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The Life Planning Network is the leading association supporting professionals who assist people at this life stage. We intend to bring into everyday use proactive and purposeful planning for the second half of life. Learn more at lifeplanningnetwork.org.

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Foreword

Joyce Cohen

The golden years used to be a euphemism for old age. Today, the allusion to gold is becoming more literal, because seniors in growing numbers are translating their experience and knowledge into diverse, meaningful ways to follow a passion, establish a new venture, and make a difference. They are replacing an obsolete vision of aging as senescence with a more robust, creative vision of pursuing positive vitality, fulfilling enterprise and economic opportunity.

At a time that American entrepreneurship is experiencing a steady decline, according to the Gallup Organization, there is a reverse trend among older adults, with 34 million seniors saying they want to start businesses. Many of these ventures involve Intergenerational partnerships. Between 1996 and 2010, 45 percent of entrepreneurial growth came from seniors 55 to 64+ and beyond. That age group represents the largest percentage of business owners in the U.S. Moreover, Americans in their 50s and 60s are the fastest growing entrepreneurs of any age group.

The numbers alone tell the real story of the value that senior entrepreneurs bring to the marketplace. Seniors have the tools and experience to start businesses. Senior entrepreneurs bring a wealth of talent, skills, integrity, experience, networks, and know how. They often back their ventures with personal funds and many don't need angel or venture capital support to be self-sustaining. What do they need? For starters, some need capital, connections, a more senior-friendly government and role models that encompass intergenerational alliances with people of all ages.

The market for life planning professionals is growing rapidly in response to added longevity accompanied by economic insecurity spiced by new understandings about the importance of meaningful lifelong work, paid or unpaid. My own experience as Director of Veteran Relations and Designer of **Boots to Backyards™**, a mentor program for Purple Heart Homes (a non-profit organization for service-connected disabled Veterans www.phhusa.org) combined with my experience with The Life Planning Network affords me the chance to coach, collaborate and contribute in entrepreneurial ways to myself, peers, clients and LPN.

The articles in this issue of *LPN-Q* will help you think about the future of your business as well as add to your repertoire of opportunities and resources you discuss with your clients. Each article holds relevance to LPN's mission as you'll see

throughout. It provides a rich reservoir of content spanning the entrepreneurial landscape.

Encore.org Vice-President Jim Emerman and research associate Cal Halvorsen sets the stage with insightful analysis of original research on entrepreneurship among adults aged 44-70. Elizabeth Isele, Moira Allen and Jan Hively highlight intergenerational partnerships, the experienced economy and the need for all of us to think like entrepreneurs. Sandy Timmermann illuminates the pros and cons of becoming a senior entrepreneur, Meta Mereday highlights continuing barriers to minority entrepreneurship, and Mary Radu shows how sometimes even a life coach can become an accidental entrepreneur as a peach farmer. Dick Ambrosius challenges as ageist the too-cute journalistic language that trumpets an older entrepreneur as a “Seniorpreneur,” arguing that business culture, obsessed with youth, is missing considerable opportunities—to benefit from substantial, new markets and a vast entrepreneurial workforce. Doug Dickson provides insightful perspective on the range of entrepreneurial opportunities as well as myths and valuable tips. There’s also plenty of inspiration for social entrepreneurs in advice given by several of Encore.org’s Purpose Prize winners.

When you finish reading this issue of *LPN-Q*, answer Jan Hively’s question, “Do we need to think like an entrepreneur?”

“You bet!” should be your instant answer.

Joyce Cohen, is President of the Life Planning Network, Director of Veteran Relations / Mentor Program for Purple Heart Homes and Founder of Unconventional Wisdom, *New Directions at Mid-Life*.

Myths and Modes of Entrepreneurship: A Practical Guide to Working with Clients Over 50

Doug Dickson

Research shows that as many as one-quarter of older adults are interested in some form of entrepreneurship. We also know that people over 50 are starting more businesses than any other age group. Those of us who work as advisors, counselors, coaches and consultants to this demographic are therefore likely to encounter our fair share of would-be entrepreneurs.

