



22

steps to make you richer in 2006, by Eddie Hobbs

By STEPHEN ROGERS

ORK financial guru Eddie Hobbs has warned there could be lean times ahead for the Irish public and that everyone should be closely guarding their spending.

Here the man behind *Show Me The Money* and *Rip Off Republic* gives some helpful hints for a financially sound 2006.

1. Let 2006 be the year that you eliminate lifestyle debt completely because we could be in for a bumpy ride. Set a target that by the end of the year it's gone and that you will cease using lifestyle debt.

2. On a piece of paper list all your debt, starting at the top with the most expensive — not the biggest debt, the most expensive (ie, how much it's costing you to service).

3. Stop using catalogue companies to buy things.

Generally, when you pay on an instalment basis for goods that you have bought from a catalogue, you will probably find

that the interest rate is somewhere between 25% and 40%.

4. Keep a cash diary for a month. Carry round a little notebook and take a note of what cash you spend every day and that will indicate where you are haemorrhaging cash.

5. If you find that you need DIY help and you are fairly handy on a computer then buy a copy of *Short Hands Long Pockets*. It comes with software called the Wonga Wizard which will help to record all spendings and debts electronically.

6. Look at your monthly electronic spending; your mortgage, your rent and bills.

Add your cash spending to your electronic spending. That is now your total spending.

7. Multiply that by 12 to get annual spend and compare it to your after-tax profit for the year.

8. Split your spending into two boxes. One is

the must spend box, the necessities such as food. Then put into an optional spending box all the unnecessary spending such as drink, entertainment and holidays.

9. Compare the necessary spending box with your net income for the year and you should find that there is a positive gap. Your net income should be more than your necessary spending. That is the gap you have to work with.

10. On the piece of paper in tip one, consider what kind of debt is at the top of the page that can be dropped to the bottom by bringing them into the areas of finance that have the cheapest interest rates. Do not put lifestyle debt into one low-cost short term loan.

11. Become a 'rate tart'

by shifting credit card balance to credit card companies that are offering a 0% rate for six months.

12. Take your credit card and disable it by cutting horizontally under the magnetic

strip. You cannot use the card while shopping but can use it to book a cheap flight using the number and expiry date.

13. Don't get off the bus at a shopping centre because it creates temptation. Replace the high you get by shopping with a long walk and a chat with a friend or go jogging or do an education course.

14. Let the mature members of your family know you are in 'slim down' mode. Share the problem so that you are not carrying it on your own.

15. Look at the cost of your loans and talk to your local credit union or bank to see if you can consolidate loans into one low-cost short term loan.

16. Talk less on the phone and text more.

Make sure your children are not overspending on mobile phone costs. Give them a limited budget.

17. Stop thinking about buying a new car every couple of years.

They are being built to last 10-15 years these days. If you need an annual holiday look for cheap deals. Plan in advance.

18. Between 10-15% of people's income is spent on alcohol. Consider cutting back. If you are on 20 fags a day that is costing around €3,000 per year.

19. Sell all liquid assets. If you are carrying debt of €30,000 it makes no sense holding money in deposit accounts or putting money into under-performing life insurance policies.

20. Look at how much you are spending on insurance, particularly health and life insurance. See if you can get it cheaper elsewhere.

21. If you are overwhelmed by the problem visit your local Money Advice Budgeting Service office. To locate one visit www.mabs.ie.

22. Finally, keep Sunday nights between 8.30pm-9pm free and watch *Show Me the Money*.

● Courtesy of the RTÉ guide.

O'Shea on Monday

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ROBERT O'SHEA
ponders the final moments of the bog men

English, as the two men would otherwise be incomprehensible, as it is believed they spoke with midland accents.

Tony — little guy.

Fionn — big guy.

Tony: How do I look?

Fionn: Grand.

Tony: You're not even looking!

Fionn: OK (looking). It's grand.

Tony: (takes one final lingering look in the puddle as he continues to spike) Perfect!

Fionn: Come on. Stop mucking about with your hair.

Tony: Oh. It's grand for Mister-Tall-As-A-Tree. All the ladies swoon when you approach the fort. A mile away and they're all abuzz — "Here comes Fionn! Here comes Fionn!" Do you have any idea what it's like to walk into a crannógs without having to crouch? I'm a laughing stock.

Fionn: And you think putting that stuff in your hair will make them like you?

Tony: I'll have you know this "stuff" comes from Paris, France.

Fionn: Whatever.

Tony sticks his tongue out when Fionn has his back turned.

Fionn: Keep doing that and when the Ice Age comes your face will be stuck like that.

Tony: What, you got eyes in the back of your head now?

Fionn: Hurry up. You know what? I'm starving. And I keep smelling berries but I can't seem to find any.

Tony: That'll be the gel. Wild berries and ginseng in the resin.

Fionn: Give me that gel. (Tony hands over the pouch reluctantly.) Mmmmm! Tasty.

Tony: What are you doing. That's supposed to last me six months. (He pulls out a knife.) Give it back.

Fionn pulls out his axe: I always thought you'd look better with a part down the middle. (He swings the weapon down on the little man's impeccably coiffured head. Tony slumps to the ground.)

Fionn: Ugh. (If Fionn had read the label he would have seen printed clearly on the back of the pouch: 'Do not ingest'. He keels over on top of the other man's knife.)

The moral of our tale: Men shouldn't use hair gel because they end up spending too much time in the bog.

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IN A FOREWORD TO ONE OF HIS BOOKS, GROUCHO MARX WROTE: "THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN IN THOSE LONG HOURS I SPENT WAITING FOR MY WIFE TO GET READY TO GO OUT."

You know the drill. After an hour in the bathroom (you don't know what she's doing, but it involves cotton buds) she emerges looking, well, different, and that's when the real waiting begins. It is during this crucial period that you must not, under penalty of incarceration, use the phrase: "Of course you don't look fat in that dress. That's the only one that makes you look thin." Even though this was meant as a joke.

Now I would never be one to be accused of being stylish. If I am spending a long time in the bathroom, it is not because I am cosmetically enhancing features of my flesh but because I am reading on the toilet. My appearance worries stretch from making sure there is no shaving cream left on my face when I leave the house in the morning (if it is behind an ear it doesn't count) to trying to get all my hair to go in the same direction.

A lot of men these days, however, are worrying about how they look and two of my male housemates are prime examples. There is less moisture in a Swedish steam room than after they emerge from the shower. Each individual follicle is carefully greased before we can venture out. Yet this is not a new phenomenon.

The most surprising thing about the two bodies of prehistoric men found in the bog in Meath must be that one of them was using hair gel imported from France at the time he had his head split open with an axe 2,300 years ago.

This was the shorter of the two, who has been named Clonycavan man. He stood 5'2" in his stocking feet, while his companion — Oldcroghan man, who was stabbed in the chest — towered over him at 6'6".

Using forensic science, Ned Kelly, head of antiquities at the National History Museum in Dublin was able to establish that they were both murdered. But this raises other questions. Why were they murdered? Why was the shorter man wearing hair gel?

Using the latest technological advancements in the power of my own imagination, I will here try to retrace the final minutes of these ancestors of Meath. We have translated the following transcript into