GOOD DEALS

The Entrepreneur's Tax Playbook

A structural guide to keeping more of what you earn — so you can live well, invest with confidence, and give generously.

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Updated for 2026 tax law (post-OBBBA)

A letter, before we begin.

This playbook is written like a letter to someone I care about.

It's what I'd tell my own kid, my best friend, or anyone sitting across from me in a Foundation Review who said: “I want to live a great life, keep more of what I earn, invest as much as possible, and give back generously — how do I do all of that at once?”

It isn't a textbook. It's a playbook. The strategies are real, current (2026 tax law, post-OBBBA), and ordered by impact.

Start at the top. Work your way down. Every section builds on the last.

And here is the core frame you'll use to hold all of it together. Take a few minutes on the next page before you go anywhere else.

— Andrew
Austin, TX

Part 1 · The 4 Jobs of Every Dollar

Before we get into tactics, understand this. Every dollar you earn has exactly four possible destinations.

- **1. Taxes — the government's cut.**
- **2. Living — your lifestyle.**
- **3. Investing — money you send into the future.**
- **4. Giving — money you send into the world.**

That's it. No dollar you've ever earned has done anything else.

The trap most high earners fall into.

If you don't deliberately assign your dollars, the tax code assigns them for you — and it takes as much of Job 1 as the default settings allow. Jobs 3 and 4 shrink. Every year. Quietly.

Most high earners I meet are overpaying taxes by $30K–$120K/year. Not because they're careless. Because nobody ever sat them down and did the assignment.

The principle.

Shrink Job 1. Expand Jobs 2, 3, and 4. Not by cheating — by using the structures the tax code was designed to reward.

The tax code isn't punishment. It's a list of incentives. The government wants you to start businesses, hire people, invest in real estate, give to charity, and fund retirement. Every deduction, credit, and exclusion exists because Congress decided that behavior was worth rewarding.

Your job — our job — is to do the things they're already paying you to do.

Read this if you read nothing else.
The structure you set today will quietly compound for decades. Most of the difference between two identical earners — one who retires comfortable and one who retires wealthy — isn't returns. It's structure.

Part 2 · Layer 1 — Entity Structure

Everything starts here. If you get this wrong, nothing else matters as much.

The S-Corporation election

If you're a sole proprietor or a single-member LLC doing more than roughly $80K in net profit, and you haven't made an S-Corp election — you are almost certainly overpaying on self-employment tax.

How the math works.

Every dollar of profit in your business is currently hit with ~15.3% in self-employment tax (Social Security + Medicare) — on top of your regular income tax.

Elect S-Corp status and you pay yourself a reasonable salary (e.g. $80K). The rest comes out as a distribution, which is not subject to self-employment tax.

Business clears $200K in profit? That's $120K of distribution not hit with the 15.3%. Annual savings: roughly $15K–$17K. Recurring. Forever.

The Accountable Plan

Stack this on top of the S-Corp. An Accountable Plan is a formal written document that lets your S-Corp reimburse you — tax-free — for legitimate business use of personal assets.

- Home office (portion of rent/mortgage, utilities, internet)
- Cell phone
- Vehicle mileage
- Certain travel

That's $8K–$18K of expenses, deducted by the business, received tax-free by you, that most owners currently pay with post-tax dollars.

Layer 1 combined impact

S-Corp election + Accountable Plan: $23K–$35K per year in recurring savings. Set-up time: ~2 meetings with a CPA and an S-Corp filing. Worth revisiting even if you already have an S-Corp — most business owners with an S-Corp do not have a written Accountable Plan on file.

Part 3 · Layer 2 — Retirement Vehicles

Retirement accounts are the government's second-biggest offer to people who run businesses. Most owners take a fraction of what's available.

The Solo 401(k)

If you're self-employed and you don't have a Solo 401(k), you're leaving the single biggest retirement tool in the code on the floor.

2026 contribution limits.

- Employee contribution: $23,500
- Employer contribution: variable based on compensation
- Combined maximum: $69,000 (up to $76,500 if 50+)

At a 37% marginal rate, a maxed Solo 401(k) is worth ~$25K in tax savings per year — before the compounding of the invested dollars or the legal asset protection a 401(k) carries.

The Health Savings Account (HSA)

The only triple-tax-advantaged account in the code:

- Tax-deductible going in
- Tax-free growth
- Tax-free withdrawals for qualified medical expenses

2026 limits: $4,300 individual / $8,550 family, + $1,000 catch-up if 55+. Pair it with a high-deductible health plan and invest the balance.

The Backdoor Roth IRA

For high earners phased out of direct Roth contributions — contribute to a nondeductible traditional IRA, then convert. You get tax-free growth forever, up to $7K/year ($8K if 50+).

Mega Backdoor Roth: if your 401(k) plan allows after-tax contributions and in-service distributions, this can move as much as $46,500/year into a Roth. Check your plan document.

