



**GreenPath Success Stories:
Client Uses Lessons Learned
in Life After GreenPath**

I was 19 years old when I realized I was in over my head with my credit card bills. The payments combined were over \$200 per month and I never saw the balances go anywhere but up. I was spinning deeper and deeper into financial trouble.

I was embarrassed to walk into GreenPath for the first time. I felt as though I was admitting defeat. Angela, my credit counselor for the five years on the program, made me feel as if I was doing something wonderful for myself and my future.

About four months into the GreenPath program, I started seeing a difference on my monthly statements from all nine of my creditors. I saw my credit card balances go down while I was learning how to budget my money and use credit wisely. I began feeling proud of my new spending and budgeting habits.

I will never make credit decisions in the future without thinking back to the five years I spent with GreenPath. With the knowledge I gained, I recently purchased a new car and am working toward buying a new home. Thank you, GreenPath!

-M. Scarbrough
Royal Oak, Mich.

Keeping Your Job Takes Work

How to avoid getting fired



Tough economic times can mean lay-offs for many people. Being handed a pink slip is never an easy thing to deal with, but here's how you can promote yourself in the workplace and make it difficult for your employer to find you expendable.

Negotiate your job description to emphasize your strengths. You don't want to appear replaceable if your new job accentuates your weaknesses rather than your strengths.

Focus on your employer's priorities. Use your time wisely and avoid distractions like responding to unimportant e-mails.

Form and maintain relationships. Employees who are generally liked are often the ones who are kept on, even if they are less competent at their work.

Give your boss what he/she wants. Find out if your boss likes to be informed of what you're working on, or if he/she wants your opinion on a subject or just the facts.

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Say 'I Do' To a Cheap Wedding

Planning a wedding doesn't mean you have to wipe out your savings. Use these simple tips to stick to your budget and save money on the big event.

- If you're getting married in a church, have your ceremony around a holiday. The church will already be decorated and will save you lots of money on flowers.
- Have your invitations printed instead of engraved. Or print them from your own computer.
- Save on postage by eliminating an inner envelope or blotter paper. Forgo a reply card and ask guests to reply online or by telephone.
- Shop a sample sale for an inexpensive dress.
- Choose a less popular day of the week for a wedding, like a Sunday or weeknight. Vendors may be willing to give you a better rate.
- Consider having a buffet dinner or an open bar during cocktail hour, but serving a cheaper wine during dinner.

Avoid Getting Fired cont.

Always ask for feedback. Get ratings from your colleagues including your boss, peers and those who you supervise. Ask for criticism; what do they like and dislike about your work? If they prefer to remain anonymous, tell them to leave suggestions at your desk when you're not around.

Stand up for yourself, but use discretion. Feel free to disagree with those in charge but know when to back off.

Practice damage control. If you make a mistake, apologize immediately and forthrightly and assure those involved that you will right the wrong. Soon it will be old news.

Promote yourself. Don't be stagnant and let others move to the top because you didn't market yourself to higher-ups. Get credit for your ideas by sending drafts to other people besides your boss.

Don't be a clock-watcher. Put in extra time when you can.

Grow and develop in your field. Take any opportunity to read articles, attend workshops and cultivate mentors in your field. If you are let go, you'll have sharpened your skills and shown future employers how valuable you are.

Source: Kiplinger's Personal Finance

To Learn More

Visit our website, www.greenpath.com, and click on Educational Resources for helpful financial tips on topics such as credit scoring and budgeting.

Submit suggestions or ideas by e-mailing Maureen O'Hara at mohara@greenpath.com or call (248) 553-5400 x 2456.

Help Teens Search For Summer Job

With school out and summertime in full swing, teenagers are searching for jobs to make some extra cash. But did you know that other options such as college courses may save *you* some money in the long run? Take this opportunity to discuss personal finance and future goals with your child.

Set Goals

The first step is to sit down with your teen and determine what his/her goals are for the summer. Does he want to earn and save money for a particular purchase? Does he want to get a head-start on college by taking summer courses? Perhaps he wants to combine a part-time job with an unpaid internship in an interesting field.

Set a goal of how much he/she should have saved by the end of the summer. Have your teen set up automatic deposit of the payroll check into a checking account with a specific amount going directly into a savings account.

Summer Job

A traditional summer job is often the most realistic choice for teens. Whether he's doing landscaping or working at a retail store, the benefits of this option are endless. He'll learn how to work with non-parental authority figures, prioritize tasks, get along with coworkers, figure out the tax deductions on his paycheck and be on time and ready to work each day. Recommend to your child that he choose a company or organization that sparks interest for a possible future career such as the zoo, the local newspaper, a law office or engineering firm.

College Courses

Encourage your child to get a head-start on college coursework. You'll end up saving a year's worth of tuition and room and board if your child's university allows students to finish in three years by attending summer classes.

Unpaid Internships

Many companies and organizations know that teens are eager to work in the right environment for the right experience – and for free. The Princeton Review publishes a Guide to America's Top 100 Internships that lists such places as MTV and the Center for Investigative Reporting.

Learning Vacations

Check out Gerson Eisenberg's book *Learning Vacations* to find choices like hiking in Nepal and an archaeological dig in Bolivia. This can be an expensive summer option so it's wise to do some research about the costs involved with an exotic locale.

Source: www.ivillage.com

Fast Facts

- Barely one out of 16 consumers contacts a company to report a bad experience, but almost one-third tell their friends and family members about it.

- Using coupons is becoming a thing of the past. Redemption rates have fallen 23% since 2001.

- Despite high gas prices, eight-cylinder vehicles still account for one-fourth of new car sales, the same percentage as last summer.

Source: Kiplinger's Personal Finance