



Tips for Over-50 Career Switchers

By Liz DiMarco Weinmann

Our media cauldron is still spitting out assertions that baby boomers are retiring in record numbers, and continue to moan that there are simply not enough 30-somethings to fill this void. In fact, recent reports indicate there are more unemployed over-50 than at any time in history.[\[1\]](#)

Let me set the record straight, and at the same time offer up some tips for over-50s now contemplating switching careers:

- 1) Boomers aren't exactly stampeding to the golf courses or beaches.** That hackneyed cliché is an egregious insult to boomers who look forward to continuing their productive careers or starting fulfilling second careers. It is most insulting to boomers who have lost their savings, and even their homes.
- 2) The work experience and expertise of boomers make some of us costly hires in this economy.** Headhunters and American corporate expatriates advise boomers to consider international work, citing India, China and Vietnam as attractive emerging markets. However, some skills may be moot even in a rebound, if the industries or companies that used to need them are mature or defunct – here and abroad. Boomers who are interested in leadership positions should also seek out small or mid-size firms rather than large corporations. Private equity firms, though somewhat dormant right now, look for experienced leaders to fill C-suite positions in their portfolio companies.
- 3) For career-switchers over 50, there's another indignation: headhunters and corporations call us "seasoned professionals with a short runway."** Some presume boomers will work only five to ten years more before we retire, and therefore we're not worth the investment. Glenn Okun, a successful venture capitalist and finance

professor, has a very different view: he recently told a group of MBAs ranging in age from late 20s to mid-50s: “You’re **all** going to be working until you’re 90 years old.”

4) A warning regarding career switching: many boomers jump to nonprofit without considering the risks, especially if the salary is comparable to their corporate pay. Don’t presume that your hard-driving private-sector persona will be welcome everywhere. It’s a very hard transition for individuals who are used to focusing almost entirely on quantitative goals and metrics without considering the cultural ramifications. Again, know what you want and need, especially the **ROLE** you want to play, regardless of title and salary.

Here are some powerful strategies that reflect the advice of psychological counselors, social workers, management consultants, business academics and executive coaches who work with individuals in transition in their personal lives or careers:

1. **Develop a concrete plan of action.** Have clearly defined objectives, desired outcomes and a strategy for managing your transition and your finances, along with a firm deadline and benchmarks along the way. Focus on delineating what your key priorities are, what you really want and need from life, what you’re passionate about for yourself and for your loved ones. Be honest about your deal-breakers as well as what you would be willing to compromise.
2. **Write in a journal about what’s on your mind, how your anxiety might be connected to past experiences, and what this means for your future.** Journals can become powerful personal development tools that impart a holistic view of what’s going on in your life, eventually transforming your vents and rants into insights and solutions.
3. **DARE to spend time alone.** Friends, colleagues and experts are a welcome source of counsel and support, but if you’ve just had a serious loss, you need time alone to process it, be angry and mourn. If you haven’t developed strategies for being alone to take care of yourself, it could be very lonely, and drive you to fill the void with people, activities and things that could thwart your ultimate goals for moving forward.

Above all, research, train, and learn how to prevent or survive a crash landing.

Remember the infamous news story: a 58-year-old former fighter pilot and trainer with thousands of hours of experience and expertise, who commandeered a massive mess of machinery and flammables with over 160 people aboard, and prevented what would have been their certain deaths, and that of thousands of other people. It was a seasoned professional (to use headhunter jargon), supported by an expert crew of equally seasoned professionals, who shepherded everyone on board that day to walk on water, literally, and return safely to their families.

I DARE ask: how many 30-somethings could have done that? Short runway, huh? Run *that* one by me again.

About Liz:

Liz DiMarco Weinmann is the Founder and CEO of The ***DARE***-Force Corporation (www.thedareforce.com), an educational resources company founded to inspire all women over 40 who want to pursue, develop and lead new and fulfilling ventures in their personal lives, careers and communities. She is the author of the new book, *Get ***DARE*** From Here! – 12 Principles and Practices For Women Over 40 To Take Stock, Take Action and Take Charge of the Rest Of Their Lives* – available on Amazon.com (paper and Kindle), on bn.com, and in bookstores everywhere.