

# Herald-Journal

## Noel Swain: Don't Follow the Herd

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But, Mommmmm!  
Johnny and Billy are  
going to the party.  
Why can't I go?"

"If Johnny and Billy jumped off a bridge, would you jump, too?"

We have all probably had that conversation with both our parents and our children, though we likely switched sides from one point of view to the other.

The idea is to get young people to think about the consequences of their decisions, which they are notorious for not doing. That's why God invented parents.

We want to keep our kids safe while they are growing up and developing the judgment to be able to make better decisions. We don't want our children following the herd. We want them to think for themselves. We want them to make their decisions with more information than just the fact that other people are doing it.

Some TV ads I watched while I was on vacation got me thinking about the herd mentality and how we, as humans, are susceptible to it, no matter our age.

There are several ads on television telling us to buy gold because everyone who wants to "protect" their portfolio is buying gold. In addition, Great Big Mammoth Bank is also buying tons of gold. Do they see something you don't?

Translation: The herd is buying lots of gold. Get yours before the price gets too high, or before they run out!

Another financial ad has a high-energy guy telling you, "Our clients go up with the market, lock in their gains, and never go down."

Who doesn't want that? Nobody. Who does want that? Everyone.

A full page of fine print is then flashed up on the screen for less than one second at the end of the commercial. That's where it tells you what he's really selling, but you have no time to read it.

But if you can get market-like returns without any risk, why bother reading the fine print? Thousands and thousands of others – the herd – are buying this guy's product, so it must be good, right?

Being in the financial planning profession for more than 30 years has taught me many lessons about financial products that catch the imagination then fizzle out after a few months or years. They arrive amid great hype and fanfare, and we are told that most others are jumping on this train and that you had also better jump on it or you'll be the only one left when the train leaves the station.

Don't believe it.

Your retirement needs are personal and unique to you. You shouldn't settle for a retirement pitch that's meant for the herd. You should have your own plan by a professional who gets to know you and your needs on a personal level.

There are many professionals capable of doing this, but the ones with the particular training to help you in all those areas of your life will normally have a CFP after their name.

That stands for Certified Financial Planner, and you can find one at the website [letsmakeaplan.org](http://letsmakeaplan.org).

Don't follow the herd. Find a good CFP and build your own unique plan today.