Layer 2 combined impact

Solo 401(k) + HSA + Backdoor Roth strategies: $25K–$40K in annual tax savings, plus tax-free growth on the invested balances. For owners 50+, the numbers are larger.

Part 4 · Layer 3 — Business Tactics

The Augusta Rule (Section 280A)

Section 280A of the IRC was written to protect Augusta, Georgia homeowners who rented their houses during the Masters Tournament. Congress never cleaned it up.

Which means: you can rent your personal home to your business for up to 14 days a year — and receive that rental income completely tax-free. The business deducts it. You don't pay tax on it.

How to use it.

- Host quarterly board meetings, annual strategy retreats, or client offsites at your home
- Get a reasonable market-rate appraisal for short-term rental in your area
- Keep meeting minutes and document the business purpose
- Have the business cut you a check

Typical result: $8K–$15K/year of tax-free income to you, fully deductible by the business.

Accelerated depreciation and Section 179

Business equipment, vehicles over 6,000 lbs GVWR, and certain real estate improvements can be depreciated aggressively. The 2026 OBBBA restored 100% bonus depreciation for qualified property placed in service through specified dates.

A well-timed equipment purchase in a high-income year can move $20K–$100K+ of deductions forward, dramatically reducing tax in that year. Pair with the S-Corp for maximum benefit.

The QBI deduction (Section 199A)

If you operate a pass-through (S-Corp, LLC taxed as partnership, sole prop), you may qualify for the 20% Qualified Business Income deduction. OBBBA made this permanent for most owner-led businesses.

Phase-outs apply above certain income thresholds and for specified service trades (SSTBs). Structuring around these phase-outs — through timing of income, spousal employment, or retirement contributions — is a significant planning opportunity for high earners.

Layer 3 combined impact

Augusta Rule + Depreciation + QBI optimization: $15K–$60K/year, situation-dependent. The highest-leverage piece is usually aligning the QBI phase-out with your retirement contributions and compensation structure.

Part 5 · Layer 4 — Investment Efficiency

Once Layers 1-3 are set, the investment layer is where the quiet compounding happens. The difference between two identical portfolios — one tax-efficient, one not — is often 1-2% per year of after-tax return. Over a decade, that is a different financial life.

Asset location

Put tax-inefficient assets (bonds, REITs, actively managed funds) in tax-deferred accounts. Put tax-efficient assets (index funds, growth stocks) in taxable accounts. Put the highest-growth assets (small-cap, private equity) in Roth accounts where growth is tax-free forever.

Tax-loss harvesting

Realize losses strategically to offset gains. Use the 30-day wash-sale rule carefully. A well-run harvesting program is typically worth 0.5%–1.5% of portfolio value per year in tax savings.

1031 exchanges (for real estate owners)

Sell an investment property and roll the proceeds into a like-kind property — defer the capital gain indefinitely. Chain these across decades and never pay capital gains in your lifetime. On death, the basis steps up, and the gain is permanently avoided.

Layer 4 combined impact

For a $1M-plus portfolio: $10K–$40K/year of additional after-tax return. Compounds dramatically over time. Most financial advisors are not implementing these at the level of sophistication available.

Part 6 · Layer 5 — Giving That Pays You Back

If giving is part of who you are — your church, your kid's school, a nonprofit you sit on the board of — the way you give matters almost as much as the amount.

Donate appreciated stock, not cash

You own a stock that went from $50 to $200. Give the stock directly to the charity.

- You get a deduction for the full $200
- You never pay the capital gains tax on the $150 of appreciation
- The charity sells it tax-free because they're a charity

Same dollars to the charity. Zero capital gains paid. Structural win that compounds every year.

Bunch into a Donor-Advised Fund (DAF)

Instead of giving $10K/year for five years and taking the standard deduction each year — consolidate. Put $50K into a DAF in one year. Itemize that year. Distribute to your charities over the next five years on your normal cadence.

Charities see zero difference. IRS sees a five-figure deduction you would have otherwise lost.

Qualified Charitable Distributions (if 70½+)

Send money directly from your IRA to charity — up to $105K/year. It never counts as income. And it satisfies your Required Minimum Distribution.

For retired clients who give anyway, QCDs are usually the single best move we make.

Charitable Remainder Trust (for larger gifts)

Contribute appreciated property to a CRT. Receive an income stream for life or a set term, take a partial charitable deduction today, avoid the immediate capital gain, and leave the remainder to charity. Best used with concentrated low-basis positions approaching a liquidity event.

Layer 5 combined impact
For a generous household: $15K–$40K/year of additional tax savings. Same amount to charity. Different outcome for you.

Part 7 · Quick Wins Checklist

Print this. Take it to your CPA. Ask which you're doing. Ask which you're not. Ask why not.

