

Finding Or Creating Your Dream Job In Your Fifties Or Beyond

Retirement isn't what it used to be. The golf course and rocking chair aren't what many retirees are looking for as they contemplate "what now?" Baby boomers are known to be untraditional. So, there is no surprise their viewpoint on what retirement should be is a change from the "gold watch" mentality of their parents. Yes, as Bob Dylan (baby boomers certainly remember him!) says, "the times, they are-a changin'."

The new generation of retirees may look forward to leaving the daily rat race, but that doesn't mean they want to stop working. What many want to do is leave the job where the only reward was "putting bread on the table", for a job that puts passion in their hearts. They want another chance for that dream job that was put on the shelf while they got on with their lives.

A 2004 Merrill Lynch survey found 77% of more than 3,400 baby boomers polled planned to work in some capacity in their retirement, including 13% who intended to start their own business. Although some feel they have to work for financial reasons, many feel they have spent their life doing what they thought they **had** to do and now are ready to do something they **want** to do. For them retirement isn't a time to step back, but a time to step forward and discover what just might be their dream job.

So how do you take that step? Unfortunately, it is not as easy as going to the classified section of your paper or Craig's List and seeing what is listed under "dream job". You won't find it there. You will find what your dream job is by examining where you have been and determining where you want to go. Retirement gives you the permission to do this and the time to follow your dreams.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Know Thyself

Ask yourself these questions:

- What was it you liked and disliked about your previous career?
- What were you particularly good at and what was difficult for you?
- What do you miss most about your job?
- Do you want to work for someone or work for yourself?
- Do you have some unique skills, talents, hobbies or interests that might translate into a dream job? If you love puttering around your house and yard, perhaps working for Home Depot in some capacity might be of interest to you. Love to read? Consider working at Borders or Barnes & Noble.
- Are your goals personal or financial ... or both?
- How much time do you really want to work?

Try setting aside some quiet time and sit down with a stack of magazines and a pair of scissors. For a few hours, simply look through the magazines and cut out images

or words that pique your interest. Put the images and words together in a collage and you might see a theme emerge. Perhaps your collage reflects a passion in sports, design or working with animals. Take that as a sign for the direction you may want to pursue.

Another exercise is to pretend you're going back to school. Pick up course catalogues for a few local colleges or community centers and read about the classes. Perhaps an old interest that had gone dormant long ago will resurface. You can also approach this quest like a detective. Interview family, friends and acquaintances and ask them what sparked your passion in the past.

Do Your Research

- Start brainstorming on professions or companies that best match what you learned about yourself.
- Consider companies you patronize and support as potential employers
- Identify and contact associations or organizations that focus on a particular field you are interested in possibly pursuing.
- Use the Internet to search actual job titles that reflect your interests and see if the job responsibilities mesh with your interests and skills.
- Determine what skills or education you will need if you are making a change in professions.

Find a mentor

- Network with family, friends and colleagues to find an expert in your field of interest.
- Contact prospective mentors to request their help in giving you a good idea of what it is like to "walk in their shoes". If possible, spend a few days with them to test-drive your dream job. Is this really what I want to do?

Create an action plan

- Once you have identified what you want to do determine if you need to go back to school or get certified in the field.
- If you want to start your own business, develop a business plan. You may need to take a class on how to do this, but it will be worth your time.
- If you want to make a drastic career change that may be hard to sell to a hiring manager, consider volunteering temporarily. One of the prejudices against older workers is the assumption they want to take over and run the place. Show employers you are a team player and you have passion for the work, and a job offer might follow.
- Be determined. Friends or a spouse may not understand why you want to take on a new career. Try to explain how and why you have arrived at this decision, but don't let their lack of support and pessimism deter you. Remember this is about you and what will make you happy.

Brian Kurth has contributed on-air advice on NBC's TODAY Show, CNBC, CNN, FOX News, ABC News, MSNBC and National Public Radio (NPR) and has been featured in

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Test-Drive Your Dream Job: A Step-By-Step Guide To Finding And Creating The Work You Love: www.amazon.com