



## **The Joy of Giving Now: Experiencing the Impact of Your Legacy**



**By Kris Woodcock**

The impacts of estate and legacy planning are often thought of as something you will not get to experience while you are living, and therefore, discourages folks from addressing this type of planning with the same level of thought as their retirement plan.

Through my experience helping clients in all stages of life, I've watched folks who never thought that they could retire successfully, gain confidence, and shift their focus to estate planning.

After years of building, saving, and planning, retirement brings a shifting perspective, and something incredibly valuable: time, and the opportunity to decide what really matters going forward.

Estate planning is often framed as something that takes place quietly behind the scenes – drafting documents, naming beneficiaries, structuring trusts. But an increasing number of our clients are choosing a different path: one that's more immediate, personal and rewarding.

Their choosing to initiate phases of their estate plan during their lifetimes, and in turn having the opportunity to experience their legacy.

### **Why Give Now?**

Through my experience, I see many retirees reach a point where they are finally convinced that their own financial needs are well covered. They have more than they need to sustain their own lifestyles, and begin asking: What now? Implementing estate and gifting strategies now can offer benefits, both emotionally and financially.



## **The Benefits of Lifetime Giving**

Gifts during your lifetime can be a powerful way to optimize wealth, reduce taxes and increase your estate planning flexibility. Here's how:

### **Lower Future Income Taxes Through Asset Shifting**

Gifts of income-producing or appreciated assets (like stocks or real estate) to beneficiaries in lower tax brackets can shift income and gains to a more favorable tax environment. This strategy helps to reduce your own taxable income in retirement, minimize capital gains with embedded appreciation, and also creates room for Roth conversions or lower Medicare brackets.

### **Offsetting RMDs**

Once you turn 73 (or 75, depending on your birth year), RMDs from traditional IRAs and retirement accounts are required — and taxable. These distributions can bump you into higher tax brackets and in turn, trigger Medicare premium increases.

### **Some Strategic Ideas**

- Use RMDs to fund annual exclusion gifts or charitable contributions
- Make Qualified Charitable Distributions directly from your IRA (up to \$100,000/year)
- Reduce overall IRA balances over time by gifting assets, lowering future RMDs and transfer of tax unfavorable assets to beneficiaries

### **Freeze Future Appreciation**

When you gift an asset, future appreciation occurs in the recipient's estate, not yours. This is impactful when gifting assets that are expected to grow significantly:

Example: Gifting \$50,000 of stock today that doubles in value over time moves the \$50,000 plus future growth out of your estate.

### **Reduction of State-Level Estate Taxes**

Through our estate analysis process, we often find that client's future estate values may be subject to state estate taxes, which are often much lower than federal levels. Through strategic planning over time while you're living, lifetime gifting or asset shifting can be a key strategy in reducing these taxes.



## **Maintain Flexibility Through Strategic Tools**

- Intra-family loans offer support with structure — allowing you to provide capital while maintaining flexibility and potentially converting to a gift later.
- Grantor trusts allow you to “freeze” asset values for estate purposes while still paying income taxes, which further reduces your estate.
- Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs) and Charitable Lead Trusts (CLTs) can provide income for you or your heirs while supporting philanthropic goals and managing estate tax exposure.

## **“I Want to Help — But I Don’t Want to Overextend Myself”**

This is one of the most common — and completely reasonable — concerns retirees express. That’s why any conversation about gifting should start with one simple principle: You come first.

A thoughtful plan ensures you remain secure throughout retirement, with the freedom to live fully, adapt to life’s changes, and take care of yourself first. Giving should never jeopardize that — it should enhance your life, not complicate it.

## **That’s Why We Often Begin with a Detailed Review Of:**

- Your long-term income and spending needs
- Potential healthcare and long-term care costs
- Tax exposure and required minimum distributions (RMDs)
- Charitable goals and family dynamics
- Asset appreciation projections

From there, we can design a gifting approach that feels impactful and sustainable.

## **Seeing Your Legacy Happen**

The beauty of giving while you’re living is that it turns your legacy into something active, relational, and personal. You’re not just transferring wealth — you’re shaping the next chapter of your family’s story, or your community’s future, with intention and joy.

Sometimes a check helps. But often the more valuable gift is a conversation, a gesture of belief, a bridge built while you’re still here to walk across it with someone.

If this kind of planning speaks to you, and you want to explore how giving could fit into your retirement plan — we’d be honored to help you map it out.



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