Rinnai announces new innovation initiative

SUBMITTED

PEACHTREE CITY — Rinnai America Corporation has announced a new innovation initiative that will drive product advancements for the U.S. and Canadian markets.

With this new direction, Ray VanAssche has been promoted to Vice President of Innovation, a new department that combines engineering and product management.

The new Innovation Department will enable the engineering and product management teams to collaborate on the product roadmap and generate leading ideas and solutions for existing and new markets.

"For years, Rinnai America Corporation has adapted Rinnai Japan products for the North American market. With a recent shift in strategy to be the product and technology leader in North America, promoting Ray will allow us to meet this goal. His proven track record of market-leading product development, leadership and progressive ideation will set Rinnai up for continued success," said Frank Windsor, Chief Operating Officer for Rinnai. "Our vision is enhancing lives by changing the way water is heated. Becoming the leader in product innovation in North America will strengthen our commitment to the water heating industry and dedication to our customers."

VanAssche has an extensive background working with market-leading, innovating organizations such as General Motors, Tesla Motors and The Coca-Cola Company.

"I am proud and truly honored to lead Rinnai America's highly talented product management and product development teams. This new role provides a unique opportunity to address market needs by integrating best-in-class products with innovative solutions which positively impact consumers' lives," said VanAssche.

This strategy aligns well with the timeline for Rinnai's new 300,000-square-foot facility in Griffin, which is slated for completion in Q4 of 2020.

Rinnai is the first major tankless water heater manufacturer in North America and will produce both residential and commercial products at the new manufacturing site.

Rinnai began the first phase of its manufacturing journey in a temporary facility in Griffin, earlier this year. The facility produced its first tankless water heater on April 4, 2018.

Also, Rinnai's new North American headquarters grand opening is planned for September 2018. The new North America Innovation and Training Center construction will start once the new headquarters is opened.

How to reset retirement plans to weather a downturn

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The older the current bull market gets, the more stories you're likely to read about how this is an awful time to retire.

Yes, we're due for a correction that trims 20 percent or more from stock values. That could be a big problem for people taking withdrawals from investment portfolios, since market losses early in retirement increase the chances of running short of money.

The answer isn't to cower in fear, but to plan for the inevitable downturns. Financial planners say the following actions can help make your money last.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE PROPERLY DIVERSIFIED

Stocks have quadrupled since March 9, 2009, the beginning of the current bull market. Meanwhile, returns on bonds and cash remain low. Investors who haven't regularly rebalanced back to a target mix of stocks, bonds and cash probably have way too much of their portfolios in stocks.

The time to rebalance is now, before markets start bucking and making it harder to think rationally. The right asset allocation depends on your income needs and risk tolerance, among other factors, but many financial planners recommend having a few years' worth of withdrawals in safer investments to mitigate the urge to sell when stocks fall.

Certified financial planner Lawrence Heller of Melville, New York, uses the "bucket" strategy to avoid selling in down markets. Heller typically has clients keep one to three years' worth of expenses in cash, plus seven to nine years' worth in bonds, giving them 10 years before they would have to sell any stocks.

"That should be enough time to ride out a correction," Heller says.

Near-retirees who use target date funds or computerized robo-advisors to invest for retirement don't have to worry about regular rebalancing — that's done automatically. But they may want to consider switching to a more conservative mix if stocks make up over half of their portfolios.

START SMALLER, OR BE WILLING TO CUT BACK

Historically, retirees could minimize the risk of running out of money by withdrawing 4 percent of their portfolios in the first year of retirement and increasing the withdrawal amount by the inflation rate each year after that. This approach, pioneered by financial planner and researcher Bill Bengen, became known as the "4 percent rule."

Some researchers worry that the rule might not work in extended periods of low returns. One alternative is to start withdrawals at about 3 percent.

Another approach is to forgo inflation adjustments in bad years. Derek Tharp, a researcher with financial planning site Kitces.com, found that retirees could start at an initial 4.5 percent withdrawal rate if they were willing to trim their spending by 3 percent — which is equivalent to the average inflation adjustment — after years when their portfolios lose money.

"You don't actually cut your spending. You just don't increase it for inflation," says certified financial planner Michael Kitces.

PAY OFF DEBT, MAXIMIZE SOCIAL SECURITY

Reducing expenses trims the amount that retirees must take from their portfolios during bad markets. That's why Melissa Sotudeh, a certified financial planner in Rockville, Maryland, recommends paying off debt before retirement.

She also suggests clients maximize Social Security checks. Benefits increase by about 7-8 percent for each year people put off starting Social Security after age 62. The more guaranteed income people have, the less they may have to lean on their portfolios.

IF NEEDED, ARRANGE MORE GUARANTEED INCOME

Ideally, retirees would have enough guaranteed income from Social Security and pensions to cover all of their basic expenses, such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, taxes and insurance, says Wade Pfau, professor of retirement income at the American College of Financial Services. If they don't, they may be able to create more guaranteed income using fixed annuities or reverse mortgages, says Pfau, author of "How Much Can I Spend in Retirement?"

Fixed annuities allow buyers to pay a lump sum to an insurance company typically in exchange for monthly payments that can last a lifetime. Reverse mortgages give people age 62 and older access to their equity through lump sums, lines of credit or monthly payments, and the borrowed money doesn't have to be paid back until the owner sells, dies or moves out.

Covering expenses with guaranteed income actually can free retirees to take more risk with their investment portfolios, which over time can give them better returns and more money to spend or leave to their kids, Pfau says.

"They'll be able to invest more aggressively and still sleep at night because they don't need that money to fund their day-to-day retirement expenses," he says.

This column was provided to The Associated Press by the personal finance website NerdWallet.

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Business Briefs

From staff and wire reports

54 Sports Cafe to hold grand opening

54 Sports Cafe, 650 N. Expressway, Griffin, will hold a ribbon-cutting and grand opening Thursday, Aug. 23 at 11 a.m.

S&P 500 touches all-time high as earnings drive stock gains

NEW YORK — The S&P 500 index briefly traded at an all-time high just as the U.S. stock market's bull run came closer to becoming the longest on record.

The market's benchmark index eked out a slight gain, closing a little below the high mark it set in January. The rally pushed the Russell 2000 index of smaller-company stocks to a record high.

The current bull market, which began in 2009, is on track to become the longest in history on Wednesday, surpassing the bull run of the 1990s.

Tuesday's gains were driven by strong earnings by homebuilders, retailers and other companies.

"That we got to these levels in January was a big surprise, more so than we're back there now," said Bob Doll, chief equity strategist at Nuveen Asset Management. "We've had a mildly higher market after the correction on the back of these amazing earnings."

Ranks of most valuable companies shifted during the bull market

NEW YORK — When the current bull market began more than nine years ago, many of the most valuable companies were concentrated in areas that investors considered safe.

Today, companies concentrated in technology dominate the market, reflecting how much the stock market and the economy have changed.

Exxon, P&G, Walmart and AT&T remain among the most valuable companies on the market, but only one company that held a position in the top five in 2009 is still there today: Microsoft, which made huge gains in recent years by branching out into cloud computing.