Retirement Blueprint
Episode 12

Why Most Retirement Plans Are Built to Fail

Transcript

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There's something happening in the financial world that almost nobody wants to say out loud:

Retirement planning is broken.

Not because people aren't saving enough—but because the industry is still giving outdated, incomplete, and sometimes even dangerous advice.

And here's the controversial part:

Most advisors don't even realize they're part of the problem.

They're using retirement playbooks written in the 1990s—for a world that no longer exists.

Think about how different retirement looks today:

People are living longer
Healthcare costs are skyrocketing
Markets are more volatile
Taxes are more complex
Social Security rules keep evolving
Retirement can last 25 to 35 years

Yet the advice hasn't changed.

And the industry's response?

"Here's your binder. You should be fine."

But “fine” isn’t security.

It’s not confidence.

It’s not a plan.

“Fine” is a shrug wrapped in a spreadsheet.

Let’s talk about the flaws baked into traditional retirement planning.

Issue #1: The 4% rule is outdated

It was built for interest rates and market conditions that no longer exist.

Issue #2: Most plans ignore taxes

Advisors often skip critical realities like:
RMD surges
Social Security taxation
Medicare IRMAA surcharges
Roth conversion planning
Capital gain sequencing

You can’t build a lifetime income plan while ignoring your largest expense—taxes.

Issue #3: Social Security is treated like a checkbox

Most advisors ask, “When do you want to claim?”

That’s the wrong question.

The right question is:

How do we integrate Social Security into your overall income, investment, and tax strategy?

Issue #4: Overfocus on investments

Retirement isn’t about beating the market.

It’s about making your income last.

Issue #5: Planning for the “average” retiree

The average retiree doesn’t exist.

But personalized planning does—and that’s where success lives.

Let me show you what this looks like in real life.

David and Karen came into my office in their early 60s.

Successful careers. Strong savings. Loyal to the same advisor for over 20 years.

But something didn’t feel right.

David said, “Everything looks good on paper—but it doesn’t feel good in our gut.”

They handed me their retirement binder.

Pages of charts. Monte Carlo simulations. Colorful graphs.

It looked impressive.

But it wasn’t built for their real life.

Karen said, “Every time the market drops, we panic. We call our advisor, and he just says ‘stay the course.’ But we don’t know what that means for us.”

So we dug deeper.

I asked, “How did your advisor determine when to claim Social Security?”

David replied, “He told us to claim early—so we could get something before it’s gone.”

Then I asked about taxes.

Roth conversions?
RMD planning?
Medicare premiums?

Nothing.

Their plan relied on:

A fixed withdrawal rate
A generic investment model
Zero tax strategy
Zero income integration
Zero Social Security optimization

We ran the numbers properly—and what we found was eye-opening:

Their future tax bill was set to spike
Their Medicare premiums would increase
Their withdrawal strategy was inefficient
Their Social Security benefits were about 25% lower than they could have been

Their plan wasn't broken because they didn't save enough.

It was broken because it wasn't coordinated.

After rebuilding their strategy—integrating Social Security, optimizing taxes, restructuring withdrawals, and adjusting risk—their plan improved dramatically.

Their money lasted nine additional years.

Nine more years of financial freedom.

Without saving more.
Without sacrificing their lifestyle.

Just by planning correctly.

Karen looked at me and said, "Why didn't anyone teach us this sooner?"

David said it best:

"We were getting a plan—but we weren't getting planning."

The real problem

Most retirement plans don't fail because people didn't save enough.

They fail because the strategy is shallow, outdated, and disconnected.

And yet the industry still says:

“Stay the course.”
“You’re fine.”
“Just follow the 4% rule.”

But retirement isn’t linear.

Life isn’t linear.

Markets aren’t linear.

If your plan only works when everything goes perfectly, it’s not a plan—it’s a wish.

The real value in retirement planning isn’t investment selection.

It’s integration.

Integration of:

Income
Taxes
Social Security
Withdrawals
Risk
Lifestyle
Longevity

A portfolio doesn’t create peace of mind.

A coordinated plan does.

Retirement isn’t about how much you have.

It’s about how well everything works together.

Final takeaway

Let’s say this clearly:

Retirement planning is broken because too many advisors are using old rules for a new world.

And retirees are the ones paying the price.

But you don’t have to.

You deserve a plan that adapts.

A plan that integrates.

A plan that includes taxes, builds income, and still works when life doesn’t go perfectly.

Because the real goal of retirement planning isn’t accuracy.

It’s confidence.

Confidence that your income is stable.
Confidence that your taxes are controlled.
Confidence that your money can weather uncertainty.
Confidence that your lifestyle is protected.

Because in retirement, confidence is the real currency.

And when you replace outdated assumptions with intelligent, coordinated planning—you don’t just retire.

You retire well.

You retire intentionally.

And you retire with a plan that supports your life—not the other way around.

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