

Great offer made me a tech wreck

In the eternal tug of war between consumer and retailer, the latter has two effective weapons. The first is inertia — the tendency of all of us to let things continue as they are.

It applies to things like gym memberships, and streaming and magazine subscriptions. This is why there is always a nudge from the retailer to tick the auto-renewal option.

Then there are the ubiquitous gift cards, vouchers for spa treatments, or weekends at luxurious resorts. I often wonder how many of these end up unused in someone's "must get around to" folder.

The other weapon is complexity, and private health funds and electricity retailers have got this down to a fine art.

Just before Christmas I got my annual private health insurance premium and decided to see what else was on the market. After a day of research I gave up, and opted to stay with the provider I had.

The next week my electricity contract came up for renewal, and once again I made the effort to do the research. Armed with what I thought was a good knowledge of the electricity industry, I called my provider to negotiate my new contract.

It was then I found that while the discount offers vary between companies, some that

Noel Whittaker



offer a big discount charge a higher rate for each kilowatt hour. Once again, I gave up.

Last week my wife and I were browsing in Harvey Norman and were attracted to a handsome new Nespresso machine by Breville. It looked great, but what sealed the deal was the \$80 cash-back offer. Given the retail price of \$199, it was irresistible.

But you guessed it, there was a catch. They don't simply deduct \$80 from the purchase price, you have to go online to apply for it. The sales assistant assured us that was quite simple.

The first challenge was finding the website to request the refund. We tried Breville and initially it did look promising. The problem was we had to find our new machine from the list shown and quote the "promotion code". We could find neither.

So we phoned Harvey Norman and spoke to an assistant who said she'd just spent over an hour on the phone helping another customer sort it out. She promised to talk to her manager and ring us back.

She did, which eventually led us to the Nespresso

Promotion site, where we could enter all our details to apply for the refund.

There was just one further challenge — we were required to download a photo of the Harvey Norman docket as part of the process.

I took the photo and emailed it to myself, but this created a file with the extension .rtfd. When I tried to upload it, the system would not accept it — the file, it now revealed, must be a .jpg or a .pdf. Fortunately, I remembered that my iPad has a scanner, which enabled me to scan the invoice and email it to myself as a PDF document. Just three hours after I started the process I was excited to discover that I'd finally submitted the application to get my \$80 back.

That's the lowest hourly rate I've earned for many years.

I found the process frustrating and time-consuming and wondered how a person who was not familiar with technology would cope.

I would love to know how many cash-backs are claimed. I reckon most consumers would give up after the first frustrating hour.

Noel Whittaker is the author of *Making Money Made Simple* and other books on personal finance. His advice is general in nature and readers should seek their own professional advice before making any financial decisions.



administrator will then be appointed and your husband's estate will be distributed based on a

predetermined formula. As for super, you'll need to contact each of his super funds and ask what's required to receive the death benefit payment, which will be a combination of his final balance and any insurance held at the time of his death.

Finally, when you start to get on top of things, follow the Barefoot Steps with all the Alpaca Attitude you can muster. You got this.

“If a statue is ever erected to honour the person who has done the most for American investors, the hands-down choice should be Jack Bogle.”

Warren Buffett

ASK THE EXPERT

Send your questions to Noel Whittaker
noelwhit@gmail.com or tweet @NoelWhittaker

Q You recently answered a question about borrowing against the equity in your home to invest in managed funds. I think you used an example where a person borrowed \$100,000 against the equity in their home and used that to invest in a quality share trust. The assumption was that the funds would earn 9 per cent a year and the interest would be a tax deduction. I'm nearly 57 and was wondering if this \$100,000 loan could be invested in my super fund. The returns are good — about 10-11 per cent — and the fees are low. Can you see any barriers to putting it into super rather than buying into a managed fund?

A Be careful. You can only claim a tax deduction for interest on a loan to buy investment assets if those assets produce taxable income. Superannuation is not regarded as an income-producing asset, so in the circumstances you describe, a tax deduction would not be allowed. An alternative strategy could be to invest in the managed funds directly, using a home equity loan, then invest the dividends from those funds into your super as non-concessional contributions. This would enable you to enjoy the benefits of compounding, while maximising the tax benefits of the borrowing strategy.

Gaslighters can drive you round the bend

EVERYONE has worked with an underwhelming or disappointing boss at some stage in their career.

Whether it is the boss who micromanages your every move, is totally disorganised or simply cannot remember what day of the week it is, bad bosses remain the No.1 reason why people leave an organisation.

But forget about the ineffectual boss, because there is a more despicable type out there — a boss who not only might limit your career progression but who may well destroy your mind.

Let me introduce the gas-

WORKPLACE MATTERS

Gary Martin



lighting boss — a boss who emotionally manipulates their team in such a way that team members question their perception of reality.

Borrowed from the Oscar-winning US mystery movie *Gaslight* (1944), in which a man manipulates his wife to the point where she thinks she is losing her mind, the term gaslighting is used for a form of workplace bullying where

seeds of doubt are sown in an individual.

We have all met the victims of gaslighting bosses. They are people who regularly complain they cannot seem to do anything right at work, or that their work is driving them crazy.

Gaslighting creates a dangerous power dynamic between an abuser and the victim, which is usually exacerbated when the offender is the victim's boss.

The gaslighting boss' sole purpose is to acquire control of, and power over, an employee via a repertoire of manipulative strategies.

The gaslighter might, for example, seek to discredit their victims by making them feel incompetent or unstable. Similarly, they might cancel meetings without letting their victim know, leave them off important emails or forget to provide important information about a particular task — and then deny that they did.

When the gaslighting boss is challenged, they become masters of creating confusion to divert the discussion to circular arguments or counterattacks in order to bewilder or frustrate their victims.

They assert themselves with such intensity and conviction

that their victims begin to doubt their own perspective.

They lie in a blatant fashion and will twist and reframe others' words to convince their victims they are right.

And by refusing to acknowledge or trivialising others' thoughts and feelings, gaslighting bosses cause their victims to increasingly doubt themselves.

Over time, the upshot of the gaslighter's actions is that victims feel confused about what is expected of them and they might even apologise for situations that are not of their making. Victims often lose their confidence to make decisions,

find themselves regularly second-guessing themselves and may even become hypersensitive and feel uninged.

There are no simple ways to survive a gaslighting boss, though experts suggest you try to garner the support of co-workers to minimise self-doubt.

And, of course, keeping records of all interactions with your boss will prove useful should you choose to make a formal workplace bullying complaint at some point.

Professor Gary Martin is chief executive at the Australian Institute of Management WA