasized to approach trading devoid of emotions, we should recognize that emotions are inherent to human nature. Rather than eliminating emotions from the trading equation, the key lies in learning to navigate and manage them effectively. Understanding the significance of emotions and strategically incorporating them to support your trading endeavors is crucial. It's about acknowledging their presence, discerning when emotions are beneficial, and actively managing them to enhance, rather than hinder, your overall trading experience."

She acknowledges that engaging in high-stakes leverage involves significant risks, and adopting a more conservative, lower-risk approach tends to yield greater financial returns over the long term. "However," Charmel points out, "executing this strategy is no simple feat; it demands a considerable amount of skill, knowledge, and adept decision-making in terms of risk management. Overcoming these challenges has been a journey for me, as I've grown more at ease with the risks I undertake. Moreover, my comfort extends beyond mere financial performance — as an individual navigating this business landscape, I now feel a heightened sense of confidence and assurance in my approach."

Losses, AI, and Trading Strategies

Aside from effectively managing emotions, Charmel has learned to endure losses, an inherent aspect of the trading landscape, a reality that can prove challenging, especially as the stakes increase.

She clarifies, “However, I believe that comprehending the nature of the business is pivotal in making informed decisions about when to accept a loss. This involves a nuanced understanding of risk levels and a keen grasp of the price dynamics of the traded instruments. Dealing with the emotional and psychological aspects of losses has been crucial to my learning journey, significantly enhancing my comprehension of the business.”

“One enduring piece of trading wisdom that has resonated with me is the admonition to cut your losses short and let your profits run,” she notes. While grappling with losses can be particularly daunting for newcomers, adopting a simplistic approach to accepting all losses may not be prudent. Striking a balance between safeguarding oneself and avoiding unwarranted risk is crucial. Over time, I’ve developed a mindset and a systematic approach to navigating losses. This involves managing losses effectively and strategically allocating resources to absorb them. This, in turn, facilitates reaching the pinnacle of trading success, what experts commonly refer to as achieving multiple peaks in the long run.”

As for risk management, it operates within the framework of what is commonly referred to as a risk budget, a yearly interval that delineates strategic exits based on specific play and opposition siding components, she says.

“The effectiveness of this risk management approach hinges on a thorough understanding of your position sizing concerning your capital and a keen awareness of prevailing market conditions,” she explains. “Recognizing the dynamic nature of the market is paramount; thus, your risk management strategy must also be adaptable.”

Charmel adds, “The decision to assume risk becomes a nuanced one. It’s acceptable to abstain from taking risks during such periods, especially if the associated risk exceeds your tolerance. Beginners may find it challenging to navigate these waters without the experiential knowledge of market dynamics. Effective risk management involves self-awareness of your risk tolerance, current capacity to absorb risk, and a

clear understanding of the prevailing market conditions.”

“When it comes to the static side of capital, allocating risks might seem straightforward initially, with a set percentage allocated to business operations. However, it’s crucial to recognize that a rigid risk allocation formula may not always be applicable due to the ever-changing nature of the market. Establishing baseline risk parameters and continually assessing their alignment with the market conditions is imperative before deciding to assume or mitigate risks. Failing to do so may result in repeated setbacks, emphasizing the importance of aligning risk management with the dynamic landscape of the market.”

And now, with the rampant use of artificial intelligence, Charmel believes how beneficial this can be. “Currently, we benefit from AI tools that efficiently handle extensive data crunching and risk-reward calculations, demonstrating their prowess in these areas,” she says. “In my role within the IT and technology sphere, the integration of AI is not a novel concept. AI effectively utilizes extensive datasets from the past, analyzing them to generate algorithms and implement new machine-learning techniques. This capability proves invaluable when navigating market fluctuations; AI can swiftly interpret charts during market downturns, offering insights and supporting decision-making processes.”

Charmel notes that the beauty of AI lies in its proficiency in number crunching and data analysis, handling the intricate details of trading: “While it’s important to note that AI isn’t a guaranteed overnight path to wealth, it is a powerful tool. The decision-making authority remains with the trader, but AI significantly aids by presenting and simplifying vast amounts of data accumulated over the years, encompassing diverse industries and various data points.”

However, she is quick to point out that despite the remarkable capabilities of AI, the realm of decision-making in trading remains a distinct human skill that has gained increased recognition.

Charmel explains, “This aspect was not as prominently emphasized before. Amidst the number of trading seminars and short courses available, there is a prevailing narrative that trading is an easy endeavor leading to quick financial gains. The reality, however, is far more complex, requiring a nuanced understanding and a skill set that transcends the simplistic portrayal often presented in these offerings.”





From Blogger to Book Author

In addition to being an IT specialist and a stock trader, she has a blog to inspire friends, especially moms, to discover the potential within the stock market – a space often dominated by IT professionals, programmers, and project managers. Witnessing many tech-savvy individuals delving into stocks, she aimed to translate this financial avenue into a language easily digestible for women.

Teaching others about the intricacies of trading served to empower fellow women and provided a means for her to refine her skills. “I firmly believe that the more you teach, the more you learn, and sharing knowledge is a pathway to its expansion,” she says.

Through the blog, shared on her Facebook profile, Charmel constantly engaged with her audience by discussing charts, sharing insights on risk-reward dynamics, and receiving valuable feedback. As interest grew, she transitioned to writing a book, aiming to create a series of relatable analogies within a woman’s world. She explored how women’s natural roles as mothers, consumers, and trend followers could seamlessly integrate into the trading landscape. This led her to pen the book “High Heeled Traders.”

The book delves into various archetypes, from bargain hunters to trend-savvy fashionistas and knowledgeable contrarians, drawing parallels between women’s innate skills and their roles in the market. Recognizing women’s societal roles as buyers and shoppers, she approached trading as a skill that aligns with their natural inclinations.

“The positive feedback from individuals who found joy in learning about trading through this approach was immensely fulfilling,” Charmel notes. “The process of blogging, sharing insights, and witnessing others derive enjoyment and knowledge from the experience underscored the inherent value of bringing women’s unique perspectives and skills into the dynamic world of trading.”

One of the key insights from the book that resonates with her is that many individuals

grasp the concept of investing when viewed from the purchasing perspective. Another crucial dimension is comprehending market conditions and discerning the prevailing atmosphere.

Charmel explains, “People increasingly recognize the significance of distinguishing between a bullish, bearish, or sideways market. The positive feedback I received stems from my ability to translate this understanding into practical advice, urging individuals to adapt to the market conditions they encounter.”

An analogy she often employs to illustrate this point is likening market conditions to weather patterns. “Just as you decide on appropriate footwear for various weather scenarios—choosing sandals in the heat or boots during rainy days—similar considerations come into play in trading. Your market conditions serve as the weather, prompting decisions on the tools, instruments, or sectors to engage with. The essence lies in understanding the relationships between these factors, a key theme explored in my book.” She explains that concrete examples, such as correlating weather conditions with suitable footwear, illustrate these intricate relationships and make the concept more tangible for readers.

While “The High-Heeled Traders” primarily delves into conceptual aspects, her second book, which is soon to come out in the third quarter of this year, focuses on the practical execution of trading strategies aligned with one’s circumstances and makeup. This sequel aims to guide individuals in making decisions that resonate with their unique strengths and inclinations, ensuring alignment with sound business practices.

