4EJournazine

The official publication of the Financial Planning Association of Malaysia

EDUCATION | EXAMINATION | EXPERIENCE | ETHICS

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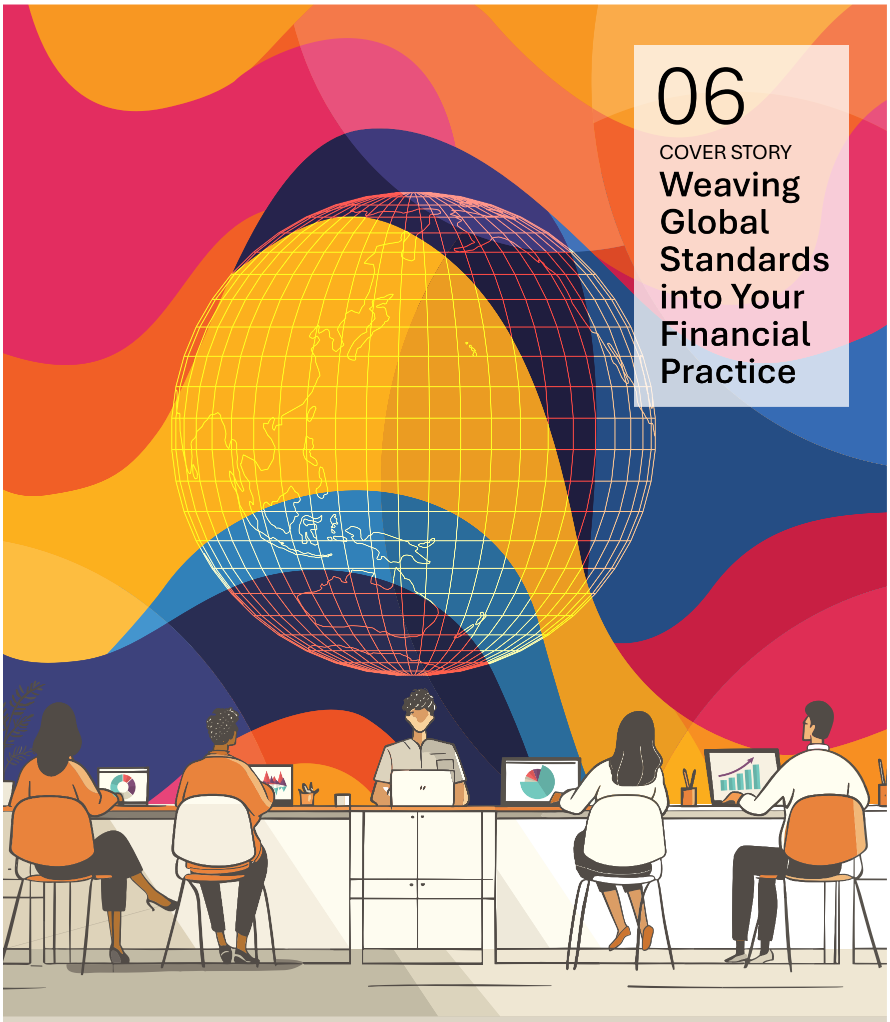

Reflecting on a Transformative Journey

As we reflect on the remarkable achievements of the first half of 2025, I am profoundly encouraged by the significant milestones FPAM has reached and the meaningful impact we have made across Malaysia's financial planning landscape. The period from January to June has been truly transformative, marked by exceptional initiatives that have strengthened our commitment to financial education and professional excellence.

The first six months of 2025 witnessed remarkable accomplishments that highlight our dedication to empowering Malaysia's future generations. Our Global Money Week 2025 campaign emerged as a beacon of knowledge and empowerment, bringing together students, educators and industry professionals across multiple institutions. These sessions not only highlighted the importance of financial literacy but also inspired participants to take charge of their financial futures with confidence and innovation.

The month of May marked another historic achievement as we celebrated FPAM's 25th Anniversary through our Annual Financial Planning Symposium at M World Hotel, Petaling Jaya. Themed "Shaping Financial Foundations, Securing Wealth for Tomorrow", this momentous event drew over 800 distinguished professionals who engaged in pivotal discussions on industry trends and innovations.

A highlight was the launch of our 25th Anniversary Commemorative Book, capturing our association's remarkable journey and impact. The commemorative book is a remarkable tribute to FPAM's rich history and evolution as a leader in Malaysia's financial planning landscape. This book captures the association's journey from its inception to becoming a pivotal force in advocating for financial literacy and professional excellence across the nation.

Our momentum continued into June with the successful conduct of our 25th Annual General Meeting, where certified members gathered to advance our profession's future direction and elect a new board of governors.

Importantly, as members of the FPAM community, you are part of a growing global network of over 230,000 CFP professionals, reflecting the increasing international demand for qualified financial planning services. This global growth underlines the critical role we play in delivering competent and ethical financial planning advice, thereby enhancing the quality of life and financial confidence of clients worldwide.

As we look ahead, FPAM remains steadfast in our mission to empower individuals and families across Malaysia through continuous education and unwavering advocacy for excellence in financial planning.

Thank you and best regards,
Alvin Tan Chin Cherng CFP®
President

4EJournazine

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SCAN ME!

Cover Story

Weaving Global Standards into Your Financial Practice

As financial planning evolves with technology and complex products, the FPSB's framework of knowledge, practice and ethics becomes more critical than ever for protecting clients and maintaining trust.

Financial planning continues to transform beyond traditional number-crunching to address a broader spectrum of client needs. As digital assets blur traditional investment boundaries and client expectations evolve beyond mere wealth accumulation, financial planners face their greatest test yet: can they adapt quickly enough while preserving the foundational trust that underpins the entire profession?

Financial Planning Standards Board Ltd. (FPSB) has established a global financial planning standards framework built on three core components: the Body of Knowledge (Knowing), Standards of Practice (Doing) and Standards of Ethical Conduct (Being). This trilogy forms the backbone of professional financial planning globally, ensuring practitioners possess both technical competence and ethical grounding.

"Financial planners must do more than just crunch numbers," explains Hanna Abdullah, a governance, risk and compliance expert. "The combination of technical expertise and ethical focus gives clients confidence that the advice truly puts their interests first and protects against mistakes or conflicts."

She points to evidence of this approach's effectiveness: "In Australia, industry data confirm these measures work—the Financial Ombudsman reported a substantial drop in investment and advice complaints in the 2023-2024 financial year, attributing it to enhanced education standards and increased professionalism in the industry."

PSYCHOLOGY: THE EMERGING DOMAIN

Among the nine knowledge domains outlined by FPSB's Global Financial Planning Standards is the Psychology of Financial Planning, acknowledging the profound influence of client behaviours, biases and emotional factors on financial decision-making.

Lim Hooi Hooi, Managing Partner & Co-Founder of Coreplus Advisory & Certified Psychology of Financial Planning Specialist

"Combining financial planning with psychological awareness offers clients more than just advice—it offers transformation. This approach doesn't replace traditional planning; rather, it enhances it by connecting the numbers with the person behind the decisions."

Hanna Abdullah, governance, risk and compliance expert

"The combination of technical expertise and ethical focus gives clients confidence that the advice truly puts their interests first and protects against mistakes or conflicts."

Lim Hooi Hooi, Managing Partner and Co-Founder of Coreplus Advisory and a Certified Psychology of Financial Planning Specialist, emphasises this importance: "Integrating psychological principles into financial planning helps us better understand why clients behave the way they do with money. Even though we provide well-researched advice and clear financial plans, many clients still hesitate to take action. That's because financial decisions are not made based on logic alone—they're also shaped by internal factors like biases, heuristics and strong emotions."

This psychological dimension reveals why technically sound advice might still fail to produce results. As Lim explains, "By understanding these patterns through the lens of financial psychology, we can move beyond just identifying what a client should do, and begin to explore why they haven't done it. This allows us as financial planners to ask better questions, listen more deeply and offer support that's aligned with their mindset—not just their money."

Consequently, combining financial planning with psychological awareness offers clients more than just advice—it offers transformation. This approach doesn't replace traditional planning; rather, it enhances it by connecting the numbers with the person behind the decisions.

FPSB Global Financial Planning Standards Framework

The FPSB has developed Global Financial Planning Standards that serve as the foundation for the financial planning profession. These standards are designed to ensure competent practice, promote consistency among financial planning professionals and clarify the roles and responsibilities of both planners and their clients.

The standards are structured around three main components:

KNOWING

- ***Definition:*** This includes the essential theories, methods and knowledge that a financial planning professional should possess to practise competently.
- Nine knowledge domains covering financial planning principles, process & skills; financial management; tax planning; investment planning & asset management; risk management & insurance planning; retirement planning; estate planning & wealth transfer; psychology of financial planning and integrated financial planning.
- Specific knowledge topics and learning outcomes within each domain.

DOING

- ***Definition:*** This refers to the actual application of financial planning through processes, practices, abilities and skills.
- Six-step financial planning process from establishing client relationships to reviewing situations.
- Core practices, standards and professional abilities (collecting information, analysing data, developing strategies).
- Essential skills including trust-building, communication, critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

BEING

- ***Definition:*** This focuses on the ethical conduct, personal values and behaviours expected of financial planners.
- Ethical frameworks and responsibilities defined by the Financial Planner Code of Ethics & Professional Responsibility.

Source: Global Financial Planning Standards (FPSB, April 2023)

This framework ensures financial planning professionals maintain comprehensive knowledge, effective practices and high ethical standards worldwide.

GUARDRAILS FOR GROWTH

The FPSB's six-step financial planning process—from establishing client relationships to regular reviews—provides a framework that can be enhanced with risk controls to protect both clients and firms.

Abdullah outlines how financial firms can incorporate risk management into each stage: "Embedding risk controls into each step of the financial planning process turns a compliance requirement into a strategic asset. It minimises misconduct, enforces professionalism and most importantly, protects the interests of clients—aligning with both regulatory expectations and business sustainability."

For example, in the initial stage of building client relationships, Abdullah recommends implementing a "know your client" protocol with clear guidelines on ethical communication and identifying vulnerable clients. For implementing recommendations, she suggests documented implementation plans with client confirmation and peer review where appropriate and a centralised task management system with date-stamped logs.

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

As financial products evolve, particularly with the emergence of digital assets, ethical standards face new challenges. Abdullah identifies several key issues:

"Ambiguity in regulatory boundaries—digital assets, depending on the category and features, sit in a regulatory grey zone. Financial planners are not confident whether they can provide recommendations on this asset class without breaching the law."

