FINANCE



The executor

The hardest job you never applied for



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Hunters and anglers understand responsibility. We maintain camps, care for equipment, and pass down traditions to the next generation. We spend years building a legacy that may include a family cottage, hunting property, fishing boat, firearms collection, as well as businesses and financial assets. One part of estate planning, however, is often overlooked: the person responsible for carrying out your final wishes — the executor. It's arguably the hardest job you'll ever have that you never applied for.

Most executors are chosen because they're trusted family members or close friends. Unfortunately, trust alone doesn't prepare someone for the complexity of settling an estate. An executor is responsible for locating assets, working with lawyers and accountants, dealing with financial institutions and government agencies, paying debts, filing tax returns, obtaining probate when necessary, and distributing assets according to the terms of the will. They're expected to do all of this while grieving the loss of someone they cared about.

Depending on the size and complexity of the estate, administration can take months — or even years — and carries significant legal responsibility. It's a role few people truly understand until they're living it.

Challenges for outdoor families

For outdoor enthusiasts, estate administration can become even more complicated. Who inherits the firearms collection? What happens to the hunting property or family cottage? How are the fishing boat, ATV, tractor, or recreational land transferred? What tax implications could arise?

These questions often surface only after death, when emotions are high and the executor is already navigating unfamiliar territory. Assets with sentimental value can quickly become sources of conflict if expectations haven't been clearly communicated.

Selecting an executor deserves as much thought as deciding who will inherit your estate. Many people automatically choose their spouse, oldest child, or closest friend. While that may be the right choice, ask yourself whether that person has the time, organizational skills, and willingness to manage a complex project involving estate professionals, government agencies, financial institutions, and family members over the course of a year — or longer. If you're unsure, consider appointing co-executors or a professional executor.

Give them the best chance to succeed

Estate planning isn't simply about reducing taxes or minimizing probate fees. It's about making life easier for the people you'll leave behind. Whether you'll one day serve as an executor or are in the process of choosing one for your own estate, preparation is one of the greatest gifts you can give your family.

Before it's needed, speak with a Certified Executor Advisor or estate lawyer to review your executor selection, organize your affairs, and help protect your loved ones from unnecessary complications, delays, and costs.

To make the process easier, ask them for a complimentary executor directory — a practical workbook designed to document your assets, liabilities, key contacts, insurance policies, account information, and final wishes. Your executor will thank you for it. ●

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