Charmel says, “Addressing the critical element of personal makeup is paramount, as success in trading is contingent on a clear understanding of oneself. Some individuals inadvertently adopt a gambling mindset or seek easy financial gains, leading to conflicting emotions during trading. The second book aims to rectify such misconceptions, fostering a mindset conducive to sustainable success.”

MONEY SUMMIT & WEALTH EXPO THE ROAD TO WEALTH

What is investing?

- "Experiential" definition of making money from your make up the quality of your

- Analytical



She explains that by strategically placing the conceptual framework in “High Heeled Traders” and subsequently building upon it in the second book, readers can seamlessly transition from understanding the theoretical underpinnings to executing these concepts in real-world scenarios. The excitement surrounding the upcoming release is palpable to provide a comprehensive guide for individuals navigating the execution phase of trading.

Charmel adds, “No title yet, but stay tuned for more updates!”

Investing in New Beginnings

Aside from her journey from IT professional to a stock investor, Charmel also underwent a significant life change when she moved to Australia years ago and, most recently, to Baguio. Her decision to relocate Down Under stemmed from a desire for a change in environment, with a primary focus on personal growth. She believes that Australia, renowned for its family-oriented culture and commitment to work-life balance, provided an ideal backdrop for such aspirations.



In contrast to the Philippines, where the frenetic pace often leaves little time for family, Australia’s emphasis on balancing professional and personal life allowed her to explore interests, particularly in trading.

She notes, “The Philippines, with its notorious traffic and demanding schedules, often left individuals exhausted and devoid of quality time with loved ones. In Australia, however, the conducive work environment enabled me to allocate time for family and pursuits that sparked an interest in trading.”

“Living in Australia also introduced me to a culture of financial prudence and investment orientation. Despite being high earners subjected to high taxes, many professionals optimized their finances through exposure to tax-friendly investments and effective financial strategies. Engaging with colleagues involved in the stock market facilitated rich exchanges of ideas. While not every insight led to immediate success, it did contribute to shaping my understanding of investments.”

She adds, “This experience has made me

more attuned to risks and conscientious regarding capital management. The shift in the environment fostered personal growth and instilled an investment-oriented mindset that has proven invaluable in navigating the financial landscape.”

As for her recent transfer to Baguio, she shares that she studied in the City of Pines during her first year of college, drawn to its conducive environment for health reasons. “The city offered a less stressful atmosphere, with cooler temperatures and minimal traffic, providing an ideal setting for academic pursuits. My decision to prioritize a healthier and more relaxed environment has been a defining aspect of my educational journey,” she says.

She adds, “Now, as a parent, I aim to provide my children with an upbringing that fosters more social interaction. In Australia, living in an apartment can sometimes lead to a sense of isolation. Recognizing the importance of social engagement in a child’s development, I am committed to creating an environment that encourages interaction and community for my family.”

Mom and Money Management

Charmel's priorities revolve around what brings joy and energy into her life, primarily focusing on spending quality time with her children and managing her business. She seamlessly integrates her career and business knowledge as an IT professional, aligning her work with her family's well-being. The key to her approach is a clear understanding of priorities, making decisions based on what matters most, and cherishing family time, ensuring the growth and happiness of each family member.

With three children – Alisha, 19; Adam, 17; and Aiden, 14 – her philosophy on managing finances centers on spending for value rather than emphasizing savings. “I emphasize the importance of understanding the value of what we spend on and, in turn, creating substantial value,” she says. “While I maintain a loose budget, I am meticulous about fixed costs and judge all other expenses based on the value they bring to our lives.”

Regarding budget management, she prioritizes spending on what holds significant value. “While I am not frugal, I am cautious about fixed costs, knowing their impact on our financial stability,” she explains. “I invest in my time, seeking assistance for various tasks, and opt for practical choices, like driving a car I’ve owned for ten years, prioritizing functionality over a new vehicle. I am not keen on spending on depreciating assets like a new car. Instead, I find excitement in investing in undervalued assets, such as a piece of land, or allocating resources to experiences and items that bring happiness and energy into my life. My financial decisions are rooted in a holistic evaluation of the value they contribute, reflecting a mindful and purposeful approach rather than mere frugality.”

As for teaching her children the value of money, she instills in them the importance of evaluating value. Her son, for instance, displays a commendable level of financial intelligence, diligently monitoring budgets and understanding the pivotal concept of judging value—whether a

deal is worthwhile or not. “While I provide them with financial freedom within allocated budgets for essentials like food and transportation, I encourage efficient spending,” she says. “I emphasize the significance of nutritious and healthy food, not merely focusing on the lowest cost but on value. For instance, I illustrate that boiled bananas offer a cost-effective and more nutritious option than peach mango pie with added sugar and additives.”

Acknowledging individual preferences, her youngest is inclined towards spending, allocating a significant amount for makeup. “While I prefer sale items, I permit them to experiment and make mistakes in their spending decisions, understanding that such experiences contribute to their learning and independence,” she says. “When my daughter insists on purchasing an item that I find overpriced, I encourage her to contribute to the expense, emphasizing my support for her artistic expression within budget constraints. They must grasp the rationale behind their spending choices.”

In terms of investing, she educates them on purchases, providing insights into the decision-making process, such as conducting a comparative market analysis for land acquisitions. “I elaborate on the value criteria, such as the current market rate of 15k per square meter in a specific area. As we explore less popular yet appealing locations with established infrastructure, I underline the importance of judging a deal based on its inherent value. Through these discussions, I aim to cultivate a sense of financial prudence and strategic thinking in my children,” she says.

Charmel has built a career and navigated her family life by finding value and creating value. Whether buying stocks or relocating her family, her systematic approach to decision-making has helped her succeed in whatever role she plays. And that makes her the different allocations in her life portfolio – mom, investor, IT professional, speaker, and author – a well-balanced one. [MS](#)





Strategies for Wealth-Building and Financial Security

Charmel says that it is essential to understand your assets and how to enhance their value. “When guiding my children, I stress the importance of assessing whether to sell, improve, or invest in assets,” she says. “For instance, we own land in Pangasinan, contemplating whether to build in the short term or await potential long-term projects, such as an airport opening. I impart the wisdom of creating long-term value in assets, steering clear of those that don’t appreciate over time. I emphasize the primary asset as oneself, urging them to develop their natural skills and knowledge.”

She advocates accumulating skills as assets, highlighting the enduring value of properties like land and emphasizing the significance of choosing growth-oriented stocks. She cites examples such as the renowned “Magnificent 7” in the stock market, including Apple, Tesla, and Microsoft. Growth, marked by innovation and value creation, is a paramount criterion in her investment philosophy. She says, “I draw attention to the transformative impact of companies, such as those in the beauty industry, emphasizing the correlation between feeling good about oneself and enhanced energy and productivity.”

In discussing investments, she introduces the concept of financial soundness and management quality, acknowledging the technical nature of such details. “I underscore the importance of assessing how companies approach growth and scrutinizing the competence of their management. As we delve into investments, I draw parallels between past success stories like Microsoft’s innovation and the potential transformative impact of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. This holistic approach aims to instill in my children a nuanced understanding of asset management and strategic investment,” she says.