She also points to lack of clear product standards and conflict of interest risks as significant concerns, noting that many digital assets lack transparent risk ratings, regulatory oversight or audited performance data and that planners may have undisclosed financial interests in recommending certain investments.

"Ethics in financial planning isn't just about avoiding misconduct—it's about building trust," Abdullah emphasises. "With digital assets challenging traditional norms, financial planners must lean even more heavily on principles like transparency, fairness and accountability. Where regulation lags, ethical judgement must lead."

THE ESSENTIAL PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Beyond technical knowledge, the FPSB identifies critical professional skills, including client engagement, effective communication, critical thinking and problem-solving—abilities that create both compliant and high-performing organisations.

"These core professional skills are not just important in financial planning firms; they are foundational to fostering both a culture of compliance and high performance," Abdullah states.

She elaborates that these skills drive business outcomes: "From a commercial perspective, soft skills are directly tied to revenue outcomes, team collaboration and client loyalty. Firms that invest in these areas (via training and performance metrics) see higher adviser confidence and reduced staff turnover."

Lim concurs, explaining her communication approach: "Trust is built not just through technical knowledge but through presence, empathy and deep listening. With my background in financial psychology, I focus on creating a safe, non-judgemental space where clients feel truly heard."

BALANCING TECHNICAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by financial planners is balancing technical expertise with emotional intelligence, particularly when guiding clients through major life transitions.

"Financial literacy is important—but knowledge alone isn't always enough," says Lim. "A client may fully understand a recommendation but still feel unsure, overwhelmed or emotionally unready to move forward. This is especially common during big life transitions like retirement, the loss of a spouse or business succession planning."

Lim explains how she addresses this delicate balance: "I take time to explain complex matters in simple, relatable terms and check in to ensure they truly grasp the advice. When clients can express the plan in their own words, it builds both understanding and confidence."

The emotional dimension becomes especially evident when planning for retirement. As Lim notes, "Retirement often triggers more emotional reactions than people expect. Some of the most common barriers I see include the fear of not having enough, even when the financial plan says they do, or a sense of loss of identity, especially for clients whose work has been their life for many years."

Her approach exemplifies how modern financial planning must evolve: "Financial planning today is no longer just about being technically correct—it's about being emotionally relevant and personally meaningful."

SHIFTING REGULATORY PARADIGMS

The landscape of governance, risk and compliance (GRC) has undergone significant transformation in recent years, with important implications for financial planning standards.

"Some of the most significant shifts in governance, risk and compliance over the past decade, particularly in Australia, have pushed the industry towards greater accountability, client focus and adaptability," explains Abdullah.

One notable change has been the move from rules-based to principles-based regulation, where regulators have gradually moved from prescriptive, rules-based oversight to principles-based expectations, focusing on intent, culture and outcomes.

This evolution places greater responsibility on individual advisors. "Senior management, licensees and directors are now personally accountable for misconduct or governance failures," Abdullah notes. "This has increased the demand for documented decision-making, clearer delegation and stronger internal controls in planning practices."

The industry has also seen increased attention to conduct and culture with a regulatory expectation that firms assess and actively manage organisational culture and conduct risk, especially on how they affect consumer outcomes.

These shifts have been accompanied by the adoption of technology and regulatory technology (regtech) where GRC frameworks are increasingly digitally enabled. Tools now support automated risk alerts, real-time compliance monitoring and AI-assisted audits.

THE WAY FORWARD

Looking ahead, financial planning standards must evolve to address emerging challenges and opportunities. Abdullah identifies four key shifts needed:

"To address the new wave of challenges and opportunities driven by technology, product complexity and evolving client expectations, standards and practices in financial planning will need to shift in four key aspects: towards dynamic regulation, tech-enabled compliance, broader competency and ethical leadership."

She emphasises that this evolution is not about more rules but smarter adaptation: "The future of financial planning is less about stricter rules and more about smarter, more adaptive practices. Technology, product innovation and client sophistication demand a profession that is agile, ethically grounded and tech-enabled. Standards must evolve to support this shift—not by replacing human judgement, but by reinforcing and extending it."

The integration of psychological principles with traditional financial planning creates a powerful synergy that benefits clients in multiple ways. Lim describes these benefits:

"Some of the key benefits we've observed include improved follow-through because the plan feels personally meaningful, reduced anxiety around financial decisions, healthier financial habits aligned with long-term goals and most importantly, a greater sense of control and purpose in their financial journey."

As the financial landscape continues to change, the global financial planning standards established by FPSB provide a vital foundation. But their effectiveness ultimately depends on adaptation—integrating new knowledge domains, incorporating technology and maintaining ethical principles that put client interests first, regardless of how complex or novel the financial environment becomes.

Safeguarding Financial Planners' Wellbeing

While financial planners focus on client wellbeing, their own mental health often receives less attention. Professor Alvin Ng, Clinical Psychologist at Sunway University, highlights the psychological impacts of repeatedly handling clients' financial anxieties.

"Psychological impacts through repeated exposure could include having their clients' anxieties and troubles rub off on themselves. At times, there could be feelings of unease or guilt for unintentionally imposing a sense of burden on their clients given their existing financial concerns," explains Professor Ng.

He emphasises that organisational support is crucial: "Providing in-house supervision or peer mentorship for planners can be a welcomed support as a way to protect mental wellbeing and to promote mental health."

Building Psychological Safety

For financial planning organisations, creating psychological safety is foundational. As Professor Ng explains, "No safety, no trust. No trust, no cooperation. No cooperation, no efficiency. No efficiency, no progress. No progress, no thriving."

Psychological safety serves as the cornerstone for flourishing workplaces, while trust issues lead to languishing—the opposite of thriving. When employees lack trust, they remain on high alert in toxic environments, leading to exhaustion and burnout.

Essential Support Systems

Professor Ng identifies several critical elements that organisations should implement:

Leadership and Culture: Empathetic and compassionate leadership that models effective coping strategies is essential. Leaders should demonstrate values that encourage psychological safety, building trust and respect within the organisation. Creating an inclusive, collaborative culture where employees feel perceived autonomy helps foster a thriving organisational climate.

Recognition and Clarity: Regular acknowledgement of roles and providing a sense of recognition are vital for cognitive wellbeing. Role clarity, combined with manager feedback on performance and competencies, helps prevent decision fatigue and promotes sustainable performance.

Professional Development: Facilitated role-play workshops can help build planners' competencies in active listening and effective responding to clients. These workshops, facilitated by qualified mental health counsellors, address emotional expressions that are typically difficult to manage in daily interactions.

Structural Support: Organisations should consider Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) that employees can access for free, paid for by the organisation. Protective policies and wellbeing support structures provide perceived structural support that enhances mental health.

Professor Alvin Ng, Clinical Psychologist at Sunway University

Work-Life Balance: Facilitating work-life balance while promoting nurturance and personal growth is crucial. Mental rest moments should be incorporated into daily routines to prevent cognitive overload.

The Business Case for Wellbeing

Beyond moral imperatives, supporting planner wellbeing makes business sense. Effective client communication—built on active listening, empathy and transparency—requires emotionally healthy practitioners. When planners feel psychologically safe, they can better affirm mutual respect, acknowledge client values and needs and express clear understanding of clients' financial situations and concerns.

As financial planning continues to evolve with increasing complexity and client expectations, the mental wellbeing of practitioners themselves should be recognised as a critical component of sustainable, high-quality service delivery. Organisations that invest in comprehensive wellbeing support not only protect their most valuable assets—their people—but also enhance their capacity to serve clients effectively in an increasingly demanding profession.

Feature

Inside the CFP Certification Syllabus UPDATE

As the financial landscape evolves with unprecedented speed, the CFP certification programme undergoes its most significant transformation in years, meeting the challenges of an increasingly complex marketplace with a restructured five-module format.

The financial planning industry is experiencing a paradigm shift. With ageing populations worldwide, rapidly transforming investment markets and the growing recognition of behavioural psychology's role in financial decision-making, the traditional approach to financial planning education needed a refresh. FPAM has responded with comprehensive revisions to the CFP certification curriculum, aligned with FPSB's revised global standards released in April 2023. These changes are scheduled to roll out in the third quarter of 2025.


Dr Joyce Nga


Wong Loke Lim

PSYCHOLOGY MEETS FINANCE

Perhaps the most notable change in the new curriculum is the integration of behavioural psychology into Module 1. Dr Joyce Nga, a business and finance educator, explains the rationale behind this addition.

"Individual investors are not always rational. Investment decision- making involves technical, emotional and behavioural dimensions," she says. "Research has shown that behavioural finance aspects, such as herding, availability and framing biases can affect the way investors perceive information and the trends in markets."

Wong Loke Lim, another key figure in the CFP certification curriculum revision process, elaborates on how this addition will transform client-advisor relationships in the Malaysian context:

"The introducing of behavioural psychology into the curriculum is aimed at ensuring CFP professionals better understand the factors that influence client mindset, behaviours and decision-making and the complex interplay between client psychology and CFP professional psychology. This is key to dispensing the right advice and providing personalised service, especially in the new era in which clients are getting more sophisticated and better informed."

The localisation of this content takes into account Malaysia's rich multicultural environment. Wong notes that considerations include addressing clients of different cultural backgrounds—language, values, traditions and race. "This cultural sensitivity extends to communication methods, with Wong pointing out that "a more indirect and passive communication approach is preferred, whereas direct questioning is commonly used in the west."

RESPONDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

A major structural change in the new curriculum is the reorganisation from a four-module to a five-module format, with Investment Planning (now Module 3) separated from Retirement Planning, which is now paired with Tax Planning in Module 4 (previously Tax Planning was in Module 1). This restructuring acknowledges the growing importance of retirement planning in an ageing global population while giving dedicated attention to investment strategies through a separate focused module.

