Phil DeFranco

Retirement Tax Optimization Specialist | Registered Investment Advisor

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Series 65 | Life, Accident & Health Licensed: NJ, NY, TX, FL, CA, WA, MD

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Seasoned financial services and estate planning professional with 35 years of experience spanning estate planning facilitation, compliance oversight, retirement income education, tax mitigation, legacy preservation, and senior-level Wall Street technology leadership. Known for translating complex planning concepts into practical client guidance, coordinating effectively with legal and planning professionals, and leading operational recovery under high-pressure market conditions.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Estate Planning Facilitation
- Compliance Oversight
- Probate Avoidance Coordination
- Tax Mitigation Strategies
- Retirement Income Distribution
- Business Continuity Leadership
- Legacy Preservation
- Client Education & Seminars
- Multi-State Client Support

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Heartland Northeast LLC, Charles Schwab Corporation member SIPC | Albany, NY | **Registered Investment Advisor**

- Facilitate estate planning engagements and serve as a liaison between clients and legal drafting professionals, helping move trust and related planning documents efficiently from discovery through execution.
- Educate individuals and families on probate avoidance, tax mitigation, retirement income considerations, asset protection, and legacy transfer strategies while maintaining clear non-attorney boundaries.
- Oversee compliance responsibilities for Heartland Northeast LLC and uphold regulatory, supervisory, and client-service standards as a registered investment advisory professional.
- Deliver educational seminars and one-on-one consultations focused on estate planning, retirement income distribution, and long-term beneficiary planning.
- Support clients across New Jersey, New York, Texas, Florida, California, and Washington, and notarize client trust documents to streamline completion of planning packages.

Selected Prior Financial Services & Wall Street Leadership

Senior-Level Roles Across Major Investment Banks, Brokerages, and Financial Information Firms | 1988-Present

- Held senior positions with Bankers Trust, Spear Leeds and Kellogg, UBS, PaineWebber, Barclays, Merrill Lynch, Thomson Financial, PR Newswire, and Natixis Bank.
- Built deep experience in financial markets infrastructure, trading systems, technology leadership, stakeholder coordination, and enterprise-scale operational controls.
- Supported high-pressure institutional environments requiring rigorous business continuity planning, risk discipline, and cross-functional execution.

Merrill Lynch | New York, NY / Jersey City, NJ

Vice President of Technology, Global Repo Trading Systems Desk

- Served at Merrill Lynch headquarters at 2 World Financial Center during the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- Led a cross-functional disaster recovery team of technology staff, traders, and operations professionals to establish a Jersey City trading floor under the firm's business continuity plan.
- Demonstrated calm crisis leadership, rapid operational restoration, and disciplined execution during one of the most challenging events in modern financial-market history.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

Education

New York University

Bachelor's Degree in Economics

Licenses & Registrations

- Series 65
- Life, Accident & Health licenses: NJ, NY, TX, FL, CA, WA, MD
- Registered investment advisory professional

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Expertise centered on estate planning, tax mitigation, legacy preservation, and retirement income distribution.
- Combines client-facing planning guidance with institutional-grade compliance awareness and operational discipline.
- Recognized for clear communication, educational presentations, and trusted support for families, retirees, and business owners.

CLIENT & PLANNING FOCUS

- Works extensively with retirees and pre-retirees seeking lifetime income strategies, pension-gap planning, and beneficiary protection.
- Supports high-net-worth families and business owners with probate-avoidance planning, tax-efficient wealth transfer, and legacy structuring priorities.
- Advises families and younger professionals on foundational protection strategies and education-oriented planning, including 529 considerations.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

- Delivers educational estate-planning and retirement-income presentations in New Jersey and through virtual consultations for clients across multiple states.
- Emphasizes clear, compliant communication that helps clients move from awareness to action with confidence and appropriate professional coordination.