Charmel points out that it is essential to know that first, trading with managed emotions is crucial, emphasizing the importance of understanding the signals emotions convey rather than simply seeking to be understood emotionally. Second, relying on popular opinion can be misleading; instead, thorough investigation and assessment of investments based on their value and alignment with your risk profile are essential. She says that if you’re entering the market with a desire to explore, acknowledge the risk as an

opportunity to learn rather than solely focusing on achieving specific results.

She says, “Moreover, while diversification is widely endorsed, it becomes more practical with a substantial capital pool. Beginners with limited funds, like a P100,000 capital, might find it challenging to diversify effectively with individual stocks. Reflecting on personal experience, initial attempts at diversification did not yield significant profits, underlining the need for business foundation and investing education. Instead of diversifying, focus is key; patience is key; invest time in understanding theoretical concepts and personal psychology. Strengthening yourself mentally and emotionally is integral before executing any business decisions.”

She has this advice for staying resilient in times of volatility: “To navigate and remain resilient in the forex market, I started my journey at a young age, accumulating 35 years of experience. Initially observing the fluctuations in US dollars within my parents’ business, I recognized the importance of continuous education as the first key to success. Building on this, the more you read, the better equipped you become to execute efficiently and accurately. While market predictions are often considered an art, it’s crucial to base them on data, although market movements are influenced by various factors beyond hard data.”

She adds, “Staying informed about macroeconomic indicators and reading the news is essential for understanding market dynamics. Market prediction, though rooted in data, faces challenges due to unpredictable events like geopolitical tensions and technological advancements, such as the AI explosion. The market is dynamic, and predictions may not always align with reality, as evidenced by unexpected turns caused by events like the Russian war.”

Charmel explains, “Rather than solely focusing on predicting market movements, adapting and managing your business through various scenarios is crucial. In times of crisis, opportunities arise, as demonstrated by the market’s response to the Russian invasion and the subsequent AI explosion. The key is to adjust capital and positions based on current events, political tensions, and evolving trends in AI.”^{MS}

Frugal Living: Achieving Financial Freedom Through Minimalism

By KARLO BIGLANG-AWA, RFP®

Do you want to achieve financial freedom? This is one of the questions you need to clarify if you plan to build your finances. Many people think an increase in income will take you to a stress-free financial life. Well, there's another approach, which is frugal living. It's possible to achieve financial freedom through minimalism.

Do you still remember the time when you started working? How about the time when you used to dream of buying all the things that you wanted after studying in college? More often than not, you soon realize that building your wealth is not easy. Frugal living and financial freedom are two related concepts that will allow you to achieve your personal financial goals.

Frugal living is a kind of lifestyle that emphasizes responsible spending. It doesn't mean that you will not enjoy your income and hard work, but it's about making wise



choices to maximize the value of your money and prioritize what is more important. Frugality can also be synonymous with being modest or straightforward.

Financial freedom, on the other hand, may be defined in various ways depending on a person's perspective. For some, it could be having enough money to live a comfortable life without needing to work. To some, it could be financing all your needs while also getting your wants without being stressed about where you will get your money. This will be possible if you build the right foundation and you are able to preserve your assets as well.

The frugal mindset. A frugal person can become financially free more quickly compared to a person who is so extravagant, as the former spends less money, saves, and invests more of her excess. Achieving financial freedom through minimalism is all about letting go of the excess and focusing on what truly matters.

Here are some ways you can achieve this:

Shift your mindset

- **Less is more:** Embrace the philosophy that possessions don't define happiness. Focus on experiences, relationships, and personal growth.
- **Values alignment:** Identify your core values and align your spending decisions with them. Prioritize experiences and things that enhance those values.
- **Intentional living:** Be conscious of your choices and avoid impulsive spending. Ask yourself if each purchase brings true value to your life.

Declutter your finances

- **Audit your expenses:** Track your income and expenses for a few months to identify areas where you can cut back. Look for subscriptions you don't use, memberships you can do without, and dining habits you can modify.
- **Create a budget:** Allocate your income towards essential needs, savings goals, and intentional spending on your chosen priorities. Stick to your budget and regularly review it for adjustments.



- **Reduce debt:** Prioritize paying off high-interest debts like credit cards. Tackle the smallest debts first for quick wins and motivation.

Embrace financial minimalism

- **Minimize subscriptions:** Evaluate memberships and subscriptions you rarely use. Replace expensive gym memberships with free outdoor activities or bodyweight exercises.
- **Cook at home:** Eating out is a significant expense. Learn to cook healthy meals at home, saving money and improving your health.
- **Multipurpose items:** Choose versatile items that serve multiple functions. This reduces clutter and saves money on unnecessary purchases.
- **Embrace experiences:** Invest in experiences like travel, learning new skills, or quality time with loved ones. These memories bring lasting joy, while material possessions often lose their value over time.

The road to financial freedom. Once you've embraced frugal living, building on your financial foundation is the next step. Follow these steps:

Establish life goals. What does financial freedom mean to you? Could it be a comfortable retirement? You must be specific on what goals you would like to achieve, and with this, you can work backward from where you are right now. This can help you establish your daily habits since the bigger picture can only take place if you are taking small steps.

Create a budget. You need to track your income and expenses to understand your financial situation. Doing this lets you know where most of your spending can hinder you from achieving your goals. Practically speaking, you can put a name on every peso. Let's say you use an envelope system for budgeting; indicate the purpose, such as your utilities, car amortization, house rent, etc.

Build your emergency funds. Having an equivalent of three to six months' worth of living expenses can provide your family financial cushion in case of unexpected events. For example, if you lose your job, you have at least funds to cover the months you are still looking for a new job. If you are a business owner, there will be instances where profit will not be the expected amount, but the funds you have set aside will save you. You can even extend this to one year's worth if you have more capacity to ensure that you have peace of mind in emergencies.

Avoid bad debts. Living frugally will entail discipline and delayed gratification. As you go along in building your finances, there will be instances of unplanned spending, which you need to be aware of. Avoiding bad debts is a strategy to help you stay focused on your goal and hamper the weight of excessive spending.

There are a lot of stories from people who have multiple credit cards but can't really pay the monthly due, which will cause accumulated interest. In this scenario, you will not be able to pay the full amount; this is the reason why living frugally is important.

Build passive income streams. If you are frugal enough to live below your means, you can eventually have more excess money that you can allocate into passive income streams. What are some possible passive income streams that can help you?

- **Dividend stocks:** Investing in the stock market with companies that pay dividends will allow you to earn a portion of the company's profits.
- **Real Estate Investment Trusts:** REITs are companies that own, operate, or finance income-producing real estate properties. They are required to distribute at least 90% of their taxable income to shareholders through dividends.
- **High yield savings accounts:** Nowadays, you can access high yielding savings accounts in digital banks in the Philippines. This can give you returns of 4% to 6%, depending on the bank's promos and period. It's like earning in a mutual fund without being exposed to market volatility.
- **Online business:** Building a blog, YouTube channel, or e-commerce store can generate passive income through advertising, affiliate marketing, or product sales. But it often requires significant upfront effort.

Plan for your retirement. Set aside regularly a certain percentage of your income that you will allocate for your retirement funds. Remember, the longest holiday in our lives is retirement. In the Philippines, wherein only a few percent are prepared for retirement, we have this cycle of dependency, which is a burden to the younger generation.