Dr Nga provides compelling demographic context: "According to the World Health Organisation, by 2030, 1 in 6 people globally will be aged 60 and above. The United Nations' *World Social Report 2023* states that the population aged 65 years or older worldwide is expected to increase more than double from 761 million in 2021 to 1.6 billion in

Previous Syllabus	New Syllabus
MODULE 1 Foundation in Financial Planning & Tax Planning	MODULE 1 Foundation in Financial Planning with Behavioural Psychology of Financial Planning
MODULE 2 Insurance & Estate Planning	MODULE 2 Insurance & Estate Planning
MODULE 3 Investment Planning & Retirement Planning	MODULE 3 Investment Planning
MODULE 4 Financial Plan Construction & Professional Responsibilities	MODULE 4 Retirement Planning & Tax Planning
	MODULE 5 Financial Plan Construction & Professional Responsibilities

2050. Malaysia is projected to be an aged nation by 2050, with 15% or more of the population above the age of 65."

This demographic reality demands a more comprehensive approach to retirement planning. "The restructured Retirement Planning module will allow FPAM to include more updated content on the topic to make it more holistic and applicable to Malaysian society," Dr Nga explains.

She also highlights the complexities that make retirement planning particularly challenging: "Retirement planning is long-term and it becomes complicated by many personal commitments and situations encountered along the way, for instance, children's education, work security and, in time to come, issues of the sandwich generation."

The revised curriculum also elevates the importance of tax planning. Dr Nga believes this change creates room to not only update but also make the contents more relevant to the general audience by including content such as e-invoicing, expanding on taxation on small and medium-sized enterprises and discussing current tax issues.

BALANCING GLOBAL STANDARDS WITH LOCAL CONTEXT

The curriculum revisions were designed with both global and local considerations in mind. "The new structure was developed together with an alignment and mapping with the standards and body of knowledge contained in FPSB's global financial planning standards framework, which is internationally recognised," Dr Nga emphasises.

Wong adds that the Malaysian localisation considerations include recognising domestic rules and regulations and the unique aspects of the Malaysian financial landscape, such as the role of religious financial concepts, the needs of different income groups and the impact of technology on financial services.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

For the new curriculum to be effective, teaching methodologies must evolve as well. Dr Nga recommends a combination of collaborative, experiential and problem-based learning to accommodate diverse learning styles among students enrolling in the CFP certification programme.

"Given the time period of study, these approaches will help candidates reinforce the development of critical thinking and problem-based skills in the real-world context," she says. "Class activities should be hands-on and include some knowledge of software simulations of calculations for discussion."

The curriculum changes also necessitate a rethinking of assessment approaches. Dr Nga advocates for more applied, real-life, scenario-based questions. This is to ensure that candidates are able to grasp concepts and apply them in the real world seamlessly.

This aligns with Wong's observation that the new syllabus prioritises the development of critical professional capabilities, including interpersonal, people and technical skills. "The assessment approaches will need to evaluate not just technical knowledge but also the application of behavioural insights and client communication strategies," he says.

THE FUTURE OF FINANCIAL PLANNING EDUCATION

Both experts highlighted the importance of industry collaboration in curriculum implementation. Dr Nga envisions partnerships with various financial institutions and regulatory bodies, suggesting that there are many avenues for collaboration. For instance, inviting content or case study contributions from the unit trust professional associations (e.g. FIMM), tax professionals (CITM), capital market regulators and institutions (SIDC and Bursa Malaysia), as well as pension and retirement funds (EPF and PPA).

The CFP certification syllabus changes represent a forward-looking approach to financial planning education, addressing both current realities and anticipated future trends. Wong notes that these changes reflect a broader focus on the evolving landscape of financial planning, including technology and artificial intelligence, behavioural psychology and client-centric engagement.

These revisions promise to equip financial planners with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex financial landscape while providing more personalised, culturally sensitive guidance to their clients.

As Dr Nga succinctly puts it, "The changes will offer a more robust and holistic curriculum that will add value to the complex financial planning marketplace."

Highlight

CFP Professional Community Exceeds 230,000 Worldwide

With Thailand, India and Brazil leading double-digit growth rates, the global demand for qualified financial planning expertise continues to rise as clients report improved financial confidence and quality of life.

The worldwide community of CFP professionals has reached a significant milestone, exceeding 230,000 practitioners by the end of 2024. This 3.1% annual growth reflects increasing global demand for qualified financial planning services delivered by professionals committed to rigorous standards.

FPSB reported the addition of 6,878 CFP professionals last year, bringing the total to 230,648 professionals across 28 territories worldwide.

"The CFP designation continues to be internationally recognised as the global symbol of excellence in financial planning," said FPSB CEO Dante De Gori, CFP. "This continued growth supports the rising demand for financial planners who commit to delivering competent and ethical financial planning advice."

Several territories demonstrated remarkable growth in 2024. The United States and Brazil led in absolute terms, adding 4,218 and 1,255 CFP professionals respectively. Four territories achieved double-digit growth rates: Thailand (18.5%), India (17.7%), Brazil (13.4%), and Switzerland (12.2%). Italy, the newest territory where certification launched in 2023, ended 2024 with 72 CFP professionals.

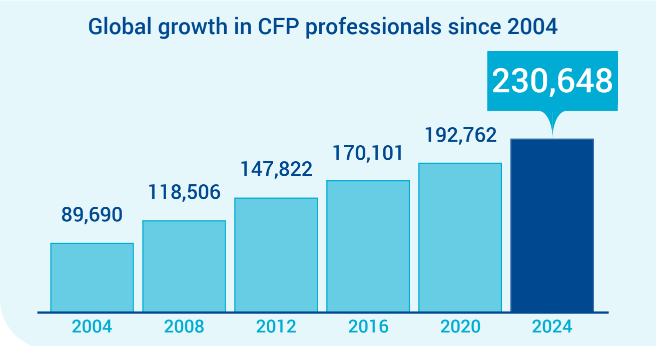
The United States remains the largest market with 103,093 CFP professionals, followed by China (34,535), Japan (26,981), Canada (17,457), and Brazil (10,634). Several territories reached important milestones, including Brazil surpassing 10,000 professionals, South Africa exceeding 5,000, India topping 3,000 and Ireland crossing the 1,000 mark.

Research conducted by FPSB indicates that clients working with CFP professionals report improved quality of life, greater financial confidence and higher satisfaction with their financial situations. Notably, 98% of clients trust their CFP professional to act in their best interests, underscoring the value these practitioners bring to their clients' lives.

230,648
CFP Professionals Worldwide
2024 year-end figures

3.1% growth rate

6,878 increase over previous year



CFP professionals by territory

Territory	CFP professionals
United States	103,093
China	34,535
Japan	26,981
Canada	17,457
Brazil	10,634
South Africa	5,001
Australia	4,352
Hong Kong	3,616
Chinese Taipei	3,248
India	3,215
Rep. of Korea	3,203
The Netherlands	2,891
Indonesia	2,755
Malaysia	2,615
Germany	1,549
United Kingdom	1,064
Ireland	1,006
Singapore	887
Thailand	703
France	625
Switzerland	340
Austria	297
Israel	283
New Zealand	216
Italy	72
Colombia	10

Source: FPSB

The Heart of the Matter

With her unique blend of technical expertise and client-focused philosophy, second-place winner of FPAM's "2024 Financial Planning Competition" Grace Loo is redefining what it means to provide financial guidance in today's complex world.

In an industry often dominated by complex jargon and intimidating financial models, Grace Loo stands out for her remarkable ability to transform financial planning into something deeply personal and accessible. Having secured the second position in FPAM's "2024 Financial Planning Competition", Loo brings a refreshing perspective that combines rigorous mathematical expertise with genuine human connection.

"My approach was simple—focus on what truly matters to the client. I imagined myself advising a real person, not just answering a case study," Loo explains about her winning strategy.

For Loo, financial planning transcends spreadsheets. "It's always about clarity, purpose and practicality. The strategy I used reflected my belief in building plans that are not just technically sound but also deeply aligned with life goals."

BRIDGING WORLDS

As both a CFP professional and Shariah Registered Financial Planner, Loo operates comfortably in multiple financial frameworks—a versatility increasingly valuable in Malaysia's diverse landscape.

"For me, it starts with understanding the values behind the numbers," she says. "I don't believe in a one-size-fits-all approach."

Loo's methodology involves deep listening to discern what matters most to each client. "When a client prefers Shariah-compliant strategies, I ensure every recommendation respects those principles while still meeting their financial goals. The key is to offer solutions that are not only compliant and effective—but also meaningful to the person behind the plan."

MAKING FINANCE SIMPLE

Loo has built her reputation partly on her ability to demystify financial concepts. She shares an example of explaining diversification: "Rather than going into technical asset allocation models, think about how you would pack for a trip. You wouldn't rely on just one outfit because you can't predict the weather—you pack a mix of clothes to stay prepared for different conditions. Diversification works the same way."

"I believe that when we connect financial concepts to everyday experiences, it not only simplifies understanding but also builds confidence," she explains. "My focus has always been to turn complexity into clarity—and help people make financial decisions they can truly feel comfortable with."

THE MATHEMATICAL EDGE

Loo's educational background in financial mathematics provides a solid analytical foundation—a combination she's now enhancing with MBA studies.

"I've always had a passion for numbers and how they tell a story—especially when used to solve real-life problems," she explains. "Financial mathematics gave me the technical foundation to assess risks, model outcomes and evaluate strategies with confidence."

Her pursuit of an MBA represents her commitment to continuous growth. "It's been incredibly enriching to add leadership and strategic thinking to that foundation. It has helped me approach planning with a balance of analysis, empathy and big-picture thinking."

Grace Loo, CFP®, Licensed Financial Planner at Axen Alpha Advisory

VALUES IN ACTION

Loo's professional philosophy centres around maintaining a positive mindset, creating good partnerships and striving for significant outcomes.

"These values are at the core of everything I do," she says. "I believe that mindset shapes action—when clients feel supported and hopeful, they're more likely to take steps towards real change."

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

When discussing financial planning in Malaysia, Loo identifies accessibility and perception as major hurdles.

"I think a lot of people still feel that financial planning is either too complicated, too costly or not for 'someone like me'," she observes. "That mindset is a big barrier."

Her solution involves meeting clients where they are. "I simplify the process, help them take small, confident steps, and build from there."

Loo sees education as critical. "The more people understand, the more empowered they feel to take control of their finances."

HOLISTIC PLANNING

"I always begin by asking questions about life, not just finances," Loo explains. "What do they want to protect? What are they building towards? What legacy matters to them?"

These foundational questions guide her planning approach. "From there, I design plans that balance protection, growth and transition. It's never just about selling a product—it's about creating a roadmap that supports both the numbers and the life they're trying to live."

LOOKING AHEAD

As for the future, Loo shares her vision for financial planning in Malaysia.

