

## A Comprehensive Roadmap of Your Critical Documents



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In the event of your disability, or even death, your loved ones will be dealing with intense emotional grief. At the same time, they must locate and gather your financial and legal information. We suggest that you consider creating a comprehensive roadmap of all your key documents now to provide guidance to your loved ones.

It should contain contact information about your service providers, including the names and telephone numbers of your attorney, accountant, and Bessemer Client Account Manager. It should also provide copies of your important financial, medical, insurance, and estate documents such as your wills, trusts, and healthcare directives, and even a copy of your cemetery plot deed. See Exhibit 2 for some suggestions.

Don't forget to include a roadmap to your online access as well. Your user access codes and passwords for banks and investment accounts will be critical to your family as they attempt to gather necessary information if you are unable or unavailable to assist them.

This process of gathering information in one place serves other purposes as well. It may be helpful in identifying any gaps in your insurance coverage or financial planning. It may also confirm that both you and important family members are aware of the same information and in agreement on critical decisions.

### Where and When

There is no one magic format for such a roadmap. Many clients find a loose-leaf binder or accordion file a helpful means to organize this information. Others prefer to use a digital format, or some combination of the two. It is important to protect this information in a secure environment. Physical documents should be stored in a locked drawer, and online documents should be saved in a secure, password-protected manner. While you're at it, you may want to prepare a cheat sheet — leaving off account numbers or balances — that you could share with your family members immediately.

### Exhibit 2: Essential Financial Records

Identification	Ownership	Financial	Medical	Insurance	Estate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth certificates</li> <li>• Marriage certificates</li> <li>• Religious certificates</li> <li>• Social Security cards</li> <li>• Drivers' licenses</li> <li>• Passports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deeds to residences</li> <li>• Mortgage and loan documents</li> <li>• Titles to cars and boats</li> <li>• Inventories of household items and valuables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank and brokerage statements</li> <li>• Blank checks for each account</li> <li>• Contact information</li> <li>• IDs and passwords</li> <li>• Tax returns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical records</li> <li>• Doctor contact information</li> <li>• Blood types and known allergies and medications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy numbers</li> <li>• Agent/agency contact information</li> <li>• Deductibles</li> <li>• Proof of ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wills</li> <li>• Revocable trusts</li> <li>• Healthcare proxies</li> <li>• Letters of instruction</li> <li>• Powers of attorney</li> <li>• Trusts</li> <li>• Trustees</li> </ul>

Creating a comprehensive roadmap is a dynamic process in that it is useful to revisit and update it from time to time. Set aside a fixed time each year, perhaps when you adjust your clocks, to review your roadmap for needed updates.

Finally, you might use this exercise as a means to also create an emergency evacuation toolkit, in the event that a natural or other disaster might force you to hurriedly evacuate

your home. Such a toolkit might include hard copies of key documents, as well as some cash, medicines, clear and recent photos of family members, cell phones, and other critical items.

Organizing your key information in one convenient location could give you and your family members one less thing to worry about during challenging times.

### Advance Healthcare Directives

At some time during your life, a medical condition may prevent you from making or communicating responsible healthcare decisions. Depending on your feelings regarding different medical treatments and your views on quality of life, you may wish to take steps now to communicate your wishes about future healthcare to your family and to your doctor.

You have the right to direct your medical care. Unfortunately, sometimes patients' wishes are not followed — whether because the patients don't clearly define their wishes, a family member may not truly understand them, or the person that you would otherwise wish to make these decisions on your behalf may not have the legal right to do so under state law. For this reason, it is important to communicate your thoughts on medical treatment to your family and your primary healthcare providers well before any medical need arises.

Before creating advance healthcare directives such as a healthcare proxy and power of attorney, you might consider asking yourself some questions:

- What are my wishes regarding my future medical treatment, day-to-day care, and medication?
- What is my attitude toward life-sustaining treatments, such as artificial respiration and intravenous feeding/hydration?
- Are there circumstances under which I definitely would, or would not, want such treatment?
- Is there someone I trust to make these and other medical decisions on my behalf?

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