How do you achieve retirement or financial freedom? One of the best role models is Warren Buffett, the most successful investor in history and one of the richest people in the world. Here are some lessons we can learn from him:

- **Invest in yourself:** Learning from the billionaire from Nebraska, investing in education will really help us gain more skills that can bring wealth to us. He invested in communication skills and even earned his master's degree to be able to understand business on a deeper level. Because of this, he was able to grow Berkshire Hathaway to where it is now. His strategies are combinations of both practical experiences and learnings from college and post-graduate studies.
- **Value investing:** Buffett is an advocate of value investing, which involves finding undervalued stocks and investing in companies with strong fundamentals. He also focuses on good governance and a company's potential that outlasts a lifetime. If you are planning to invest in something, consider value investing so you can also build a fortune in the long term.
- **Margin of safety:** This means buying assets or stocks at a price significantly below their intrinsic value to protect against potential losses.
- **Quality over quantity:** Buffett prefers to invest in a few businesses he thoroughly understands rather than diversifying excessively. He advises against spreading our investments too thin, as this can also affect the returns.
- **Competitive advantage:** This principle is about sustainable economic advantage or economic moat. A moat can be a strong brand, high switching costs, or other factors that can protect a company from strong competition.

Focus on fundamentals: Buffett recommends focusing on the company's financials, including earnings, cash flow, and return on equity, rather than short-term stock price movements or market trends.

- **Ignore market noise:** This means that investors should not focus on media noise or influences but stay focused on the implemented strategy. Short-term fluctuations in the market should not influence investment decisions.

- **Cash positions:** Holding cash or cash equivalents when attractive investment opportunities are scarce is still a valid strategy. This provides flexibility to capitalize on market downturns.
- **Avoid emotional investing:** Emotional reactions to market swings can lead to poor decisions.
- **Be fearful when others are greedy, and be greedy when others are fearful:** This famous quote from Buffett highlights his contrarian approach in the market. He often looks to invest when market sentiments are low and assets are undervalued.
- **Transparency and honesty:** Buffet values integrity in the management of a company. He looks for organizations with trustworthy and competent leadership since this will be a factor for sustainability and long-term growth.
- **Do not invest in something you do not understand:** Nowadays, there are many investment platforms you can see on the internet or social media. If you are not careful and you are carried away by the hype, chances are, you will invest in something that you are not aware of.
- **Stay humble:** Despite Buffett's success, we can observe his humility in his daily life. He acknowledges that he and his company will still make mistakes from time to time. He encourages us to learn from our errors rather than dwell on them.

Frugal living is really a powerful principle. At the end of the day, no matter how rich you may become in this world, all of these are temporal things. Living simply doesn't mean that you don't aspire for growth and to build wealth, but rather, it is about creating something of value in society that will bring growth personally, professionally, and even financially.

Alongside the growth that we will pursue, we need to be grateful for what we have. This can help us enjoy the process of building our wealth. It can be tiring at times, but if the purpose is clear that it is not just for our own but for the people around us, the pursuit will have meaning.

It is a holistic approach that takes into account not only financial success but also personal happiness and fulfillment. It recognizes that true wealth encompasses a rich and fulfilling life. This reflects a commitment to leave a legacy in our family, community, country, and the world.

While pursuing all these things, you can enjoy your time and daily tasks here on earth. It will start with a small vision planted in your heart, a dream that seems impossible to take place. Take it one step at a time; sooner or later, you will be surprised by the impact that will take place. You will achieve your true financial success with just one single step of faith.

Remember, minimalism is a journey, not a destination. Start small, gradually implement changes, and celebrate your progress. By aligning your finances with your values and reducing unnecessary spending, you can pave the way towards financial freedom and a richer, more fulfilling life. **MS**



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Strategies for Shopping Seasonal Sales and Discounts

By JANICE SABITSANA, RFP®

In the vibrant and bustling markets of the Philippines, seasonal sales and discounts are not just opportunities to save money; they're a cultural event that brings communities together in a shared pursuit of bargain hunting.

As Filipinos, we have an unspoken love for finding the best deals. Whether it's the Christmas season, mid-year sales, or spontaneous flash sales, these events spark a nationwide shopping frenzy. Yet, beyond the excitement and thrill of the hunt, there's a strategic art to navigating these sales. This article aims to equip you with strategies to maximize your savings and get the most out of every seasonal sale.

Understanding Seasonal Promotions.

Seasonal promotions are specific marketing strategies used by retailers to boost their sales during certain times of the year. They may come in the form of discounts, bundled offers, or even freebies. These promotions are commonly tied to holidays or changing seasons, such as the 'Ber months leading up to Christmas, which is a significant shopping period in the Philippines.

But how can Filipinos truly benefit from these promotions? The key lies in understanding how they work and learning how to strategically navigate them. With the right approach, seasonal sales can be more than just a shopping spree. They can be a way to budget wisely, make smart purchases, and even discover new products and brands. So whether you're a seasoned bargain hunter or a newbie to the sales scene, read on to unlock the secrets of savvy shopping during seasonal sales.

Preparation for Seasonal Sales. Just as a well-prepared soldier doesn't go into battle without a plan, a savvy shopper does not step into a seasonal sale without preparation. The key to maximizing the benefits of these sales lies in careful planning.

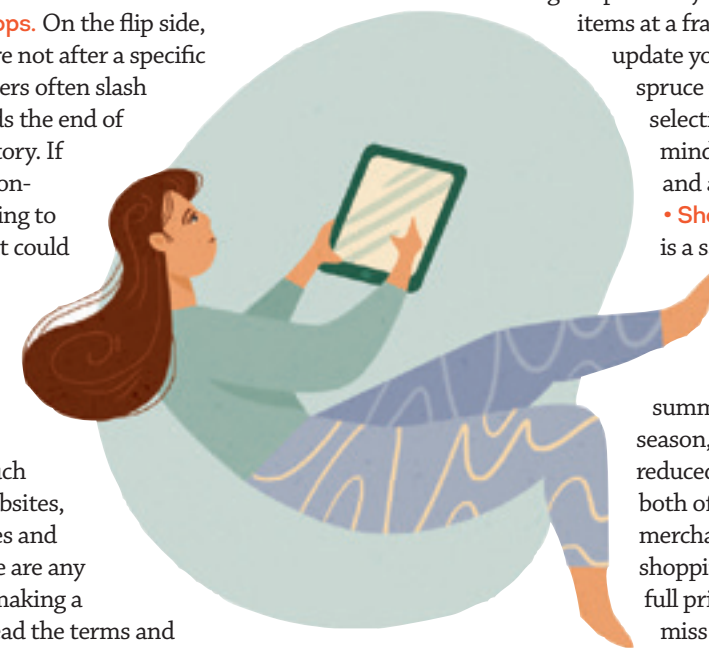
- **Plan ahead for upcoming sales.** To start with, it's crucial to have a clear idea of when sales are likely to occur. In the Philippines, certain times of the year are renowned for sales events - like the 'Ber months leading up to Christmas, the mid-year sales around June and July, and specific holiday sales such as Labor Day or Independence Day. Retailers also often host anniversary or end-of-season clearance sales. Mark these dates on your calendar and set reminders to start preparing a few weeks in advance.

But how exactly do you prepare? One effective strategy is to follow your favorite brands on social media or subscribe to their newsletters. This way, you'll be among the first to know about any upcoming sales, giving you ample time to strategize.