"The landscape is definitely changing. Clients today want more transparency, more education and more tailored advice," she observes. "Planners who can combine emotional intelligence with financial knowledge will thrive."

For her own part, Loo demonstrates commitment to constant development. "I'm investing in continuous growth—pursuing my MBA has been a big step towards that. I'm also committed to contributing back through education and mentoring."

She concludes with optimism: "I believe the future of this profession lies not just in better tools but in better conversations—and I'm excited to be part of that change."

Shaping Lives Through Financial Education

Dr Jack Lin, founder of Lyfeshaper, shares his journey from student to approved CFP education provider and his vision for nurturing ethical, competent financial planners who put clients first.

The complexity of modern financial decisions has created an unprecedented demand for competent, ethical financial planners. Dr Jack Lin, founder of Lyfeshaper, is among those leading the charge to transform how these professionals are trained. His company, Lyfeshaper recently achieved a significant milestone by becoming an approved CFP education provider. His story is one of vision, persistence and an unwavering commitment to transforming how financial planning professionals are trained—a journey that spans two decades of industry experience and educational innovation.

FROM STUDENT TO EDUCATOR

Dr Jack Lin's path to founding Lyfeshaper began in 2004 when he enrolled in the CFP certification programme as a student himself. What he discovered during that transformative year would fundamentally shape his perspective on financial education and its broader potential impact.

"Lyfeshaper was born out of a deep desire to bridge the gap between technical financial knowledge and real-world application," Dr Lin explains. "My journey began back in 2004, when I enrolled in the CFP certification programme, which at the time consisted of six modules. I completed the programme in 2005, and I found the content not only comprehensive but also immensely valuable—something that I felt shouldn't be limited to those pursuing a career in financial planning alone."

The realisation that struck Dr Lin was profound and would become the driving force behind his eventual venture into education. The knowledge he gained wasn't just professionally valuable—it had the potential to transform how everyday people approached their financial decisions.

"It struck me that this knowledge could benefit many more people if it were made more accessible and contextualised to everyday financial decisions. That was when the seed was planted: I started to think seriously about becoming a trainer so I could share this knowledge with a wider audience."

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

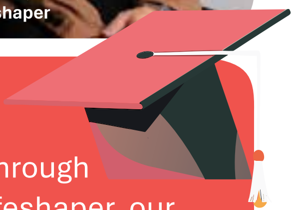
Dr Lin's transition from industry professional to educator wasn't rushed—it was a carefully planned evolution. He spent a decade building his expertise and understanding the market dynamics before officially becoming a CFP education trainer in 2015.

This patient, methodical approach would prove invaluable when he launched Lyfeshaper. At the end of last year, Lyfeshaper proudly obtained its status as an approved CFP education provider—thanks to the opportunity granted by FPAM.

The achievement represents more than just a business milestone—it's the culmination of a vision that extends far beyond traditional educational boundaries and conventional training approaches.

"Through Lyfeshaper, our mission is not just to prepare individuals for the CFP certification but to nurture a new generation of ethical, competent and client-centric financial planning professionals—while also empowering the public to make informed decisions about their own financial futures."

Dr Jack Lin, CFP®, Founder of Lyfeshaper



"Through Lyfeshaper, our mission is not just to prepare individuals for the CFP certification but to nurture a new generation of ethical, competent and client-centric financial planning professionals."

ADAPTING TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The financial planning education sector has undergone significant transformation. Dr Lin has observed these changes and adapted accordingly.

"Since Lyfeshaper's inception, we've seen a significant shift in both the demand for and delivery of financial planning education," he notes. "The public's awareness of the importance of financial literacy has grown, partly due to economic uncertainties, changing demographics and increased regulatory focus on holistic advice."

"We've also witnessed a digital transformation—students now expect flexible, hybrid learning models and we've adapted accordingly with our online modules and interactive workshops. Additionally, the content itself has evolved to incorporate emerging topics like ESG investing, gig economy planning and digital asset management."

STAYING CURRENT AND RELEVANT

In an industry where regulatory changes occur rapidly, maintaining relevant content is crucial. "Staying current is non-negotiable for us. We work closely with industry practitioners, regulators and educational councils to ensure our content reflects the latest regulatory changes and market trends," Dr Lin explains.

"Beyond the CFP education syllabus, we offer enrichment sessions, invite guest speakers from fintech startups and investment firms and foster a strong alumni network for continuous learning. We also conduct annual curriculum reviews and feedback loops to ensure we are always aligned with the needs of the profession and the community."

CORE VALUES AND KEY CHALLENGES

Lyfeshaper's educational philosophy is built on a foundation of five carefully chosen principles that guide every aspect of their training programmes and student interactions.

"At the heart of Lyfeshaper are five core values: Integrity, Practicality, Growth, Client-Centricity and Community," Dr Lin states. "We believe in instilling ethical standards that go beyond compliance—our students are taught to put clients' interests first. Practicality means equipping students with tools they can use from day one, not just theory."

The emphasis on personal development and community building reflects Dr Lin's understanding that successful financial planning requires more than technical competence. "We also emphasise personal growth, encouraging our students to be lifelong learners. Our client-centric approach ensures they develop empathy and communication skills, not

just analytical ones. Lastly, we foster a strong community of financial planners who support and uplift each other."

However, running an education provider in today's digital age comes with unique challenges that require constant innovation and adaptation. Dr Lin identifies a particularly pressing modern obstacle that many educators face.

"In recent years, a new challenge has emerged: today's students are surrounded by distractions and digital temptations. With constant access to social media and entertainment on their devices, it's increasingly difficult to capture and maintain their attention in a traditional classroom setting."

His innovative solution demonstrates the creative thinking that has driven Lyfeshaper's success: "To counter this, we've made it a priority to innovate our delivery methods. This includes offering up-to-date training programmes that reflect current industry practices and introducing creative tools like our proprietary 'Lyfeshaper Quest' board game—a one-of-a-kind interactive learning experience designed to make financial planning concepts fun, practical and engaging."

Beyond student engagement, Dr Lin faces the broader challenge of changing industry perceptions. "One of the biggest challenges has been the prevailing perception that financial planning is more of a sales-driven profession rather than a true advisory vocation grounded in ethics and technical expertise. Changing this mindset—both within the industry and among students—has been a continuous effort."

TECHNOLOGY AND THE HUMAN TOUCH

As fintech innovations reshape financial services, Dr Lin recognises the need to prepare students for a technology-enhanced future while maintaining focus on human values.

"Technology is transforming financial planning—from robo-advisors and AI-driven tools to blockchain-based financial products. Education must keep pace. At Lyfeshaper, we are integrating fintech modules and case studies into our curriculum, helping students understand how to leverage technology for better client outcomes."

However, Dr Lin highlights the importance of maintaining balance, stating, "Technology enhances the role of the financial planner; it doesn't replace it. Preparing students to thrive in a hybrid digital-human advisory environment is one of our key focuses."

WISDOM FOR NEW PROFESSIONALS

For aspiring financial planners, Dr Lin offers guidance that reflects his deep understanding of professional success:

"My advice is simple but powerful: Always lead with purpose. Financial planning isn't just about numbers—it's about changing lives. Be humble enough to keep learning, brave enough to ask the right questions and committed enough to put clients' needs above all else."

His final words encapsulate Lyfeshaper's philosophy: "Get your fundamentals right, invest in continuous education and surround yourself with mentors and peers who challenge you to grow. Lastly, embrace technology, but never forget that the most valuable asset you offer is your ability to understand and care for another human being's financial wellbeing."

Through Lyfeshaper, Dr Jack Lin is shaping the future of financial planning education, one student at a time.

Healthcare at a Crossroads

As medical insurance premiums skyrocket, experts share strategies to balance quality care with financial security in an increasingly expensive medical landscape.

Dr Parathythasan Rajaandra, Head of Operations at Maaedicare Charitable Foundation

Siti Zarifah binti Amir, CFP®, Licensed Financial Planner at Kenanga Investors

Malaysia's healthcare system stands at a critical juncture. With medical inflation that has risen to 15%—higher than the global and Asia Pacific average of 10%—patients face tough choices about coverage, treatment options and long-term financial planning; according to the *Global Medical Trend Rates Report 2024*, this inflation is primarily driven by advances in medical technology as well as an increase in non-communicable disease cases.

As medical insurance premiums rise, healthcare providers are shifting focus from reactive treatment to proactive prevention—a change that could benefit both medical outcomes and financial bottom lines.

Dr Parathythasan Rajaandra, Head of Operations at Maaedicare Charitable Foundation, explains that technology is driving this transformation: "Preventive care and patient wellness programmes are increasingly leveraging technology—such as wearable devices, mobile health apps like HealthifyMe, telehealth services including DoctorOnCall and BookDoc and AI-driven screening and risk assessments—to enable earlier detection, continuous monitoring and personalised interventions."

This technological evolution helps manage chronic conditions before they become acute emergencies requiring costly interventions. For patients, this means fewer hospital visits and better health outcomes; for the healthcare system, it translates to more efficient resource allocation.

CREATING HEALTHCARE BUFFERS

Financial planners unanimously agree that addressing rising medical costs requires deliberate and early planning.

Siti Zarifah binti Amir of Kenanga Investors highlights the severe impact of medical inflation: "General inflation in Malaysia, such as for food and petrol, is around 2-3% per year. Medical inflation, however, is estimated at 10-15% annually, based on data from Aon and Mercer. This means if something costs RM1,000 today, it could cost over RM2,000 in just 7 years."

When asked about her approach to helping clients, Siti explains her two-pronged strategy: "First, protect what they already have by helping them review their insurance plans and communicate with their insurers if they're affected by premium resets. Second, plan for what's coming by including a 'healthcare savings bucket' in their retirement plan."

Chow Sook Woon, CFP®, IFP®, Licensed Financial Planner at Prudential Malaysia

Chow Sook Woon, a veteran financial planner with over 20 years at Prudential Malaysia, shares a client story that demonstrates the human impact of proper planning:

"One client who was diagnosed with kidney failure at age 50 had to begin dialysis treatment—a long-term commitment both emotionally and financially. Fortunately, he had a comprehensive medical plan with me. Every single dialysis session was covered by his medical card, and because we had thoughtfully structured his portfolio, he didn't have to pay for his premiums anymore—not for the medical plan and not for his three other retirement savings plans."

She emphasises that this planning provided her client with one priceless gift: peace of mind. Even while managing a critical illness, he could maintain financial independence and continue building towards retirement.

