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Independent Agents Now Beginning to Look At Whole Life

Independent agents are starting to show some willingness to look at **whole life** insurance as a product they might offer to customers. That is a shift from five years ago when most independents were "locked onto" universal life with secondary guarantees for clients with permanent life insurance needs.

Quake Impact "Modest" on U.S. Life Insurers

The 8.9 magnitude earthquake in Japan on March 11 is likely to have a "modest" impact on North American **life insurers**, according to an equity analyst.

Americans Want Wealth Spread More Evenly, Even the Wealthy

The **gap** between the richest and poorest Americans is at historic highs. Estimates suggest that the top 1 percent of Americans hold nearly 50 percent of the wealth, topping even the distance before the Great Depression in the 1920s. Whether this spread is politically acceptable lies behind many debates, particularly when it comes to estate taxes.

Hybrids an Alternative to Long-term Care Rate Increases

Policyholders and financial advisors increasingly are looking at hybrid alternatives to traditional long-term care policies as insurers, wary of rising liabilities, are bailing out of the business or proposing huge rate increases to make up for increased longevity and lower lapse rates. The products provide a payout to clients either in the form of a death benefit or long-term care (LTC) coverage, eliminating the use-it-or-lose-it nature of traditional **LTC insurance**.

Separate but Unequal: Charts Show Growing Rich-poor Gap

The Great Recession and the slump that followed have triggered a jobs crisis that's been making headlines since before President Obama was in office, and that will likely be with us for years. But the American economy is also plagued by a less-noted, but just as serious, problem: Simply put, over the last 30 years, the gap between rich and poor has widened into a **chasm**.

Senate Passes Bill Addressing Tax Strategy Patents

On a 95-5 vote from the Senate, the America Invents Act (S 23) was passed. Previously dubbed the **Patent Reform Act**, the bill includes a provision intended to stop the granting of patents for tax strategy. It deems that any "strategy for reducing, avoiding or deferring tax liability" to be prior art.

Life Insurance for Businesses: The Biggest Pitfalls Made Today

The most common **error** made when insuring a business owner is titling, which opens the policy benefits to a host of potential tax traps. Subsequent to that, inadequate reviews of existing policies can allow the policies to lapse or lose the benefit that it should supply.

How to Plan Distribution Alternatives for IRA Beneficiaries

The rules governing post-death **IRA distributions** often permit deferral significantly beyond the distribution period that would apply if the IRA owner had survived. This extension of the deferral period over a longer life span of a younger beneficiary requires strategic planning both before and after the death of the owner. This article discusses the planning alternatives and issues practitioners should consider when advising clients.

UBS Says U.S. Is Probing Possible Libor Rate Manipulation

Switzerland's largest bank has stated that it received subpoenas from U.S. authorities investigating possible attempts to manipulate the London interbank offered rate ([LIBOR](#)).

10 of the Weirdest Things People Claim as Deductible Expenses

They tried to deduct what? From pornography to emu feathers, here are 10 of the wackiest things taxpayers have tried to [deduct](#). Uncle Sam and the U.S. Tax Court were not amused.

Client Perspective

A Smarter Way to Buy Insurance?

Most people who buy life insurance do so from an agent working for a life insurance company or from a broker who receives a commission. But a lot of financial advisors are suggesting a different [approach](#) for their clients: Find a fee-only life insurance consultant.

Retiring Boomers Find 401(k) Plans Fall Short

The [401\(k\)](#) generation is beginning to retire, and it isn't a pretty sight. The retirement savings plans that many baby boomers thought would see them through old age are falling short in many cases. The median household headed by a person aged 60 to 62 with a 401(k) account has less than one-quarter of what is needed in that account to maintain its standard of living in retirement.

Family Businesses Catch a Big Break

Families now have the chance to pass a substantial stake in their [businesses](#) to the next generation — even before handing over the reins. But transferring ownership can raise complicated succession and estate-planning issues that families need to address before giving away so much as a share of stock.

U.S. Millionaires Say \$7 Million Not Enough to Be Rich

More than four out of 10 American millionaires say they do not feel rich. Indeed many would need to have at least \$7.5 million to feel they were truly rich, according to a Fidelity Investments [survey](#).

Roth Conversion Remorse? Here's How to Back Out

After all the hoopla around Roth conversions in 2010, now is the time to consider whether or not a [recharacterization](#) is in your future. So what is a recharacterization, and how does it work? Recharacterization is the "backing out" of your Roth conversion. In other words, you can literally make the conversion as if it had never been done at all, with your money back in the traditional IRA where it started.

Promises Will Be Broken: Public Pension Reform Movement Grows

Workers (especially public employees) who were planning on enjoying generous pension benefits promised them may be in for a rude awakening. California is joining the pension [reform movement](#), stating it cannot make good on its future promises.

IRS Targets Richest Americans for Audits

Internal Revenue Service [audits](#) of the richest Americans rose from 10.6 percent in 2009 to 18.4 percent last year. Audit rates for all income groups in 2010 increased except for people with no adjusted gross income, but audits of people with incomes over \$10 million rose the most in part because of information the IRS received from its voluntary offshore disclosure programs and court cases involving Swiss banks.

Household Debt Falls to Its Lowest Point Since Late 2004

American families reduced their debt last year to the lowest in six years by spending less and defaulting on loans. The lower debt puts consumers in a position to open their wallets again. Total [household debt](#) in the U.S. dropped to \$13.4 trillion, according to a report from the Federal Reserve. Consumer debt, however, which includes student and auto loans, has started to rise again.

Most Workers Have Saved Just \$25,000 for Retirement

More than 25 percent of workers say they are "not confident at all" about [retirement](#), while only about 13 percent of workers are "very confident" that they've saved enough. According to this CNNMoney article, most Americans have less than \$25,000 saved up for retirement.

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