- **Set a budget.** The thrill of finding great deals can easily lead to overspending. That's why it's crucial to set a budget before the sale begins. Determine how much you can comfortably afford to spend without straining your finances. Remember, the goal of shopping a sale isn't to spend money. It's to save money on items you need to buy anyway, not to make unnecessary purchases just because they're discounted.
- **Create a shopping list.** Once you've set your budget, it's time to create a shopping list. This list should include items you need or have been planning to buy. It's also a good idea to categorize your list into "needs" and "wants." Your "needs" should take priority in your budget allocation, while your "wants" can be considered if your budget allows.

Making the Most of Discounts. Once you've planned for the sale and set your budget, it's time to dive into the tactical side of shopping seasonal sales. Here are some strategies to help you squeeze every peso out of those discounts.

- **Research and compare prices.** Knowledge is power when it comes to sales. Before the sale starts, do some research. Check the regular prices of the items on your list so you'll know how much you save when the discounts hit. Use online tools or apps to compare prices across different retailers. This will help you identify where the best deals are.
- **Shop early in the sale.** While waiting for further price drops might be tempting, there's a significant advantage to shopping early in the sale—inventories. The best items or the most popular sizes tend to sell out quickly. By shopping early, you have the best selection available, increasing the chances that you'll find exactly what you're looking for.
- **Wait for further price drops.** On the flip side, waiting can pay off if you're not after a specific item, brand, or size. Retailers often slash prices even further towards the end of the sale to clear out inventory. If you've got your eye on a non-essential item and are willing to take the risk, waiting it out could lead to bigger savings.
- **Use coupons for extra discounts.** Coupons can provide additional discounts on top of sale prices. These can be found in various places, such as newspapers, retailer websites, or coupon-specific websites and apps. Always check if there are any available coupons before making a purchase. Remember to read the terms and conditions, as some coupons might not apply to sale items or certain brands.
- **Utilize cashback apps and credit card points.** Apps like ShopBack and credit cards offer cashback or points for every purchase. This can add to significant savings over time, especially during seasonal sales when you're likely to spend more. Before shopping, check which platforms or cards offer the best cashback or points deals.
- **Combine coupons and discounts.** Maximize savings by combining coupons and discounts. Find promotional codes that can be used alongside sale offers, seasonal sales, clearance events, or special discount days. Time your shopping trips to leverage these promotions, applying coupons to already reduced prices. This double-dipping technique layers discounts for significant savings. Read the fine print to ensure you can take advantage of every available discount.
- **Sign up for loyalty programs.** Joining loyalty programs is a great way to save during seasonal sales. You gain exclusive discounts, early access to sales, and personalized offers by signing up. Earn points on purchases and redeem them for rewards or discounts.



Birthday perks and VIP events add even more value. Plus, it ensures you stay informed about upcoming promotions and establish a lasting connection with the brand.

- **Shop with a friend to save more.** Shopping with a friend can offer numerous benefits. For one, retailers often offer "buy one, get one free" deals or discounts on multiple purchases. By shopping with a friend, you can take advantage of these deals without buying more than you need. Additionally, you can split shipping costs for online purchases, resulting in further savings.
- **Shop clearance sections.** Retailers offer heavily discounted items in these dedicated sections, filled with overstock, end-of-season sales, or discontinued items. You'll find a wide range of products, such as clothing, accessories, electronics, and home goods, often at discounts of 50% or more off the original price. Enjoy the benefits of finding high-quality items at a fraction of their cost, allowing you to update your wardrobe, upgrade electronics, or spruce up your home affordably. Note that selection may be limited, but being open-minded can lead to discovering new finds and a treasure trove of savings.
- **Shop off-season.** Shopping off-season is a savvy way to save money on high-quality items. Retailers clear out the previous season's inventory, offering great deals on popular items. From rain gear in the summer to swimwear during the rainy season, find trendy items at significantly reduced prices. Online and physical stores both offer discounts to make room for new merchandise. Plus, planning ahead and shopping off-season helps you avoid paying full price when demand is higher. Don't miss out on savings for seasonal items like holiday decorations, sports equipment, and outdoor gear.
- **Consider outlet stores.** Outlet stores are a great way to find cheaper versions of the products you're looking for. Many retailers have dedicated outlets offering past season items at discounted prices. These stores usually feature all the same quality materials and designs, but with a lower price tag. This is especially useful for shoppers who don't need to buy the latest trends or styles.
- **Check for price match policies.** Many retailers offer price match guarantees, where they will match a lower price found at a competing retailer. If an item you want is on sale but still cheaper elsewhere, check if the store has a price match policy. This could allow you to purchase the item from the retailer you prefer without missing out on the lower price.
- **Navigate flash sales effectively.** Flash sales are exciting but can be overwhelming. These sales often offer the deepest discounts but for a very limited time. To navigate these effectively, it's best to have a clear plan of what you want to purchase. Act quickly but decisively, as items can sell out



Janice Sabitsana is a Registered Financial Planner of RFP Philippines. For more tips, follow @PinayInvestor on YouTube or visit www.thepinayinvestor.com.

within minutes. And remember, just because it's a great deal doesn't mean it's worth buying if it's not on your list.

- **Sign up for newsletters.** Email newsletters are another effective tool for staying informed about sales. Many retailers offer exclusive discounts to their email subscribers or allow them early access to sales. By signing up for these newsletters, you can stay one step ahead and plan your purchases accordingly.
- **Follow brands on social media.** Social media is not just for staying connected with friends and family; it's also a great platform to follow your favorite brands. Many companies announce their upcoming sales and exclusive discounts on their social media pages. By following these brands, you can stay updated with the latest deals and even participate in social media-exclusive promotions.
- **Follow influencers.** Many brands collaborate with influencers to offer exclusive promo codes to their followers. These codes can provide additional discounts or special offers that are not available to the general public. By following influencers who partner with brands you're interested in, you can gain access to these exclusive promo codes and unlock additional savings.
- **Join giveaways and contests.** Social media platforms are also a popular avenue for brands and influencers to host giveaways and contests. During seasonal sales, they may run special promotions where participants can win free products or enjoy additional discounts. By following these accounts, you can stay updated on such opportunities and participate for a chance to win exciting prizes or earn exclusive discounts.
- **Read product reviews.** Don't underestimate the importance of reading product reviews before making a purchase. Reviews can provide valuable insights into the product's quality and performance. They can also highlight any potential issues that might not be apparent from the product description. This can help you avoid purchasing products that may not meet your expectations, even if they're on sale.
- **Check return policies.** Always check the return policy before making a purchase during a sale. Some stores have stricter policies for discounted items, or they may not allow returns at all. Knowing the return policy protects you if an item doesn't fit, doesn't work, or simply doesn't meet your expectations.



Strategic Payment Methods. Choosing the right payment method can have a significant impact on your shopping experience and your savings. Let's explore the pros and cons of different payment methods and how to strategically use them during seasonal sales.