Felix Neoh, CFP®, Director – Financial Planning at FinWealth

Felix Neoh, Director of Financial Planning at FinWealth, offers a more pragmatic view on insurance needs: "Different life stages require different insurance needs, with retirees often needing a medical card and long-term care arrangements such as nursing care services or home healthcare provisions if they have medical conditions." He suggests that retirees who have built sufficient net worth may consider self-insuring for certain health risks while maintaining essential medical coverage.

QUANTIFYING FUTURE HEALTHCARE COSTS

For many Malaysians, the challenge lies in estimating how much to set aside for future healthcare needs. Financial planners employ various approaches to help clients visualise these costs.

Siti Zarifah takes a detailed, personalised approach: "I engage in detailed conversations with clients to understand their personal health history, family medical background and any specific concerns they may have about future healthcare needs."

She then uses concrete examples to illustrate the financial impact: "If you're currently spending RM5,000 annually on healthcare, in 20 years (assuming a 10% inflation rate) you'd need around RM33,637 per year just to maintain the same level of care. Over the life span of 20-25 years, this could easily amount to RM700,000 or more."

Neoh acknowledges the challenges in making future projections, as healthcare costs in Malaysia involve many stakeholders, including hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, insurance providers and government bodies. "Given the fluid situation in determining future medical inflation rates, consumers should expect repricing every two to three years and factor in a rate of growth for medical premiums in their financial planning."

As for Chow, she takes a more narrative approach, focusing on real-life scenarios rather than charts and projections. "For many clients, retirement feels like the finish line. But I often remind them—retirement is not the end of planning; it's the beginning of a new kind of responsibility." She guides clients through difficult questions like, "If you had to stop work tomorrow due to illness, how long could your savings last without affecting your retirement lifestyle?"

BALANCING QUALITY CARE WITH COST EFFICIENCY

As healthcare costs continue to rise, both medical providers and financial planners are developing innovative approaches to maintain quality while managing expenses.

Dr Rajaandra describes how his non-profit organisation balances technology investments with cost considerations: "Transitioning to a Hospital Information System (HIS) with electronic health records (EHRs) across our 11 dialysis centres, two free clinics and cardiac diagnostic centre has already enhanced workflow and care delivery." Beyond EHRs, we've streamlined key operational processes—such as inventory, billing and invoicing—to reduce manpower needs and administrative overhead."

For individuals approaching retirement, Chow outlines three practical options: "First, deal with higher premiums. As you get older, premiums will naturally increase. If your budget allows, maintaining a comprehensive private medical plan is still the most convenient option for quick access and comfort."

The second option is self-insurance, though she cautions against this without careful consideration: "Some clients prefer to reduce or cancel their medical plans, thinking they'll 'just pay as they go'. But we look at the math together—and often the cost of a single surgery or hospital stay can wipe out years of savings."

The third option acknowledges financial realities: "For some, especially those on tighter budgets, [relying on government hospitals] becomes the fallback. While government hospitals in Malaysia are still relatively affordable, the trade-off is often long wait times and limited access to certain treatments."

Neoh offers additional practical advice: "Focus on maintaining good health through a balanced diet and exercise to reduce medical expenses." He also recommends establishing separate medical funds—one for personal long-term care and another for ageing parents—while ensuring siblings collaborate on setting aside funds for potential parental healthcare bills.

With medical inflation showing no signs of slowing, proactive planning becomes not just financially prudent but necessary for securing both health and wealth in the decades ahead. As Siti Zarifah concludes, "Planning isn't just about the numbers. It's about securing peace of mind and maintaining your quality of life during retirement."

THE INSURANCE TIMING DILEMMA

Should you buy medical insurance young or wait until you're older? The answer might surprise you.

Based on research by Woo Kok Hoong, CFP®, Shariah RFP, PB(AICB), Lecturer/Trainer; Nurfadhilah Bt Abu Hassan, Lecturer; and Nurul Ikma Bt Haris, Lecturer at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kampar.

Here's the catch-22 situation many Malaysians face: medical insurance makes the most financial sense when you're young and healthy, but you'll need it most when you're older and sicker.

The Young Person's Advantage

When you're in your 20s and 30s, insurance premiums are low because you're statistically less likely to make claims. It's the perfect time to lock in coverage—but it's also when healthcare feels least urgent.

The Senior Challenge

As you age, two things happen simultaneously: your chances of needing medical care increase, and insurance companies respond by raising premiums. It's basic risk management—insurers charge more when they expect to pay out more.

The Public Healthcare Question

This raises an interesting policy question: Should Malaysia follow the American model with programmes like Medicaid (for low-income individuals) and Medicare (for seniors)? The idea would be to have private insurance for the young and public healthcare for the elderly.

What's Driving Up Costs?

Several factors are making healthcare more expensive globally:

Patent Protection: Brand-name drugs are protected from generic competition, keeping prices high. Trade agreements like the now-defunct Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) actually extended these protections.

Generic Drug Delays: While generic drugs cost significantly less and work just as well as brand names, patent holders often find ways to delay their introduction to the market.

Innovation vs. Affordability: There's an ongoing tension between rewarding pharmaceutical companies for research and development and keeping medications affordable for patients.

Emerging Solutions

Some countries are getting creative with cost control:

Telemedicine: Home hospitalisation through video consultations and home visits can reduce the need for expensive hospital beds while maintaining quality care.

Generic Drug Promotion: Encouraging the use of equally effective generic medications can dramatically reduce prescription costs.

Data Sharing: Better sharing of clinical research data could speed up drug development and reduce duplication of expensive studies.

Optimising Drug Exclusivity Periods: Balancing patent protection periods to reward innovation while allowing faster introduction of affordable generic alternatives.

Health Insurance Securitisation: Creating financial instruments that help spread healthcare risks across broader markets, potentially reducing premium volatility.

Global Research Initiatives: Collaborative international research programmes that reduce duplicated efforts and share costs across multiple countries and institutions.

Local Pharmaceutical Hubs: Establishing pharmaceutical hubs locally to reduce dependency on expensive imported medications and create regional production capabilities.

Traditional Medicine Standardisation: Developing quality standards and integration pathways for traditional medicine practices, potentially offering cost-effective complementary healthcare options.

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Key Takeaways

As medical premiums continue their upward trajectory, Malaysians face complex choices balancing healthcare needs with financial security. The insights from our experts suggest a multi-faceted approach:

Invest in preventive care and leverage technology to reduce major medical interventions.

Create dedicated healthcare funds separate from general retirement savings.

Regularly review and adjust both insurance coverage and financial projections.

Consider lifestyle changes that can improve health outcomes and reduce medical needs.

When Tragedy Tests Your Insurance Policy

The devastating gas explosion in Putra Heights left families homeless and facing massive financial losses. Are you and your clients prepared if disaster strikes?

The recent gas explosion in Putra Heights has sent shockwaves through local communities, leaving victims to sift through rubble that was once their homes. As affected residents face the daunting task of rebuilding their lives, a critical question emerges: Will their insurance cover the devastating losses?

For many homeowners caught in the blast radius, the explosion destroyed not just structures but also cherished possessions, vehicles and a sense of security. What seemed like an ordinary day turned catastrophic in seconds, highlighting a sobering reality—many Malaysians don't fully understand what their fire insurance policies actually cover until it's too late.

As a financial planner with years of experience in the insurance industry, I've witnessed countless cases where property owners discover their coverage gaps only after disaster strikes. The Putra Heights incident serves as a wake-up call for all property owners to review their policies before they need them.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COVERAGE

Standard fire insurance policies typically cover damages caused by fire, lightning and domestic gas explosions. However, coverage specifics vary significantly between insurers and policy types. What seems comprehensive on the surface may contain critical exclusions that leave homeowners vulnerable.

In my practice, I've identified four common exclusions that could lead to denied claims:

Uninsured Perils: Some basic policies don't automatically include gas explosions unless explicitly added.

Wear & Tear: Claims may be rejected if the explosion resulted from poorly maintained or ageing gas systems.

Commercial Use: Using a residential property for business purposes without appropriate coverage could invalidate claims.

Underinsurance: Properties insured below their actual value may receive only partial compensation—sometimes barely enough to cover repairs.

TAKING ACTION AFTER A DISASTER

For those affected by fire incidents, I recommend taking these crucial steps:

Review Your Policy Immediately: Contact your insurer to verify if gas explosions are covered under your specific policy.

Document Everything: Take comprehensive photos of damage, obtain police reports and complete damage assessments professionally.

File Claims Promptly: Delays can complicate the process and potentially reduce compensation amounts.

Seek Professional Guidance: Insurance agents, brokers or financial advisors can navigate complex claims processes and advocate for fair settlements.

PREVENTING FUTURE LOSSES

While insurance provides financial protection, prevention remains the best defence. Regular inspection of gas systems, installing gas leak detectors and ensuring proper maintenance can significantly reduce explosion risks.

In my experience, many homeowners invest in expensive furniture and renovations but hesitate to spend on adequate insurance coverage. The relatively small premium increase for comprehensive coverage pales in comparison to the potential financial devastation of an underinsured loss.

The Putra Heights tragedy highlights a critical lesson for all property owners: review your insurance coverage now, before disaster strikes. Understanding exactly what's protected—and what isn't—could mean the difference between rapid recovery and financial ruin when the unthinkable happens.

> "Don't wait for a catastrophe to discover your insurance gaps. The time to evaluate your protection is today."

Don't wait for a catastrophe to discover your insurance gaps. The time to evaluate your protection is today.

FIRE SAFETY ESSENTIALS

Reuben Teoh, Founder/ Secretary of the Fire Preventors' Society

Every second counts when it comes to fire emergencies, and implementing prevention strategies can be the difference between safety and tragedy. Reuben Teoh, Founder/ Secretary of the Fire Preventors' Society, shares some tips to protect your family and property from the devastating effects of fire.

Home Fire Prevention	Vehicle Fire Prevention
Install smoke alarms on every floor and test monthly.	Regularly inspect wiring, fuel lines and engine.
Never leave cooking unattended; keep flammables away from heat.	Properly discard cigarettes; never toss from windows.
Avoid overloading electrical outlets; replace frayed wires.	Secure flammable items in ventilated areas away from sunlight.
Store gasoline, lighters and aerosols away from heat.	Keep an ABC-class fire extinguisher within reach.
Practise a 2-minute evacuation drill regularly.	Avoid parking on tall, dry grass that could ignite from hot exhausts.

