



MAKING CENTS

KEEP YOUR RECORDS UP TO DATE

-John P. Napolitano, CFP®, CPA, PFS, MST



Aren't we fortunate to live in an age when technology allows us to update vital information at the drop of a key stroke? How simple it has become to maintain a running list of phone numbers, passwords, contacts and all other important data.

Do you have a computer file titled "Where my stuff is"? If you do, when was the last time that you updated it? I know, you have the most important info memorized, or jotted down on a business card safely secured in the breast pocket of your dark brown suit. But you and I both know that brand of record keeping is just not going to cut it today.

What you need to do is either resurrect or create a document that includes all pertinent data - and one that you will vow to update as information changes. This up-to-date file will not only make your life easier in an emergency, but ultimately will serve as an unmatched resource for your heirs upon your passing.

So, what should be on this virtual database of your life? To begin with, list all accounts, including bank, broker, money market and credit cards. Include account numbers, contact information and passwords and critical Web sites. All assets should be on the list, as well: your home, additional property and vehicles.

I would also have a set of instructions on how to deal with household issues, like how to jumpstart the furnace when it's acting up, or information about the service people like plumbers and electricians you have used.

Keep a list for medical issues, with the

names and contact information for all of your physicians, health policies and medications. In a medical emergency, this information could single handedly save your life.

The location of important documents, like insur-

ance policies, birth certificates, Social Security cards, wills, health care proxies, stock certificates and any other valuable paperwork should have a high place of priority on "the list." It may not be the easiest addition to the list, but do include any final wishes for burial or cremation.

There are a number of software programs available that can help you fill in the blanks of this personal record. Access to these programs can be restricted with a password, and sensitive data can be encrypted. Make sure that anyone who may be called to help both has a copy of the parts of the list that pertain to them and a directive as to where the entire list can be found. It would also be a good idea to include a hard copy in a safety deposit box.

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