- **Pros and cons of using cash versus credit.** Cash is king when it comes to sticking to your budget. It provides a physical limit to your spending, making it harder to overspend. However, carrying large amounts of cash can be inconvenient and risky. Credit cards, on the other hand, offer convenience, potential rewards, and sometimes additional discounts. Many retailers partner with banks to offer extra savings for using their credit cards. Plus, if you're enrolled in a rewards or cash-back program, you could earn points or cash back on your purchases. But be careful—credit cards also make it easy to overspend, and interest charges can quickly outweigh any savings if you're not able to pay your balance in full.
- **Consider shipping costs and delivery times.** Online shopping offers the comfort of making purchases from your home and often provides exclusive online discounts. However, it's crucial to be mindful of shipping costs and delivery times. Look for retailers offering free shipping or consider pooling orders with friends to reach free shipping thresholds. Also, ensure the website is secure before entering your card details to protect against fraud.
- **Buyer Beware.** While sales can offer fantastic opportunities for savings, it's important to approach them with a discerning eye. Here are some tips to ensure you're truly getting a good deal.
- **Avoid too-good-to-be-true deals.** Sometimes, deals that seem too good to be true often are. Extremely low prices can sometimes indicate counterfeit products, items in poor condition, or scams. It's important to verify the authenticity of the product and the credibility of the seller before making a purchase. Read reviews, check the seller's ratings, and do your due diligence to avoid falling for a scam.
- **Be aware of dynamic pricing.** Dynamic pricing is a strategy where retailers change the price of products based on demand, time of day, location, and other factors. This means that the price you see may not always be the best deal available. You can counter this by clearing your browsing history and cookies, using incognito mode, and comparing prices across different platforms.
- **Negotiate prices in local markets.** In local markets, prices are often negotiable. Don't be afraid to haggle. Sellers expect it, and it can lead to substantial savings. Start by offering a price lower than what you're willing to pay, then gradually increase your offer until you reach a compromise. Remember to remain polite and respectful during the negotiation process.
- **Consider the cost of maintenance.** The cost of a product doesn't end at the purchase price. Depending on the item, there may be maintenance or operational costs to consider. For example, electronics might need regular software updates, vehicles require servicing and fuel, and clothing may require dry cleaning. These ongoing costs can add up over time, so it's important to factor them into your decision before making a purchase.

Monthly Sale Seasons in the Philippines: Get the Best Deals on Items Year-Round. When it comes to shopping seasonal sales and discounts in the Philippines, understanding the monthly sale seasons by item can help you make smart purchasing decisions and save money throughout the year. From January to December, each month brings unique opportunities to snag discounted items. Let's explore the monthly sale seasons in the Philippines and provide examples of the items you can find at great prices during each period:

- **January.** Kick off the year with New Year clearance sales in the Philippines. During this time, you can find great deals on appliances like refrigerators, washing machines, and air conditioners as retailers clear out last year's models. Additionally, keep an eye out for discounts on home and kitchenware items such as cookware, bedding, and furniture.
- **February.** February brings Valentine's Day sales to the Philippines. Take advantage of promotions on flowers, bouquets, and heart-shaped chocolates for your loved ones. Many retailers also offer discounts on popular perfumes and colognes, making it a perfect time to find the ideal gift.
- **March.** As graduation approaches and students prepare to go back to school, March offers graduation and back-to-school sales. Look out for sales on electronics like laptops, tablets, and smartphones to equip students for their academic needs. It's also an excellent opportunity to stock up on office supplies such as stationery, pens, notebooks, and backpacks.
- **April.** Summer fashion sales are in full swing during April. Retailers offer discounts on swimwear, beachwear, and flip-flops as the Philippines heads into the summer season. It's also a great time to snag deals on outdoor gear, including camping equipment, hiking gear, and sports accessories.
- **May.** May brings Labor Day and Mother's Day sales. Take advantage of discounts on home appliances such as kitchen appliances, vacuum cleaners, and small electronics. Many retailers also offer promotions on women's clothing, shoes, handbags, and accessories, making it a perfect time to update your wardrobe.
- **June.** In June, Father's Day Sales present an opportunity to find the perfect gift for dads. Look for deals on gadgets and tech accessories like smartphones, laptops, headphones, and more. It's also a great time to grab discounts on men's fashion, including clothing, shoes, watches, and grooming products.
- **July.** July marks the mid-year clearance sales in the Philippines. Retailers clear out mid-year inventory, offering



enticing discounts on fashion items, including clothing, shoes, and accessories. Sports enthusiasts can also find promotions on sports gear, gym equipment, and athletic wear.

- **August.** Celebrate Buwan ng Wika and back-to-school sales in August. Many retailers offer discounts on local products, including clothing, accessories, and home decor. It's also an excellent time to stock up on school supplies such as pens, notebooks, backpacks, and other essentials needed for the upcoming academic year.
- **September.** As the "ber" months roll in, September marks the beginning of the holiday spirit in the Philippines. It's a time when retailers kick off their Christmas preparations and offer enticing sales and promotions on Christmas decorations. Get into the festive mood and take advantage of discounts on ornaments, lights, trees, wreaths, and other festive decor items. Whether you prefer traditional or modern Christmas decorations, September is the perfect time to start transforming your home into a winter wonderland while saving money.
- **October.** October is the month for Halloween sales. Look for discounts on costumes, accessories, and spooky decorations. Baking enthusiasts can also find promotions on baking ingredients and kitchenware for Halloween-themed treats.
- **November.** Prepare for the holiday season with pre-Christmas sales in November. Retailers offer enticing discounts on electronics, appliances, toys, games, and children's clothing. Plus, towards the end of the month, many employees receive their Christmas bonuses, making it a popular time for shopping. Don't miss the opportunity to snag great deals and get into the festive spirit!
- **December.** December is synonymous with holiday season sales. Take advantage of fashion and party wear discounts, including festive clothing, evening gowns, and party accessories. Many retailers also offer promotions on holiday-themed gift sets, food baskets, and beauty kits.

The world of seasonal sales and discounts is a treasure trove to be explored. By implementing these strategies, you hold the key to unlocking incredible savings and discovering hidden gems. Each shopping trip becomes an adventure, brimming with excitement and anticipation. So, let your imagination soar as you envision the possibilities that await you in the aisles of seasonal discounts. Embrace the thrill, seize the savings, and let your shopping journey inspire you to think creatively and make the most of every opportunity. Happy shopping! ^{MS}

Stock Market Sectors: Where to Invest

By JOSEFINO GOMEZ, RFP®

Investing in the stock market can be a rewarding venture if approached correctly. One proven strategy for achieving consistent returns is to analyze and invest in different stock market sectors. Investors can increase their profit potential by understanding economic cycles and matching them with sectors poised to boom.

Sector performances differ depending on the stage of the economy. It may be beneficial to have exposure to each sector at one point or another when investing to maximize investing opportunities. While one sector may be performing poorly as a result of bad economic conditions, other sectors may be thriving. Here's a rundown of the six sectors and their companies in the PSE:

The Sectors. The current sector classification system groups listed companies into six main sectors, namely:

Financials. Composed of banks and other financial institutions, the financial index is composed of eight banks and a stock exchange company. The banking and financial services sector in the Philippines has witnessed steady growth, driven by robust domestic consumption and increasing financial inclusion. The country's banking system is well-regulated and resilient, making it a safe haven for investors. Banks often benefit from economic growth and have a dividend-paying history.

Industrial. This is made up of electricity, energy, power & water, food, beverage & tobacco, construction, infrastructure & allied services, chemicals, electrical components & equipment, and other industrials as subsectors. The industrial index is composed of about 27 stocks. It reflects the basic consumption story of the country as it includes companies that produce food and energy.

Property. The Property Index comprises property developers and includes real estate companies and REITs. The Philippine real estate market has remained resilient over the years, with sustained demand for residential, commercial, and industrial properties. Urbanization, a growing population, and the rise of mixed-use developments have fueled the real estate sector's growth.