Remember

- Teach children fire safety basics. (stop, drop, roll)

STOP	DROP	ROLL
Don't run, as movement fans flames and makes the fire spread faster.	Immediately get to the ground and lie flat with your hands covering your face to protect airways and prevent flames from reaching your face.	Roll back and forth slowly to smother the flames by depriving them of oxygen.

- Never leave open flames unsupervised.
- Prevention starts with mindful habits and preparedness.

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Navigating Succession in Family Enterprises

Family enterprises must build robust governance frameworks and succession strategies to ensure wealth preservation while adapting to changing business landscapes and next-generation expectations.

As the global economy approaches an unprecedented US$18.3 trillion in n wealth[1] transfer by 2030, family enterprises face a dual challenge: preserving legacy while adapting to modern complexities. Shifting family dynamics, digital disruption and diverse next-generation ambitions demand a reimagined approach to succession planning. Here are key strategies to ensure continuity, fairness and resilience in an evolving landscape.

PROACTIVE PLANNING: START EARLY, STAY AHEAD

Succession planning should begin long before leadership transitions become urgent. Initiating conversations during periods of stability—not crisis—helps families align on shared goals and reduces the risk of conflicts derailing the process. Early dialogue allows younger generations to contribute fresh perspectives while respecting the wisdom of senior leaders. Delays risk abrupt handovers triggered by unforeseen events, such as health crises or irreparable disputes.

Neutral third-party advisors can play a pivotal role in facilitating these discussions. By objectively framing sensitive topics—such as ownership distribution, roles and governance—they help families reach consensus without emotional bias.

TOOLS FOR WEALTH PRESERVATION AND GOVERNANCE

Modern succession planning requires a mix of legal, financial and governance tools, each with unique advantages and challenges:

A Trusts, Foundations and Holding Structures

- **Trusts:** Trusts separate legal ownership from economic benefits. Active family members are appointed to exert control over business decisions, while passive members mainly receive distributions. However, trusts may face limitations in jurisdictions with foreign ownership restrictions or unfavourable tax regimes.
- **Private Foundations:** In regions like Labuan, private foundations are increasingly used to consolidate ownership of family business shares into a single block. For example, a foundation can hold 100% of a company's shares, ensuring unified decision-making while distributing economic benefits to heirs. This prevents fragmentation of ownership across cousins or branches, which often leads to governance gridlock. Private foundations also provide stability against political or economic volatility.
- **Holding Companies:** Multi-class share structures allow families to assign voting rights to active members and dividend rights to passive heirs. This ensures operational control remains with engaged stakeholders.

B Wills: Risks of Fragmentation and Disputes

While wills are straightforward and inexpensive, they often create unintended risks:

- **Share Fragmentation:** Equal distribution of shares among heirs, over generations, can lead to a proliferation of minority shareholders. This dilutes control and complicates decision-making. For example, a family business split among 20 cousins may struggle to approve strategic initiatives, leading to operational paralysis.
- **Dispute Risks:** Ambiguities in wills—such as undefined roles or unequal treatment of heirs—often spark litigation. A patriarch's vague directive to "divide shares equally" might ignore operational realities, pitting active and passive heirs against each other.

To mitigate these risks, wills should be supplemented with trusts or private foundations, together with family constitutions that clarify governance and ownership rules.

C Insurance: Liquidity Solutions for Stability

Insurance plays a critical role in addressing liquidity challenges:

- **Estate Liquidity:** Life insurance can cover estate taxes or debts tied to illiquid assets (e.g., real estate or private equity), preventing forced fire sales. For instance, a US$10 million policy could settle a patriarch's outstanding business loans, preserving the family's stake in the company.
- **Director's Risk Insurance:** In partnerships, this can fund share buyouts if a sudden exit incident occurs, ensuring continuity without draining cash reserves.
- **Equalisation Policies:** Insurance payouts can compensate heirs who receive fewer business shares, preserving family harmony.

D Family Constitutions: Blueprint for Harmony

Formalised agreements can outline values, ownership rules, employment criteria and conflict-resolution mechanisms. A well-drafted constitution can stipulate:

- Merit-based roles (e.g., requiring external work experience for leadership positions)
- Protocols for addressing divorce, remarriage or estranged family members
- Dividend policies to balance rewards for active and passive heirs
- Education policies for future descendants' education funding

E Business Exit Strategies: Planning for All Scenarios

Not all heirs will want—or deserve—a role in the family business. Exit strategies should align with the family's long-term vision. Proactive planning must include exit pathways:

- **Partial or Full Sale:** Liquidation via sale or initial public offering (IPO) provides capital for heirs to pursue other interests.
- **Management Buyouts:** Transitioning leadership to non-family executives while retaining ownership.

ENSURING FAIRNESS: GOVERNANCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND DIVIDENDS

Traditional succession models often prioritise equal asset distribution, but this can clash with operational realities. Passive heirs holding majority voting rights may impede critical decisions.

To mitigate this, families must balance equity with merit and recognise contributions of active members through enhanced governance rights. For example:

Working Dividends vs Family Dividends:

- **Working Dividends:** Reward family members actively involved in the business through performance-linked payouts.
- **Family Dividends:** Provide fixed distributions to heirs based on ownership stakes.

This dual structure incentivises contribution while ensuring economic fairness. For example, a family-run manufacturing firm might allocate 70% of profits as working dividends to active members and 30% as family dividends to shareholders. The family can also implement vesting schedules, tying economic benefits to tenure or milestones (e.g., heirs receive full dividends only after five years of employment in the business).

CONFLICT PREVENTION: GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Structured governance frameworks are essential to reducing disputes:

- **Family Offices:** These entities centralise decision making for investments, education and intergenerational communication.
- **Independent Advisors:** External experts—such as lawyers or accountants—bring objectivity to boards and mentor next-gen leaders.
- **Regular Governance Reviews:** Update structures to reflect changing dynamics, such as marriages, divorces or new ventures.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

Succession is not just about transferring assets—it's about cultivating capable leaders. Strategies include:

- **Formal Education:** Encourage business-related degrees or certifications.
- **Sandbox Innovation:** Allow digitally savvy heirs to test ideas (e.g., e-commerce ventures or AI tools) in controlled environments under mentorship. This balances innovation with core values.
- **Rotational Programmes:** Expose heirs to different roles within the family enterprise.
- **External Experience:** Require next-gen members to work outside the family business to build credibility.

LIQUIDITY AND DIVERSIFICATION: REDUCING DEPENDENCY

Over-reliance on illiquid family business assets poses risks. Diversifying into real estate, equities or venture capital ensures stability and provides exit options for heirs seeking independence.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING A RESILIENT LEGACY

Successful succession planning hinges on foresight, adaptability and open communication. A well-structured family office, combined with preservation vehicles, is essential for sustaining family wealth across generations. These structures offer centralised governance, professional management and risk mitigation, ensuring financial longevity and strategic wealth distribution.

By integrating these tools with proactive succession planning, families can foster resilience, adapt to modern complexities and secure their legacy for future generations.

Source:
1. Roala Khalaf, Editor of the Financial Times, 27 Dec 2024

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The Ethics-Trust Connection in Financial Planning

In an industry where trust is paramount, financial planners must prioritise ethical standards to bridge the gap between client scepticism and valuable engagement.

It's quite common to hear feedback from CFP professionals that clients often fail to appreciate the value of financial planning, making it difficult to charge consultation fees. Some members even express frustration when, despite their genuine efforts to help clients, those clients ultimately turn to products that seem more 'attractive' or 'interesting'. Many of these products are aggressively oversold by agents or even marketed in misleading ways.

I can truly empathise with the frustration and disappointment these members feel. I've experienced this journey myself, and, even after more than 16 years in the financial planning industry, I still face these challenges.

However, over time, I have developed a different perspective. Rather than blaming the market for not being ready to engage with financial planning services, I believe the responsibility lies with us, the financial planners. We need to consider what more we can do to educate the market and what gaps exist in the public's understanding of the value of financial planning.

With this in mind, I want to share my thoughts in this edition: creating demand from the public isn't just about education. It should begin with each financial planner upholding a strong code of ethics and professional standards. The trust and engagement between a client and a financial planner are a classic 'chicken and egg' situation. Should we wait for the market to demand our services, or should we take proactive steps to create that demand?

THE TRUST ELEMENT: A KEY CHALLENGE IN CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

When potential clients seek financial planning services, they are entrusting their future financial wellbeing to an advisor. In essence, they are placing their hopes, dreams and life savings in the hands of a professional, making trust a non-negotiable aspect of the relationship. Yet, trust is not granted easily; it must be earned.

The first determinant of trust from the client's perspective is the financial planner's professional competency. This encompasses a blend of practical skill, product knowledge and the foresight to anticipate the client's evolving needs and aspirations. Financial planners must demonstrate a mastery of their field, showing clients they are capable not only of understanding the intricacies of financial products but also of crafting strategies tailored to specific client goals. This requires continuous education, industry awareness and an ability to forecast potential financial hurdles or opportunities for the client.

Equally important is the planner's ability to listen and understand the unique priorities and concerns of each client. When clients see that their advisor is attentive, proactive and skilled in navigating complex financial landscapes, the groundwork for trust is laid.

INTEGRITY: PUTTING THE CLIENT FIRST

Beyond professional skill, trust is heavily influenced by the integrity of the financial planner. A code of ethics places emphasis on a client-first mindset, an ethos that requires planners to act in the best interest of their clients, free from conflicts of interest. This ethical framework means prioritising the client's welfare above personal gain or organisational pressures.

Financial planners who operate with integrity provide transparency in all their dealings. They disclose potential conflicts of interest, explain the rationale behind investment strategies and ensure that clients are fully informed before making decisions. This level of honesty fosters an environment where clients feel secure, knowing that their advisor is committed to safeguarding their financial future rather than seeking personal or corporate advantage.

> "The trust and engagement between a client and a financial planner are a classic 'chicken and egg' situation. Should we wait for the market to demand our services, or should we take proactive steps to create that demand?"

Additionally, integrity involves keeping promises and honouring commitments. When a financial planner says they will take certain actions or provide specific follow-up, doing so reinforces the trust relationship. A failure to honour such commitments, on the other hand, can severely damage trust and, consequently, client engagement.

