

Generational Change / Quality of Life & Mature Careers

Remember the man who flew the first MiG out of Russia and landed in the United States? This same man in 1991 had to develop a résumé for the downwind leg of his career. We think of him, back in the 50's as fearless, don't we?

Let me tell you, he was just as nervous planning the strategy and résumé to get him by the Human Resources gatekeepers as anyone. His journey, this time, to pass through those intricate, foreboding, Human Resource doors of General Dynamics, was just as worrisome to him as it is to anyone going through a fifty +career change.

This WEB SITE (www.midlifecareers.com) AND FUTURE ARTICLES are about the fact and fiction of those worries mixed with a little inspiration to disburse the worst closet of horrors and set the stage to actualize the best-possible scenario.

- It's about a powerful approach for managing your career change— for those many, many varied 50+ job seekers, who have suddenly found themselves jobless in a job market that is vastly different than it was *even three years ago*.
- It's about navigating you to clarity through the maze of fear, uncertainty, confusion, anxiety that goes with career change.

A career coach provides you insight plus motivation to overcome obstacles and regain career legs for those facing midlife career change. That is exactly what I am going to do by guiding you through some introspection, goal setting, and rebuilding a positive path for your new career legs.

If my grandmother had decided to pursue a career when she was fifty-eight, her daughters would have discouraged her in soft patronizing voices. A generation later, when these very same women had grown into grandmother's generational shoes, neither they nor their husbands would have thought of careers much past fifty-five years.

Today it's different. To begin with, statistics tell us that life expectancy has expanded to eighty years or more. This is twenty years, past the golden years of earlier generations.

Putting a finger on the pulse of the thing, I would say, as our society has advanced life expectancy, they have also grown healthier, and even more mentally alive than previous generations. At the same time we can enjoy the blessings of additional years, life has grown more expensive than it was for past generations.

It's more than just bringing home a paycheck that drives the need to continue careers. As a generational group, we're a bit sharper. Our way of life from negotiating the freeway to manning all types of information technology that surrounds us has fine-tuned the problem solving side of our brains. Perhaps, this drives our need to actualize in the marketplace, rather than on the porch swing.

There was a twentieth century philosopher, Claude Levi Strauss, who said that each generation has its locked in characteristics, and once beyond that era, you will not find quite the same unique cultural tidbits again. (This is sort of the long and short of his theory on aging Puerto Rican rum in wooden barrels vs. the aging in pristine metal vats for volume exporting.)

We too are no longer the mellow society of yesteryear, aging serenely on wooden porch swings. I think of this 50+ generation that is stepping into the 21st Century as the Age of Busyness. We are so busy going here and there that our vibrations must form something of a celestial hum, similar to a beehive.

To tell this 50+ generation to quit their careers, because they're too old is ludicrous. If statistics are giving us twenty or more years of productive life, then to face a downsizing means a lifestyle crisis. Or to retire without productive plan could spell disastrous.

There are as many reasons for continuing careers past midlife, as there are people to work. Each has a positive story that began with a career concern.

I'd like to tell you some of the stories that may help you break down the fact and fiction of your own concerns. Mixing a little inspiration to disburse the worst closet of horrors, the client stories, you will read, set the stage to actualize the best-possible scenario to help you regain your career legs.

The process of writing a résumé and getting it front and center is about far more than the “techy” side of résumé writing. Each client history represented in the book is chosen to represent a typical archetype of career change. The client histories go further than résumé preparation to navigate you to clarity through the maze of fear, uncertainty, confusion, anxiety that goes with career change. Replacing such emotions with motivation, passion, mission, and purpose to restore excitement and energy to your search, and help you regain your career legs.

Let’s begin with three categories of common reasons for job change in midlife that are common across industries:

Need to Work

A general manager of the telecommunications industry came to me for a résumé, because he was facing a merger of Mobilcomm and Bell South. His first concern was that his age would stifle hiring at his same GM level. His second concern quite equal to age, was his lack of education.

Very typical of men in their late 50’s is advancement within a company or industry that has generated from consistent hard work with no time for an education.

Bill had his starting point with telegrams and now was the general manager for a telecommunication service that included sales, service, and the bottom line profit and loss of the area.

For the forthcoming merger, he was braced for replacement by younger manager and wanted a résumé to support his qualifications for internal reorganization and for representing himself outside the industry.

Every advertisement that he read for a general manager required a degree. He asked me with a chuckle, if we could put on the résumé that he had sent 5 kids to college, but just didn’t have time to go himself.

To overcome his obstacles, my job was to build a well-layered résumé. To secure his position or switch industries he needed a résumé that demonstrated extensive knowledge of his industry, or high proficiency for general management that could apply to another industry. All this needed to be accomplished without an education to pass through the doors of Human Resources.

Overcoming both age and educational obstacles, Bill, I am happy to report received a stay-package from Bell South, and in fact, survived five mergers since his original dilemma.

Desire to Work

A woman contacted me from Singapore recently. She was the CFO of a national network, for the Asian division. Ready to retire with excellent benefits, she was definitely not ready to look for the porch swing either. She envisioned a position that was productive and vital to another institution.

She told me that her interest was to appeal to an eastern college as a financial administrator. Her concern was that she would look overqualified and be eliminated before she could get an interview.

The task on hand was to write a résumé dynamic enough, but not so overwhelming that higher education would not consider her over qualified. We accomplished this with a supportable résumé and an appealing cover letter.

Itch to Change

Tom contacted me by e-mail from San Diego, California. In his first e-mail he told me that he was 59, had a wonderful wife and family. He wrote that he wanted to leave San Diego and find a position in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Did I know a recruiter in Pittsburgh?

I answered him by querying why he wanted to leave paradise for some snow and ice in winter months? Was he facing a layoff? Did he have family in Pittsburgh?

He answered “no” to all questions. He just thought Pittsburgh sounded like a good place to live.

The short version that I will tell you here is that Tom is an industrial designer who was bored with designing new features for the same product line. He craved a new challenge. It was as simple as that.

Simple it was not to find a company in Pittsburgh, not because of Tom’s age, but because industrial designers are inventors, rare birds that not every manufacturer needs. Casting a net in Pittsburgh to find a specialized recruiter was too limited and the national search contained a narrow list of recruiters who had a specialty in industrial design.

I needed to uncover Tom’s talents, interests, and accomplishments, write a brilliant résumé, listing patents, and start a national campaign mailing to gain the attention of at best 200 recruiters.

How Tom and I did this will be left for another career article --- to come.

These are just a few of the basic reasons that people change jobs today instead of receiving a gold watch and retire with the hidden meaning of ceasing to exist or at best stopping a quality lifestyle.

The Need to Think Growth in Retirement

This web site and future articles are about turning around the old idea of career management past 50 ---or retirement in 60’s and 70’s and beyond -- to mean a fuller-not-lesser- lifestyle for your emerging life to be. I like to call this final growth spurt of freedom: **New Age Retirement!**

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