



Reluctant Retirees

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Retirement:

1. *giving up an office, occupation;*
2. *going away to be quiet or alone;*
3. *withdrawing.*

Above, are a few traditional definitions for the term 'retirement'. For many of us, however, retirement in the 21st Century is anything but a quiet departure. More and more often, it represents the ticket to a whole new career adventure.

In this day and age, it is rare that someone trained in a particular profession or skill will go on to work in, and retire from, that same field three or four decades later. Career labels are not the lifelong sentence they once were. I, for one, have worn a variety of career hats in my working life thus far, from construction foreperson to magazine publisher to mother to gallery owner to ... freelance writer and, now, real estate office manager!

Similarly, retirement does not necessarily have to be forever nor bring to a grinding halt all future personal and professional development. A time of endless bridge, golf and grandchildren may seem appealing while you're still sitting behind your desk in a downtown high rise, but if it turns out not to be so great in reality, you are not out of options.

Richard Bolles, author of *What Colour Is Your Parachute* suggested, as early as the 1970s, that we would eventually grow out of and beyond the three stages of life that had, up until then, been defined as the learning, working and retirement stages. Eventually, he said, the stages would overlap and merge so that learning, working and retiring would occur concurrently and continuously.

After exiting a career or job, many people choose to return to the workplace in some capacity or another. They may set themselves up as a consultant, decide to work part time instead of fulltime, or seize the opportunity to pursue a completely new line of work. Their motivation may be financial or, like so many, it may be that they simply love to work and remain involved in something beyond themselves.

Knowing this, employers would be doing themselves a great disservice by ignoring this potential work force merely on the basis of age. These are the people any business would be lucky to have working with and for them because they really want to be there.

Pauline Daniel is a 58-year-old life coach living and working in Nelson, BC. "I work because I must (as in, *love to*)," she says. "It's *my turn*," she adds—three very powerful words echoed by many women of her age and stage. After decades spent looking after the needs of others—partners, children, aging family members,

incontinent pets, to name a few—women in their late fifties and early sixties are, often for the first time in their lives, free to follow their own passions and dreams. They want their turn and they are stepping up and out to take it. They are taking courses, attending workshops, joining organizations, applying for bank loans, starting businesses and filling out job applications.

Other post-retirees are working because, financially, they have no choice. In one's twenties and thirties, it is difficult to imagine just how expensive life might be in our latter years and how much living we'll still be capable of when we get there. A combination of poorly thought out financial plans, disappointing investments and increased living costs are enough to propel many older workers back into the workforce.

The baby-boomers are aging, but few are toddling off to their rocking chairs quietly. This is a generation that has worked hard, measuring its success by its performance and wealth. It is the generation that takes credit for popularizing aerobic workouts, personal computers, red wine, tofu, SUVs and book clubs. It is a generation that expects to live long, live well and remain active. Its membership is on the rise. Don't let the grey hair fool you; this is a group to be reckoned with. As employers, you want these people on your team; you need their accumulated wisdom and experience. You can't afford to ignore their economic impact as producers and consumers; nor underestimate their political voice as decision-makers and voting citizens.

With a top heavy aging population growing exponentially, it is far healthier and less costly in the long run to keep its members busy, productive, independent and engaged for as long as possible.

Hire us! We're not retiring; we're simply ready for a change.

Next time, I'll discuss how employers can best tap into this resource-rich pool of workers.