Entity & Payroll

- S-Corporation election (if profit > $80K)
- Reasonable salary calculation done annually
- Accountable Plan on file in writing
- Home office, phone, mileage reimbursements running monthly

Retirement

- Solo 401(k) established and funded
- Employee + employer contributions maxed
- HSA funded and invested (not left in cash)
- Backdoor Roth executed annually
- Mega Backdoor Roth if plan allows

Business Tactics

- Augusta Rule used for legitimate business meetings (up to 14 days/year)
- Vehicle > 6,000 lbs GVWR if Section 179 applicable
- Equipment purchases timed for bonus depreciation
- QBI deduction calculation reviewed annually
- Spousal employment structured if beneficial

Investments

- Asset location optimized across account types
- Tax-loss harvesting active in taxable accounts
- 1031 exchange available for real estate gains
- Concentrated position management plan in place

Giving

- Appreciated assets (not cash) used for giving
- Donor-Advised Fund for bunched giving years

- QCD for charitable giving if 70½+
- Estate/legacy structure reviewed within last 3 years

One-sentence rule

If you can't check 12+ of the items above, you're probably leaving $30K-$120K/year in taxes on the table. That's what a Foundation Review is designed to find.

Part 8 · The Coordination Problem

Here's the question I want you to sit with: why doesn't everyone do this?

The answer isn't “because people are lazy” or “because the strategies are hard.” The answer is structural.

Your CPA is a historian.

Their job is to take what you did last year and report it to the government. They are not paid to restructure your life. They will not call you in June and say “hey, let's reorganize your entity.” That's not the engagement.

Your financial advisor is a tailor.

They optimize the last dollar — the one that already survived the tax code. They'll help you pick index funds and argue about small-cap value tilts. Which is fine. But they're playing for 3% when the tax code is offering you 20%.

Your attorney drafts documents.

On request. They don't watch your numbers. They don't update your plan when your income doubles. They wait for the phone to ring.

Nobody is paid a flat fee to sit across from you and look at the entire picture.

That gap is where the money lives. And closing that gap is the job Good Deals Advisors was built to do.

About Andrew Escher

Andrew Escher is a CFA charterholder and the founder of Good Deals Advisors, a Registered Investment Adviser with the Texas State Securities Board, based in Austin, Texas.

Before Good Deals, Andrew spent 10,000+ hours as a Fractional CFO to more than 30 companies, with $300M+ of revenue running through the systems and plans he built. He was part of the team that took a Kansas City software company from scrappy startup to a nine-figure acquisition exit — leading the financial side of the deal through the full sale process.

The CFA designation is held by fewer than 20% of candidates who attempt it. Andrew holds Series 65 and is a fiduciary to all Good Deals clients. Good Deals does not accept commissions, sell insurance as a primary business, or receive referral fees from product providers.

What makes Good Deals different

- Flat-fee annual planning engagement — no commissions, no product sales, no quotas
- Single relationship covering tax strategy, investment management, retirement, business structure, insurance review, and estate coordination
- Fiduciary to every client, every decision, every quarter
- CFO-level rigor applied to personal and household finance, not just investments

Your next step: The Foundation Review

If you made it this far, you have the same question most serious business owners ask when they finish reading this: what does this look like for me, specifically?

I'd like to offer you a Foundation Review.

What it is

- **30 minutes. On Zoom. One-on-one with Andrew.**
- You share what you do, what you earn, how your business is structured, and what's keeping you up at night.
- Andrew walks you through the 3-5 highest-leverage moves specific to your situation, what each is worth in annual dollars, and what it would cost to implement.
- You leave with a prioritized punch list you can execute.

What it isn't

- **Not a sales pitch.**
- Not a webinar or a group call.
- Not a product push — Good Deals doesn't sell products.
- Not a commitment to hire us.

Some people book the review, get 3 ideas, thank Andrew, and go implement them with their existing CPA. That's fine.

Some people book the review and ask Good Deals to build and manage the plan for them. Also fine.

Either way — you leave that call with specific moves you can execute this quarter.

Book now — gooddeals.work/book-a-call
30 minutes. No cost. No pitch. Worst case: you walk away with a couple of five-figure tax-saving ideas. Best case: we build something that compounds for the rest of your life.

Disclosures

Good Deals Advisors, LLC is a Registered Investment Adviser with the Texas State Securities Board. Registration does not imply a certain level of skill or training.

Nothing in this playbook constitutes an offer, solicitation, or recommendation of any security, investment strategy, tax position, or legal structure. This document is provided for educational and informational purposes only.

Tax law is complex and fact-specific. Every strategy described should be reviewed and implemented only with a qualified CPA and, where relevant, a licensed attorney. Dollar figures cited throughout are examples based on typical client results — actual outcomes vary significantly based on individual circumstances, and no specific outcome is promised or guaranteed.

This document reflects federal tax law as of early 2026, including changes enacted under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). Tax law changes. State tax law adds complexity not addressed here. Consult your advisors for current guidance.

Past performance is not indicative of future results. No investment strategy can guarantee a profit or prevent a loss.