Services. This includes media, telecommunications, information technology, and transportation services subsector. The service index is comprised of telcos, media companies, gaming and retailers. The Philippines boasts a young and growing population with increasing purchasing power, making the consumer goods and retail sector an appealing investment option. Filipinos are becoming more brand-conscious and are willing to spend on a wide range of products, from fast-moving consumer goods to high-end luxury items.

Mining & Oil Sector. This is composed of companies whose core business involves taking raw materials or natural resources and converting them into something more



Contraction Phase. In the contraction phase, the economy starts to slow down, and consumer spending decreases. This is the time to consider investments in defensive sectors and assets like bonds or precious metals.

Trough Phase. The trough phase represents the bottom of the economic cycle. Investors can gradually shift back into growth-oriented sectors as the economy begins to recover. Sectors like technology and financials may offer significant upside potential during this phase. You may also look for undervalued stocks in sectors hit hardest during the contraction phase, such as the services or travel and leisure sector.

Investors should also align their investments with the prevailing economic cycle to profit from analyzing and investing in different stock market sectors.

useful. Many mining companies, metals businesses, and oil companies are in this sector. It tends to do well when the economy is growing and there is high demand for industrial metals.

In 2013, the PSE created an ETF Sector for exchange-traded funds, with equity as a subsector. Real estate is one of the fastest-growing parts of the market in recent decades, supported most clearly by the increased listing of real estate investment trusts (REITs). A REIT is a tax-advantaged investment vehicle that allows retail investors to easily gain exposure to the cash flows that come with a more diversified real estate ownership, but without the large capital outlay.

Understanding Economic Cycles. Economic cycles are recurring patterns of expansion and contraction in the economy. These cycles typically consist of four phases as follows:

Expansion Phase. During this phase, the economy and consumer confidence are growing. Investors can benefit by allocating their investments to sectors that thrive in a growing economy, such as property and industrials.

Peak Phase. The peak phase marks the height of economic growth. It is when investors should consider reducing their exposure to high-growth sectors and moving towards defensive sectors like utilities, healthcare, and consumer staples. These sectors tend to be less affected by economic downturns.

Consider Economic Trends. To profit from sector-specific investing, aligning your investments with prevailing economic trends is crucial. Economic cycles, inflation rates, and interest rates can significantly impact sector performance.

- **Economic Cycles:** As mentioned earlier, different sectors perform better at different stages of the economic cycle.
- **Inflation:** Rising inflation can erode the purchasing power of consumers and impact various sectors differently. Stocks in sectors like energy and commodities can benefit from rising prices, while consumer staples may struggle.
- **Interest Rates:** Interest rates set by central banks can affect sectors like financials and real estate. Higher interest rates may boost profits for banks but can be detrimental to REITs.

Analyzing and investing in different stock market sectors based on economic cycles can be a profitable long-term strategy. By understanding the characteristics of each economic phase and matching them with the right sectors and assets, investors can maximize their portfolios for both growth and stability.

However, it's essential to remember that economic cycles are not always perfectly predictable, and other factors like geopolitical events and market sentiment can influence sector performance. Therefore, proper diversification and continuous research and portfolio rebalancing remain crucial elements to a successful sector-specific investing strategy.^{MS}

Property Management Basics

By CARLOS GONZALES

owning property in the Philippines can be a rewarding investment, but it also comes with responsibilities. Whether you manage your own rental property or entrust it to a professional, understanding the basics of property management is crucial. This guide dives into the key aspects of managing real estate in the Philippines, equipping you with the necessary knowledge to navigate this dynamic domain.

1 Understanding the Legal Landscape

The Rent Control Law: The Rent Control Act of 2009 regulates rent increases and evictions for residential properties in Metro Manila and other specified areas. Familiarize yourself with the regulations to ensure compliance.

Housing Laws: The Housing Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) oversees various housing laws and regulations. Stay informed about updates and requirements to avoid legal issues.

Tax Implications: Property owners are responsible for paying property taxes and income taxes on rental income. Consult a tax advisor for proper guidance and deductions.

Tenant Rights and Responsibilities: Familiarize yourself with tenant rights and responsibilities outlined in the Philippine Rental Laws. This includes understanding rent control laws, security deposit regulations, and eviction procedures. Adhering to these legal frameworks protects both landlords and tenants.

Documentation: Maintain detailed records of all transactions, communications, and maintenance activities. Proper documentation is crucial in case legal issues arise. Keep copies of lease agreements, communication logs, and receipts in an organized manner.

2 Finding the Right Tenants:

Screening and Selection: Develop a thorough screening process to verify potential tenants' income, employment, references, and rental history. Utilize credit checks and guarantors if necessary. This helps mitigate the risk of rent defaults and property damage.

Lease Agreements: Clearly outline lease terms, including rental rates, security deposits, payment schedules, maintenance responsibilities, and termination clauses. Use standard lease agreements or seek legal counsel for customized contracts. This document serves as a legally binding contract that protects both parties.

Competitive Rates: Research rental market trends in your area to determine fair and competitive rent prices that attract responsible tenants while maximizing your income.

3 Maintaining the Property

Preventive Maintenance: Regular inspections and preventive maintenance can prevent costly repairs and ensure the property remains in good condition. Schedule routine maintenance for plumbing, electrical systems, and appliances. Proactive maintenance preserves the property's value and enhances tenant satisfaction. Addressing issues promptly prevents minor problems from escalating into major repairs.

Responding to Repairs: Promptly address repair requests from tenants to maintain the property's value and prevent further damage. Establish clear procedures for reporting and handling repairs.

Emergency Preparedness: Develop and communicate emergency procedures to tenants. This includes guidelines for handling natural disasters, power outages, or any unforeseen circumstances. Being prepared ensures the safety of tenants and minimizes potential damage to the property.

Complying with Building Codes: Ensure your property adheres to building codes and safety regulations. Conduct fire safety inspections and maintain necessary permits and licenses.

4 Managing Finances

Budgeting and Expense Tracking: Develop a budget to cover operational expenses like property taxes, insurance, maintenance, and repairs. Track your income and expenses

to maintain financial control. A well-planned budget helps ensure financial stability and allows for the allocation of funds for unforeseen expenses.

Rent Collection and Payment Processing: Establish clear and consistent rent collection processes. Clearly communicate due dates, payment methods, and consequences for late payments in the lease agreement. Implement a reliable rent collection system and consider offering online payment options for convenience and efficiency. Ensure timely deposit and proper recordkeeping of rent payments.

Investment Strategies: Consider depreciation of the property, potential renovations for increased value, and long-term investment goals when making financial decisions about your property.

5 Building Relationships

Communication Channels: Establish open and effective communication channels with tenants. Promptly address concerns, inquiries, and maintenance requests. A transparent and responsive approach fosters a positive landlord-tenant relationship, reducing the likelihood of disputes.

Building Trust: Fostering a positive relationship with your tenants encourages prompt rent payments, responsible behavior, and longer lease terms. Be approachable and responsive to build trust and encourage open communication.

Community Engagement: If managing a multi-unit property, consider establishing a community space or communication channels for residents to interact and share concerns. This fosters a sense of community and strengthens relationships with tenants.

