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make it *enjoy it*
Money

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A photograph of a smiling couple holding a white dog. The woman is in the foreground, smiling broadly, holding the dog. The man is behind her, also smiling. The dog is a small, white, fluffy breed.

**Family
plan**

Find your ideal financial adviser

When trust is a must

Anneli Knight finds out what makes a perfect fit between financial planner and client.



Big questions ... Sasha and Shaun Kahan were taken by surprise in their first meeting with an adviser.

Photo: Tamara Dean

Question time

Questions to ask a financial planner at your first meeting:

- What kind of clients do you see? Are they in a similar situation to me?
- What services do you offer?
- What areas do you specialise in?
- What are your industry qualifications and experience?
- Is there a range of products for which you receive commissions?
- What fees will I pay for your services?
- How often do we meet to review my plan?
- How will you keep me updated with new information?

Source: *Flirting with Finance* by Anneli Knight and Virginia Graham (Fairfax Books).

A HOME AND FAMILY

Sasha Kahan is 28 and, with her husband Shaun, recently had a first meeting with a new financial planner. The couple married four years ago and saw a planner around that time but they drifted away without setting up a plan because it wasn't the right fit.

Recently the couple have been thinking of starting a family and would like to buy their first home in Sydney's eastern suburbs, so they felt it was time to seek some guidance.

"You're so busy living your life that you don't actually manage your life," Kahan says. "It's really important to have a third-party expert who can guide you and direct you, because the years just fly."

Kahan and her husband were both surprised by the format of that first meeting.

"It was almost like a psychology session in a way; numbers didn't even come into it, it was all about life goals," she says. "What does money mean to you and what does having money mean to you and, from there, what are your goals surrounding money and what role does money play in your life?"

Kahan says there were issues that came up in the one-hour meeting that she'd never spoken about to her husband.

"I'm never stumped for words and

some of the questions he asked ... were so hard-hitting, I've actually never thought about that before," she says. "I didn't know how to answer them."

The couple sent details of their financial position to the adviser beforehand and were instructed that after the meeting they would receive a detailed proposal for their financial plan, bringing together personal goals with finances.

"When we walked away from the meeting Shaun said, 'I actually think I can trust him,'" Kahan says. "You need someone you can trust. It's your livelihood; your life is in someone's hands. The way our planner approached it - it's not just about money, it's about you as a person and your own personal lifestyle goals."

The planner the couple visited was David Hardman from Strategy First Financial Planning. Hardman says the questions he asks in his first meetings with clients are designed to ascertain not only people's attitudes to money but also their attitude to life.

"What I really want to understand from that first meeting is what's important about money to them and from there, I get to understand what really makes that person tick," Hardman says.

After looking at through the figures and getting a clear understanding of goals, Hardman creates a plan.

"What clients really want is, 'Dave, tell me what I really need to do to make this happen. Who's going to be responsible for doing the different things so we've actually got an action plan to move towards achieving that goal,'" Hardman says. "Then we need to sit down and we need to work out: What are the small steps to make this plan real."