UPHOLDING A CODE OF ETHICS

A well-defined code of ethics serves as a guiding light for financial planners, reminding them of the fundamental principles that govern their profession. Adherence to this code not only ensures legal and regulatory compliance but also bolsters the reputation of the financial planning profession as a whole.

Financial planners who commit to ethical practices signal to their clients that they are reliable, principled and driven by a sense of duty to serve. In today's financial landscape, where instances of fraud and mismanagement have eroded public confidence in financial services, adherence to a code of ethics is more important than ever. It becomes a critical means of differentiating ethical practitioners from those who might exploit their position.

In summary, a financial planner's ability to engage clients meaningfully is inextricably linked to the element of trust. Trust is established through a combination of professional skill and integrity, both of which are underpinned by a strong code of ethics. For financial planners, cultivating this trust requires a relentless commitment to ethical behaviour, ongoing professional development and a genuine client-first approach. By placing trust at the forefront of their practice, financial planners not only enhance client engagement but also contribute positively to the reputation and credibility of the financial planning industry.

About the Writer:
Nicholas Chu, CFP®, IFP®, is the CEO of 8VI FIN Malaysia Sdn Bhd and Founder of Max Wealth Education Sdn Bhd. Sixteen years ago, he left the corporate world to become an independent financial planner. Now, he is more actively involved in financial planning education, having written seven books and frequently being interviewed by mainstream media.

ASEAN's Q3 Investment Playbook

Amid intensifying global economic headwinds, Southeast Asia offers a compelling, albeit complex, investment landscape. Kenanga Investors Berhad's Chief Investment Officer, Lee Sook Yee, shares her insights on the region's opportunities and challenges for investors.

The third quarter of 2025 promises to be a defining period for Southeast Asian markets. Investors will grapple with evolving US trade policies and shifting monetary landscapes. While global uncertainties loom, the region's domestic fundamentals remain resilient, creating a nuanced investment environment that rewards strategic positioning.

THE TARIFF TANGO AND EXTERNAL FORCES

US trade policy continues to cast a long shadow over ASEAN markets. Lee Sook Yee frames the current environment succinctly: "As we turn the corner into Q3, the tone for ASEAN assets will be impacted by two external forces: the final form of tariffs, which are still reverberating through global supply chains, and monetary policy from the Federal Reserve. Analysts expect the US Fed to cut interest rates as growth slows, but inflation could prove to be a constraint."

"Against that backdrop, Southeast Asia's domestic growth drivers remain comparatively resilient, supported by healthy household balance sheets, government spending and infrastructure pipelines," Lee notes, highlighting the region's underlying strength. However, she cautions that growth will still be impacted by any tariff-related slowdown in exports.

Currency dynamics add another layer of complexity. A weaker US dollar, while potentially boosting import-based sectors and domestic consumption, could simultaneously pressure export-oriented industries. "Hence, investors should adjust their strategies to differentiate between tariff-insulated, consumption-led stories and export names whose earnings might be impacted by tariffs and a weaker USD," Lee advises.

THREE WINNING INVESTMENT CLUSTERS

Despite the challenging backdrop, certain sectors emerge prominently in the Q3 landscape. Lee identifies 'three clusters' that stand out for their growth potential and resilience to external shocks.

"The first cluster focuses on the data centre and broader AI infrastructure build-out, where hyperscalers continue to accelerate capacity across Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. The scale of this build-out is impressive—Malaysia expects facilities with around 1 gigawatt (GW) of power capacity to come online over the next two years, with an additional 3 GW announced. This represents not just incremental growth but a fundamental reshaping of the region's technological infrastructure," says Lee.

The second opportunity lies in "renewables and transition utilities, underpinned by a deep pipeline of projects funded through a fast-growing regional sustainable bond market." This sector benefits from both regulatory tailwinds and genuine economic demand.

Perhaps most intriguingly, opportunities exist in value-for-money consumer plays—particularly those geared to increasingly price-conscious Gen Z households. "This demographic shift carries significant long-term implications, as Gen Z's spending power is expected to reach US$12 trillion by 2030, with a significant focus on affordability and essential goods," Lee highlights.

GLOBAL MONETARY POLICY SHIFT CREATES NEW DYNAMICS

The global monetary policy landscape is experiencing a significant shift, with central banks increasingly aligning on interest rate cuts. "Global central banks such as the European Central Bank (ECB), Bank of England (BOE) and People's Bank of China (PBoC) have already begun cutting interest rates in response to slower growth and inflation," Lee observes.

For ASEAN economies, this creates a unique opportunity. "Regional central banks are also in a better position to cut rates to mitigate a slowdown in domestic growth given the recent weakness of the USD. The weaker dollar provides more leeway for regional central banks to cut by lessening concerns about currency depreciation post-cuts," Lee explains.

Lee Sook Yee, Chief Investment Officer at Kenanga Investors Berhad

> "All eyes are on the pivotal trade tariff discussions between the US and China, along with other major economies like Japan and India."

Malaysia's central bank exemplifies this cautious but opportunistic approach. "We expect a 'wait and see' stance from Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) while they assess the Fed's next move and downside risks to domestic growth," Lee notes. This positioning creates attractive opportunities in Malaysian bonds, as Lee anticipates steady demand for Malaysian bonds as investors position for rate cuts by BNM in the latter half of the year.

MITIGATING GEOPOLITICAL RISKS

Heading into Q3 2025, US tariff policies remain the most closely monitored geopolitical risk. "A 90-day trade tariff pause (9 April - 8 July 2025) has created a window for numerous countries to negotiate actively with the US on trade tariff reductions. All eyes are on the pivotal trade tariff discussions between the US and China, along with other major economies like Japan and India. These negotiations are expected to be protracted, with significant implications for future trade relations."

For Malaysian portfolios, Kenanga Investors Berhad suggests focusing on domestic-centric sectors that are less vulnerable to trade tariffs. These include banks, construction, healthcare, telco, utility, renewable energy and property/REITs.

GREEN FINANCE GOES MAINSTREAM

The ESG landscape is transforming, moving beyond compliance to active investment opportunities. Lee identifies two key trends driving this evolution: the rise of 'green digital' infrastructure and the institutionalisation of carbon markets.

"Investments in renewable-powered data centres and electric vehicle (EV) charging networks are expected to be spurred by regional frameworks like the ASEAN Responsible AI Roadmap," she explains. This convergence of sustainability and technology opens new financing opportunities, including sustainability-linked sukuk and sovereign-led green finance.

The maturation of carbon trading platforms represents another significant development. "The maturing of carbon credit platforms like Bursa Malaysia's voluntary carbon market and Singapore's Climate Impact X is enabling early investors to gain alpha in climate-aligned assets," Lee observes.

REGIONAL CHAMPIONS AND MARKET LEADERS

Looking across ASEAN markets, Lee's analysis reveals distinct winners and opportunities. "In Q3 2025, the Philippines stands out as our top ASEAN pick, driven by resilient consumer spending, election-fuelled fiscal stimulus and potential monetary easing—favouring consumption, infrastructure and financials."

Malaysia follows closely, benefiting from "structural reforms and tech/green transitions boosting semiconductors, renewables, and domestic sectors," Lee adds. "Meanwhile, Vietnam emerges as the region's dark horse, with its electrifying tech/EV export boom—powered by foreign direct investment and infrastructure upgrades positioning it for potential breakout growth."

Overcoming Hurdles to Saving for Retirement

Fund performance, budgetary concerns and limited financial capacity were top reasons cited by PRS Members for not saving more, according to a PPA survey.

Amid a brewing retirement crisis in Malaysia, policymakers and economists are increasingly sounding the alarm over the nation's retirement savings gap. This issue has been further compounded by shifting global dynamics, geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties.

In this context, Private Pension Administrator Malaysia (PPA), the central administrator of the Private Retirement Schemes (PRS), conducted a survey recently to identify key barriers discouraging PRS Members from contributing more towards their retirement savings.

The voluntary online survey, conducted over a period of one month in December 2024, garnered 1,053 responses from PRS Members and indicated that about one in four respondents did not wish to top up their PRS accounts in 2024.

A deeper analysis of the results revealed a worrying trend: among respondents who are not topping up their PRS accounts, the top three reasons cited were concerns over fund performance, competing financial priorities and a lack of disposable income.

These findings highlight a pressing challenge in inculcating the habit of consistent voluntary retirement savings among Malaysians.

PRS FUND PERFORMANCE REMAINS A KEY CONCERN

Given the current times of heightened market volatility, it is perhaps unsurprising that fund performance is the top reason cited by PRS Members who did not top up their PRS account in 2024.

PPA Chief Executive Officer Husaini Hussin said, "Fund performance has consistently been one of the top considerations for both PRS Members and the public when deciding whether to save or increase their contributions in PRS."

He noted that the concept of Ringgit-cost averaging, where a fixed sum is invested regularly regardless of market conditions, can help mitigate short-term volatility and maximise long-term returns.

"PRS Members who contribute consistently are more likely to benefit from long-term compounding, even during market downturns," Husaini explained. "To support this, we ensure that detailed fund performance information is readily accessible on the PPA website, in line with our commitment to transparency."

BUDGET PRESSURES AND COMPETING PRIORITIES

Aside from fund performance, financial pressure remains a significant hurdle. Nearly a quarter of the responses indicated that there simply is not enough in their monthly budget to make additional PRS contributions.

With many Malaysians burdened by housing, car and even credit card loans, it is unsurprising that long-term savings took a backseat to more immediate financial commitments or debt obligations.

Data from the Department of Insolvency Malaysia paints a stark picture, where an average of 13 Malaysians is declared bankrupt daily. Some of these primary causes are unpaid personal, business and car loans. This growing debt burden highlights a worrying trend of present consumption being prioritised over financial resilience.

"The accumulation of debt and its demands on monthly budgets makes it all the more crucial to adopt a 'save first, spend later' mindset," Husaini emphasised. "Additionally, having a robust emergency fund is vital for individuals to better manage unexpected challenges without tapping into their long-term retirement savings."

> "While barriers to saving exist, an established scheme like PRS, which is regulated by Securities Commission Malaysia, provides a practical pathway for Malaysians to take control of their financial future."

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The third major factor impeding higher retirement contributions is low income. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), the national median wage stood at RM2,602 in 2023. This modest wage constrains many Malaysians, especially younger workers, leading to lower disposable income and subsequently lower contributions towards retirement savings.

In addition, data from Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN) indicates that more than half of its borrowers either earn below RM2,000 or remain unemployed after graduation—significantly impacting their ability to save or even repay student loans.