Remember, successful property management in the Philippines requires a blend of legal knowledge, financial acumen, communication skills, and relationship building. By understanding these basics and staying updated on regulations and market trends, you can effectively manage your property, ensure tenant satisfaction, and maximize your investment returns.

Whether you own residential or commercial properties, effective property management is the key to unlocking the full potential of your real estate investments while ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of tenants.^{MS}



A Guide to Thrifting and Secondhand Shopping

By CARLOS GONZALES

For Filipinos, thrifting is more than just a budget-friendly shopping experience; it's a treasure hunt, a cultural adventure, and a sustainable statement. From bustling ukay-ukays to online marketplaces, the secondhand scene in the Philippines offers a plethora of gems waiting to be discovered. This guide will equip you with the know-how and insider tips to navigate the exciting world of pre-loved finds in the Philippines!

Financial Benefits of Thrift Shopping. The obvious financial benefit is that you save money! There's also the thrill of the hunt. There's an undeniable thrill in finding that perfect treasure after rummaging through clothes or browsing online listings.

Affordability. Thrift shopping allows individuals to access a diverse range of clothing at significantly lower prices than buying new. This affordability is particularly appealing for students, young professionals, and families on a budget.

Unique Finds. Thrift stores offer a treasure trove of unique and one-of-a-kind items that may not be readily available in traditional retail stores. Vintage pieces, designer items, and eclectic fashion finds contribute to a distinctive and personalized wardrobe.

Quality at a Lower Cost. Secondhand items often retain their quality after minimal use, providing consumers with durable goods at a fraction of the original cost. This is especially beneficial for those seeking high-quality clothing without the hefty price tag.

Embrace the Ukay-Ukay Spirit. The iconic ukay-ukay stores, with their mountains of clothes waiting to be sifted



through, are the ultimate thrifting experience. Hone your bargaining skills, unleash your inner fashion detective, and prepare to unearth unique treasures amidst the piles.

Tips for Ukay-Ukay Success

Go early: The best finds often disappear quickly, so get to the store before the crowds.

Wear comfortable clothes and shoes: You'll be doing a lot of digging, so dress for the occasion.

Inspect carefully: Check for damages, stains, and missing buttons before making a purchase. Careful examination ensures that you get value for your money and reduces the likelihood of purchasing items that require extensive repairs.

Know your size: Thrift stores may not organize items by size as meticulously as traditional retail stores. It helps to

have a general idea of your measurements and try on items whenever possible. Don't be discouraged by sizes; vintage and secondhand items may not conform to modern sizing standards.

Be patient and persistent: Don't give up easily! The perfect piece might be just a few layers below.

Bargain politely: It's part of the ukay-ukay culture, so don't be afraid to negotiate the price. Don't hesitate to ask for a discount, especially if you're buying multiple items. Building a rapport with the shopkeepers may also result in better deals over time.

Explore regularly: Thrift store inventory changes frequently, so make it a habit to explore different shops regularly. This increases the chances of discovering unique pieces and scoring great deals.

Beyond Ukay-Ukay: Expanding Your Secondhand Horizons:

Online Marketplaces: Carousell, Facebook Marketplace, and Shopee all offer a vast selection of pre-loved clothing, furniture, electronics, and more. Browse listings at your convenience and score bargains from the comfort of your home.

Online Thrift Shops: Dedicated online thrift shops curate collections of pre-loved clothing, making it convenient for shoppers to browse and purchase from the comfort of their homes. These platforms often categorize items, making it easier to find specific styles or brands.

Garage Sales and Community Markets: Keep an eye out for local garage sales and community markets where you can find hidden gems and unique vintage pieces.

“Thrifting in the Philippines is more than just shopping; it's a cultural experience, a community activity, and a way to express your individual style.”

Consignment Shops: These shops offer curated collections of secondhand items in good condition, often at slightly higher prices than ukay-ukays.

Tips for Online and Other Secondhand Shopping
Read descriptions carefully: Look for detailed descriptions and clear pictures before making a purchase.

Ask questions: Don't hesitate to contact the seller to clarify any doubts about the item.

Check seller reviews: Read other buyers' experiences to assess the seller's reliability.

Be aware of scams: Be cautious of deals that seem too good to be true, and avoid sharing personal information with unknown sellers.

Thrifting in the Philippines is more than just shopping; it's a cultural experience, a community activity, and a way to express your individual style. So, grab your bag, unleash your inner treasure hunter, and dive into the exciting world of second-hand finds! Remember, the best bargains and most unique pieces often await those who are willing to put in the effort and embrace the spirit of the hunt.^{MS}



Investing in the Bank of Heroes: A Unique Investment Opportunity for Veterans, Military, and Their Families

Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB) provides a unique opportunity for Filipino military veterans and active personnel and their families to become stockholders in the Bank through its Stock Subscription Offering (SSO). This equity capital raising exercise allows eligible individuals to buy PVB stocks and enjoy the benefits of being an owner of the Bank that has been a stalwart in serving the welfare of veterans and their families since the 1960s.

Vision for the Future

With the passage of Republic Act No. 11597, Veterans Bank has increased its authorized capital stock, positioning itself for growth and ensuring that it remains majority-controlled by veterans in terms of equity. The Bank is not just a financial institution; it is the Bank of Heroes, and owning shares is a way to become part of this legacy.

Who Can Subscribe?

The PVB SSO is open to Filipino WWII veterans, post-war veterans, AFP retirees, active AFP personnel, and their families and heirs. This ensures that those who have contributed significantly to the nation have the chance to become owners of the Bank.

Benefits of Owning PVB Shares

Investing in PVB shares offers a multitude of benefits:

- **Ownership of a bank with a rich history:** PVB, established in the early 1960s, has a long-standing commitment to the welfare of WWII veterans and their families. Today, it is evolving to serve all veterans, military personnel, and their families.



- **Potential capital gains:** PVB shares have the potential to grow by 69% in 5 years, providing investors with the opportunity for capital appreciation.
- **Steady cash flow through dividends:** Owning shares in a company that regularly distributes cash dividends is a smart investment strategy to receive a steady cash flow and increase passive income. PVB, under its new charter, declares a percentage of its distributive net income as dividends every year.
- **Pre-emptive rights and participation:** Shareholders have pre-emptive rights to newly issued shares and the opportunity to participate in the Bank's annual stockholders meeting.
- **Special privileges:** Stockholders who are also clients of the bank enjoy special privileges at Veterans Bank branches.

How to Subscribe

Potential investors can subscribe online at the official PVB website (www.veteransbank.com.ph) or download the Subscription Agreement, complete it, and submit it along with other requirements at the nearest PVB branch. The process is designed to be accessible and convenient, allowing interested parties to initiate their investment journey with ease.

How to Purchase PVB Shares

The price per share is Php 110, with a minimum investment of Php 11,000 (equivalent to 100 shares). Investors can buy as many shares as they want and even opt for an installment plan of up to 6 months, making it accessible for a wide range of potential investors.

Investing in PVB shares is not just a financial decision; it is an opportunity to be part of a bank that has played a crucial role in supporting veterans and their families for decades. As an investor, you not only contribute to the growth of the Bank but also become a stakeholder in an institution that values its shareholders. Your investment could potentially yield both financial rewards and a sense of pride in being a part of the Bank of Heroes.^{MS}





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Yan ang Bangkong may Puso. Malalapitan. Dito na tayo!

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