

[Guest Post] Freedom Fighter Interview #16 - Mr. Z

Today we have our 16th Freedom Fighter interview in this series. I should point out that these guest interviews will continue but at a much slower pace than the once a week schedule we have been following through summer of 2015. I love sharing other peoples stories with you all, but I need to make room for a little more original content. So, through October, we will be publishing one interview every two weeks, and then from November on it will be one a month.

All the way from the UK, today's guest, Mr. Z, is breaking away from the Zombie Horde of what he calls the consumerism apocalypse. He is looking to reach his definition of Financial Freedom in 10 years.

But I will let Mr. Z tell you all about it himself...



1 - Who are you and what do you do? What is your story? How are you fighting for your Freedom? Where did you start, where in the journey are you, and where do you ultimately want to end up?

Hey Gen Y Finance Guy,

Thanks for having me ☺

I am Mr. Zombie. I am fighting my way to freedom through the Zombie Horde of

the consumerism apocalypse.... by being an actuary...

I only really got going on the trek towards financial independence about a year ago and the start of the journey is some of the toughest going. Constantly hacking my way through the foliage of consumerism and bullshit with my financial machete. I hear the path gets easier as you sharpen your tools though. So I have spent the last year sorting out my outgoings and nailing down an investing strategy that works for me. Ten years is my target for FREEDOM, if Mr. Market plays ball.

The end goal is financial freedom, but my definition of that does keep changing. Some days it's the amount that means I can live off my accumulated funds forever, others it's an amount that allows me to change careers and not be in it just for the money.

2 - What is your favorite Quote or Mantra that you live by?

There is one I use on my blog - "Spend Less, Save More & Escape the Horde". I repeat it to myself every morning while looking at myself in the mirror. Then I sacrifice a goat.

Read enough blogs and you come to realize that the premise behind achieving Financial Independence is deceptively simple. Trim out the shit from your expenses, then save the excess. Eventually you will be free. Increasing your income and your investment strategy have an impact as well, but I think sorting out your expenses in turn sorts out your mind set and then you are well and truly on the yellow brick road towards financial independence with a skip in your step and a creepy glint in your eyes. The machete doesn't help.

Where in the world are you from?

I'm from the U.K, on the West Coast of England. It's like the rest of England only windier and wetter. And everyone talks like a pirate. It's great.

3 - What is the worst financial decision you have ever made?

I never really got myself into the debt whirlwind that so many people seem to end up in. I've had one credit card, the same one since I was 18. But my mum put the fear into me when I got it, so I used it pretty sensibly. And never really got myself any loans, other than the mortgage on my house. I took out a small loan after passing my bike test to get a motorbike, but it annoyed me and it felt like such a

drag so I paid it off early.

My biggest mistake, not one decision, was frittering away money in my 20's. On hobbies and coffee mainly I think! I don't regret spending on travel, and I always did that pretty cheaply (3 week trip surfing the south west of France and sleeping in a car anyone?). But I must have hemorrhaged money on just the day to day stuff, you know? Lunch, coffees, beers, taxis and whatever else. If I had my current mindset when I first started work I would pretty much be FI now and ready to see what that offered.

4 - What is the best financial decision you have ever made?

Paying into my voluntary company pension scheme. The pension scheme at the place that I work is pretty generous, if you pay in 5% the company matches it with another 13%. I pay in an extra 2% to top that up to 20%, ALL TAX FREE baby. Having that chugging along in the background, all automated and out of my wages before I even see it, has been good. I forgot about it until a year or so ago, when they updated the online system so that you could see how your funds were doing. I was pretty stoked with the amount the regular contributions had added up to ☐

It was actually seeing how much that had grown that got me researching retirement investing strategies and stumbling across the whole world of financial independence.

To be honest, if I carried on with just this pension scheme until I was 65 I would probably have a nice nugget to retire on. Buuuuuut we want freedom early, so that's just one part of my war chest against The Man.

5 - Are you a morning or a night person? What time do you wake up and go to sleep?

Morning person. I tend to get up two hours before I need to for work and either study, write for my blog or get out for a cycle. The evenings are for relaxing.

6 - What is your definition of Financial Freedom? And what is your FREEDOM number?

At first it was all about generating enough passive annual income to be able to sack off work forever. But I don't think it is just that, perhaps my financial nugget will reach a stage where I feel comfortable to move onto work that perhaps doesn't pay

particularly well but is more interesting. Or it allows me to feel comfortable starting up my own business and working for myself.

It started off as £1million. It's currently £625,000 on the basis that it would give me around £25,000 a year. I've recently realized that I live off far less than this, especially if you took mortgage payments and money I save each month. So it could be as low as £250,000. Like I say, it seems to change.