However, there is hope.

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has illustrated that even Malaysians earning the current minimum wage of RM1,700 can accumulate RM1 million by retirement age—provided they save consistently and start early, harnessing the power of compounding over several decades.

START SMALL, SAVE REGULARLY WITH PRS

This is where PRS provides a practical approach to bridging the retirement savings gap.

As a voluntary, long-term savings scheme, PRS is designed to complement Malaysia's mandatory retirement savings scheme by providing a well-regulated and convenient avenue for Malaysians to save more for their retirement.

It offers flexibility, allowing individuals to choose how much and how often they contribute, starting from as little as RM100.

PPA's PRS Online service allows you to start saving anytime, anywhere. PRS Members can save more using the PRS Top Up service or enrol in a new PRS fund through the PRS Online Enrolment service—all via an easy, convenient and secure platform.

To further incentivise Malaysians to save more for their retirement, a personal tax relief of up to RM3,000 was introduced by the government to lower the tax obligations of PRS Members.

Since its inception in 2012, the PRS industry has grown steadily, with nine PRS Providers offering a total of 78 PRS funds in both Conventional and Shariah schemes.

As of end-April 2025, close to 630,000 PRS Members have collectively saved over RM7.3 billion in assets under management.

As Malaysia navigates a rapidly evolving demographic and economic landscape, the importance of long-term financial planning and retirement cannot be overstated.

While barriers to saving exist, an established scheme like PRS, which is regulated by Securities Commission Malaysia, provides a practical pathway for Malaysians to take control of their financial future—one small, regular contribution at a time—and save before spending!

This article is brought to you by Private Pension Administrator Malaysia.

The Next Chapter in China's Financial Planning Industry

As China's wealth management market surpasses 159 trillion yuan, FPSB China CEO Cathy Zhang shares insights on the industry's transformation, technological disruption and the evolving role of financial planners in the world's second-largest economy.

The financial planning landscape in China has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decade. From the explosive growth of Internet wealth management platforms to the watershed regulatory reforms of 2018, the industry has followed what Cathy Zhang, CEO of Financial Planning Standards Board China, describes as a "spiral development trajectory characterised by innovation expansion, risk clearance and structural upgrading."

China's financial planning industry has entered a new phase where quality and innovation now take precedence over sheer scale. With household investable assets exceeding 320 trillion yuan and a rapidly ageing population, the sector stands at a critical juncture where artificial intelligence (AI), regulatory reforms and changing consumer expectations are reshaping traditional business models. Bank wealth management subsidiaries are differentiating themselves from traditional players, while AI-driven asset allocation and hybrid service models are becoming the new standard in a market that continues to grow at double-digit rates.

A DECADE OF EVOLUTION

When asked about the evolution of financial planning in China, Zhang traces a clear developmental arc that began around 2015 with the rise of digital platforms.

"Around 2015, the rise of Internet wealth management platforms drove explosive industry growth, with money market funds commonly yielding over 5%," Zhang explains. "The integration of third-party payment systems with investment channels accelerated online sales and rapidly awakened public financial awareness."

However, this period of explosive growth eventually gave way to more measured development following regulatory intervention. The implementation of New Asset Management Regulations (NAMR) in 2018 marked a turning point for the industry.

"The 2018 implementation of NAMR became an industry watershed," Zhang notes. "This ended banks' practice of using expected return products with hidden guarantees, requiring investors to bear market risks directly."

Today, the industry has entered what Zhang calls a "quality-efficiency enhancement phase". The numbers are staggering: Chinese household investable assets exceeded 320 trillion yuan by 2024, with the wealth management market reaching 159 trillion yuan—a 15.2% year-over-year increase.

THE AI REVOLUTION IN FINANCIAL PLANNING

Perhaps no trend is reshaping financial planning in China more profoundly than AI. Zhang identifies this as a transformative force that is fundamentally altering service delivery models.

"China's financial planning industry is transitioning from rapid expansion to quality-driven development," Zhang observes. "Key trends include AI and blockchain reshaping service models through robo-advisors and automated allocation tools."

This technological shift presents both opportunities and challenges for financial planners. When asked about the biggest challenges facing planners today, Zhang is frank:

"Key challenges include AI tools eroding planners' role in basic planning," she acknowledges. To address this threat, FPSB China is upgrading CFP certification with AI ethics, data security and algorithmic interpretation modules.


Cathy Zhang, CEO of FPSB China

Rather than resist technological change, Zhang envisions a future where human planners and AI systems work in concert: "Future innovations will include advanced robo-advisors, VR/AR applications and intelligent platforms. The industry is transitioning from sales-driven to client-centric models, where technology liberates planners from standardised processes to focus on trust-building and value transmission."

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS RESHAPING CHINA'S FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

China's financial planning industry has also been shaped by significant regulatory reforms. Zhang highlights the 2018 NAMR as particularly consequential:

"The 2018 NAMR and complementary rules eliminated implicit yield guarantees, mandating net-value product management effective January 2022," she explains. Net-value product management is a transparent investment approach where financial products are valued and reported based on their actual market performance rather than promised fixed returns, requiring investors to bear genuine market risks while eliminating implicit guarantees from financial institutions.

Additional reforms have further strengthened consumer protections while creating new opportunities in retirement planning.

"The nationwide rollout of the personal pension system by the end of 2024 created a three-pillar pension framework," Zhang notes. "The phased retirement age extension policy effective January 2025 is reshaping pension systems and driving product innovation for ageing investors."

Looking ahead, Zhang envisions continued regulatory evolution facilitating greater global connectivity. "Optimised cross-border investment mechanisms and relaxed foreign access will expand global asset allocation capabilities," she predicts, suggesting a future where Chinese investors enjoy greater access to international markets.

Zhang also emphasises the growing importance of ESG integration in China's wealth management sector. "ESG integration will drive sustainable transformation," she notes. Expansion of pension planning and green finance products emphasising stability and sustainability is among the key trends Zhang identifies.

Looking beyond urban centres, Zhang anticipates broader market penetration with fintech extending services to county-level markets. Additionally, industry competition will centre on professional expertise as China's market transitions to high-quality development. FPSB China remains committed to advancing service professionalism, standardisation and internationalisation to foster symbiotic development between real economy services and wealth management.

THE PLANNER OF TOMORROW

For aspiring financial planners, Zhang offers clear guidance on the skills necessary to thrive in this evolving landscape:

"Success requires international certifications for systematic knowledge; dual technical capabilities—traditional skills combined with fintech competencies; soft skills including cross-generational communication and family governance consulting; and a fiduciary mindset prioritising client interests."

She concludes with a reflection on the profession's deeper purpose: "Ultimately, this trust-based profession demands craftsman spirit in safeguarding family wealth dreams—our honourable mission."

As China's financial planning industry continues its transformation, this blend of technological sophistication and human-centred service appears to be the formula for future success. Through all the changes—regulatory, technological and demographic—the fundamental mission remains unchanged: helping clients navigate an increasingly complex financial world with expertise, integrity and care.

FPAM CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Celebrating 25 Years at FPAM's Annual Financial Planning Symposium

On 22 May 2025, FPAM marked a momentous occasion by hosting its Annual Financial Planning Symposium at M World Hotel, Petaling Jaya. This year's event, themed 'Shaping Financial Foundations, Securing Wealth for Tomorrow', celebrated FPAM's 25th anniversary and drew over 800 esteemed professionals, both on-ground and online, to discuss pivotal trends and innovations in financial planning.

In his opening address, FPAM President Alvin Tan emphasised the organisation's longstanding commitment to excellence and integrity, urging consumers to seek advice from CFP professionals, known for their stringent standards.

The symposium featured enlightening sessions on innovative cyber insurance strategies, practical family office approaches for high-net-worth clients and the psychology of financial decision-making. Attendees also explored artificial intelligence's transformative role in the industry, amidst discussions on elevating professional standards through CFP certification.

A highlight was the launch of FPAM's 25th Anniversary Commemorative Book, capturing the association's journey and impact on Malaysia's financial planning landscape. As FPAM looks to the future, it remains dedicated to empowering individuals and families across Malaysia through continuous education and advocacy for excellence.

Andrew Hong, Regional Director of Dynarisk, captivated attendees by exploring contemporary cyber insurance solutions and their pivotal role in financial planning strategies.

Tay Lee Hoon from Cheng & Co Global Advisory and **Catherine Yuan** of Confiance Family Office shared their expertise, demonstrating how to effectively implement family office services for high-net-worth clients.

Professor Alvin Ng Lai Oon from Sunway University enthralled the audience by delving into the psychological principles underpinning financial decision-making and client relationships.

Robin Hoo, Founder and COO of PAiX Tech, led a compelling discussion on the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on the financial industry, highlighting both challenges and new opportunities.

With **Dr. Jack Lin** as the moderator, panellists **Rafiq Hidayat, Terence Ng, Dr Jeffrey Chiew** and **Dr Calvin Cheong** engaged in a vibrant exploration of how CFP certification enhances professional excellence, fosters client trust and fuels business growth.

Summary of Events: July to September 2025

NO	DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	EVENT FROM	PROGRAMME TITLE
	JULY 2025				
1	Thursday, 10 July 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Integrated Approach to Estate Planning, A Practical Perspective
2	Tuesday, 15 July 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Case Studies - The Practical Approach to Deliver Financial Planning Service to Mass Affluent Clients
3	Tuesday, 22 July 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Effective Habits for Personal and Professional Excellence

NO	DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	EVENT FROM	PROGRAMME TITLE
	AUGUST 2025				
1	Thursday, 07 August 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Performing Comprehensive Retirement Planning with Microsoft Excel
2	Saturday, 16 August 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Understanding Guaranteed Income in Income Insurance Plans & How to Calculate My Actual Return in Property Investments
3	Thursday, 21 August 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	AML for Reporting Institutions and The Role of RegTech in Combating Money Laundering

NO	DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	EVENT FROM	PROGRAMME TITLE
	SEPTEMBER 2025				
1	Thursday, 11 September 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Beyond Inheritance: Decoding Generational Prosperity with Family Office Strategy
2	Monday, 15 September 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Holistic Children Education Planning For The Modern Parent
3	Saturday, 20 September 2025	CE Workshop	KL/Sel	FPAM	Successful Investment Strategies in Unit Trust Investments

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- PRS Members to make nominations for the purpose of easy disbursement of PRS balance in the event of member demise.

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