



Driving – The A – Z’s of cost!

Many of our clients who manage to determine for themselves what’s at the root of their financial woes, all come to a similar conclusion, it’s being mobile. Driving from point “A” to point “Z”, while stopping at all points between is an incredibly expensive proposition. Now, this does not suggest, and nor does it imply, that transportation costs themselves are at the heart of financial difficulties. Rather, it says that about 35% of the thousand or so new people who will come to our agency for the first time this year will be able to say its mobility that’s causing them financial grief.

This is a reality for many for a number of reasons. Sure, there are the obvious things; facts like car and truck prices have gotten so high that by now they feel like a small mortgage. We’ve also got to consider skyrocketing insurance rates, particularly if adding a child or two as drivers on family vehicles. And then of course, there’s that spike in gasoline costs which occurred a couple years ago, and which only ever fluctuates but never really goes down.

The bulk of these costs are beyond our control and therefore saving on them is also beyond our control for the most part.

There are however certain transportation costs which we absolutely control. If we approach these exclusively as an opportunity to save a few bucks, then we are usually a little more motivated to do so.

First of all, there’s preventative maintenance. The manufactures warranty should always be your guideline while your vehicle is still in the warranty period. You’ll soon discover the practice will minimize major outlays for future repairs, since problems can usually be nipped in the bud while hopefully still under warranty.

If you’re the type who likes to have your car washed weekly, car washes at reduced prices or possibly even for free, with a gasoline purchases will save several hundred dollars each year. There’s also the cheaper option of supporting local sports teams and groups as they fundraise through car washes almost every weekend, particularly during the summer months.

You'll save about three or more cents per gallon, that's about \$1.50 for a 50-litre tank by using self-serve gasoline pumps rather than having the staff of the gas station fill up for you. There's several hundred dollars to be saved here too – depending on purchases.

Parking costs can be minimized by choosing “customers only” areas or by obtaining parking validations when merchants provide them. If you're forced on to metered parking, be smart and don't risk a parking ticket to save twenty-five cents; put too much rather than too little money into the parking meter. If you are willing to be a Good Samaritan, remember to put money into an expired meter with the space occupied even though you don't know the owner.

The City of St. John's has come up with a brilliant parking scheme for residents along with the many and much loved brown baggers. The Capital has made parking cards available for purchase, so you don't need to worry about having change for the meter. What's really cool, is the fact that you've got the option of getting a refund for the unused time right back on your card. By the way, if you can have an “out of province” visitor with you as you exercise this option, its great to watch their face as you reclaim any unused time. Typically they can't believe something this forward looking and citizen friendly is happening here!

Remember too that you can save some insurance premium costs by increasing the deductibles on your policy.

Look in an absolutely serious way for tires. Again you'll be surprised by the savings which can be achieved. And as you shop, remember that thrift is only one of many considerations, the first and chief of which is safety.

Remember as well to not write off public transit or taxis as a viable option even if you have access to or own a car. This even applies for work, especially if you pay for parking. Approach the prospect with an open mind. I know one chap from the west-end of St. John's who decided to take the bus to and from work and began saving over \$100.00 per month between parking and gasoline costs, along with a slight reduction in his insurance costs. He also discovered that the family vehicle was deteriorating more slowly by him not racking up miles going to and from the office.

Times continue to change, as do expectations. What's normal, reasonable, or acceptable is also vastly "changeable". Many of us grew up in households without a vehicle whatsoever; in families two to three times the size of our own today. Yet today many require a second car. The notion of not owning one at all is entirely beyond comprehension. At our agency, regrettably we see people who fork out almost half their net income for transportation. This fact causes me to regularly question my own transportation habits. I hope reading about it does the same for you.

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