As I'm at the start of the path I try to focus on saving as much as I can and increasing my income (seemingly some companies love to pay you to pass exams, happy days!). I'm not trying to worry too much about a specific number as I figure that I am building some good habits now and, at some point, I will have had enough of work and be in a good position to get me some freedom, rather than grind it out for the next 30 years because that's what everyone else is doing.

7 - What is your favorite Asset Class to invest in (i.e Real Estate, Stocks, Bonds, Peer to Peer lending, etc)? Why? And what platforms do you use (i.e [TD Ameritrade](#) for stocks, [Realty Shares](#) for Real Estate, [Prosper](#) for Peer to Peer lending, etc.).

Simple boring diversified passive funds. I have a bad tendency to tinker, so simplicity is key. Then I can leave it alone ☐

8 - What is your favorite online financial resource, paid or free (i.e. [Mint](#), [Personal Capital](#), blogs, podcasts, [Tasty Trade](#), etc.)?

I keep all of my data on one monstrous spreadsheet, sadly I built it as if I was a company, it has a Profit and Loss, a Balance Sheet and a set of financial notes. Ha-ha, a throwback to my old days auditing. Please say **someone else** does this!

Otherwise I top up my motivation mana through reading personal finance blogs. I love reading about people who are already rolling in Financial Freedom, those that are years into the journey and nearly there and those that are just starting out. It's also nice to read blogs based in the UK, the States, Canada and anywhere else around the world. It's a global pursuit!

9 - When it comes to building wealth, do you spend more time figuring out how to cut expenses or increase income? Why?

I changed jobs a few years ago to train as an actuary as this will give me the

opportunity to earn a healthy basic salary, only a few more exams to go. But that's all I am doing on the income side.


I have worked to cut my expenses down and boost my savings rate. Not to the point where I am miserable and trying to survive by eating sawdust and drinking my own urine, just cutting out all the tat I don't need. I'm not adverse to increasing income, I just think cutting back expenses first helps to highlight what's really important to you.

10 - How many hours a week do you watch TV? What's your favorite show?

Barely any. Mrs. Z watches some TV in the evenings (it's tiring work being a zombie you see), so I tend to catch up on reading excellent PF blogs such as this one.

Disclaimer: I watch The Walking Dead, obvs.

11 - If you had to recommend 1 book, what would it be? And why?

[The Man Who Cycled the World](#)  by Mark Beaumont. It's about a Scottish dude who, after University, decided to try and break the round the world cycling record. So he trained and attempted just that, pretty much completely solo. It is an awesome read about what you can do if you set your mind to it. Hmmmm a long hard journey, some similarities to the journey towards Financial Freedom, perhaps!

12 - What is the best piece of advice you have ever received or what advice would you give to the readers?

Don't care what the person in the street thinks of you.

13 - Where can we find you online? If you're a blogger, this is the perfect plug to talk about your blog and why it's great.

[The Finance Zombie](#)

You should pop over for a read It can be a little bit swearsy and a bit surreal at times. But I am just trying to document my path to Financial Independence as honestly as possible, mistakes and all. It's (hopefully) not just the same old articles being hammered out or the same old concepts being re-written. [This is one of my favorites.](#)

What's that? The zombie thing? Oh yeah. Well I kind of get the impression that 99% of people just seem to stumble through life, following the Horde afraid to make any changes. Especially when it comes to money, the Horde seem infected with the rage virus that is consumerism. And Financial Independence is the cure, but you got to fight for it and it takes a while. For the moment I am just shuffling along with everyone else, but working on a cure that is the dirty growing secret that is my Freedom Fund. Ssshhhh



Gen Y Finance Guy

Hey, I'm Dom - the man behind the cartoon. You'll notice that I sign off as "Gen Y Finance Guy" on all my posts, due to the fact that I write this blog anonymously (at least for now). I like to think of myself as the *Chief Freedom Officer* here of my little corner of the internet. In the real world, I'm a 30-something former C-Suite executive turned entrepreneur turned capital allocator. I am trying to humanize finance by sharing my own journey to Financial Freedom. I believe in total *honesty* and *transparency*. That is why before I ever started blogging, I decided that I would share all of my own [financial stats](#). I do this not to brag, but instead to inspire motivate, and also to hold myself accountable. My goal is to be a beacon of hope, motivation, and inspiration for *you*, the reader, by living life by example and sharing it **all** here on the blog. My sincere hope is that you will be able to learn from me - both from my successes and my failures! [Read More](#)