Does it take an entrepreneur or someone deeply knowledgeable about entrepreneurship to help someone become an entrepreneur?

I have worked over nearly 20 years with dozens of clients, most over 50, with a goal of entrepreneurship. A majority succeeded, but what they got from me was not mainly subject-matter expertise about entrepreneurship—that they could obtain from other sources. What I provided was the discipline of a process and lots of questions, some betraying my ignorance of the details, but challenging clients, nonetheless, to think carefully and clearly about their goals and the means to achieve them.

Though I'm still not an expert on entrepreneurship, I know a lot more about it today than I did 20 years ago. And the experience through which I acquired that knowledge has opened my view of entrepreneurship, as if seen through a panoramic lens and not a keyhole.

The modes of entrepreneurship

A more inclusive understanding of entrepreneurship reveals a broad range of possibilities. Here are some examples, along with selected stories that illustrate the advantages that older adults can offer:

Business ownership – A former banker decided to buy a group of hardware stores. He understood real estate and leases, which are at the core of retail business success, but relied on advisors to help him understand and assess the opportunity. The stores were underperforming but he conceived a path to sustainability: improve salaries and benefits and offer a profit-sharing plan that would create good jobs and attract people who would stay with the business over time. The plan not only worked—in two years, the stores were exceeding growth targets—but he acquired a

fourth store and added it to his group. Today, he runs the stores by working three days a week, allowing time for other interests.

Mentorship – A veteran operations executive in the medical technology industry wanted to offer the benefit of his long experience to inventors who had patented technologies but had no knowledge about how to bring them to market. Through university connections, he identified several individuals who seized the chance to learn from him, to benefit from his advice and industry relationships, and to place him on advisory boards and in other roles. Without the responsibility of a full-time position, he was free to speak his mind, work in more than one business and manage his time to include non-work activities, while adding real value to those he mentored.

Business creation – A business executive and her husband, both artists in their retirement years, grew frustrated with the limited availability of safe toys for their grandchildren. After finding toys that met their standards, they launched an online business to make them more widely accessible to likeminded parents and grandparents. Acting as an intermediary between customers and suppliers, with most of the work done through technology (which both learned as they went), they were able to operate the business on a part-time basis, even as it steadily grew.

Paying hobby – A retired nuclear physicist grew enamored of old clocks he found on the shelves of a local antique shop. Noting their lack of function, he offered to tinker with them to see if they could be repaired. Some he could fix but for others, he purchased modern movements and replaced the original workings to make them useful as well as beautiful. The shop owner rewarded this added value by offering a commission on each clock sold. Today, this accidental entrepreneur spends the equivalent of two days a week repairing clocks for pleasure and extra cash.

In these stories, I have purposely focused on those involving less than a full-time commitment. Many misunderstand entrepreneurship as an all-or-nothing obligation, and while that is certainly an option, it's not a requirement. Other entrepreneurship options, which can also be scaled to fit lifestyle choices, include:

“Many misunderstand entrepreneurship as an all-or-nothing obligation, and while that is certainly an option, it's not a requirement.”

Early-stage business – This usually involves adding specific experience, often in finance, sales, operations, strategic partnerships or service, to a business just getting to market or scaling its early growth. This is where specialized skill and experience can pay off in a big way for a small business that has a lean budget. Often these roles are part-time or intermittent and may be compensated with ownership shares in addition to cash. This category also includes those who invest in an early stage business, play an active role in guiding the enterprise, sit on the board or contribute to success in other ways.

Franchise – Thousands of businesses are available as franchises, and not all involve food! The sheer number and diversity of franchise businesses makes the selection and due diligence process a challenge, despite the intense regulation of the industry. But this form of business ownership offers advantages, including a proven business model, training and assistance from the franchisor, and options to fit every budget and lifestyle. The downside is that the franchisee may have limited ability to adjust the underlying model to meet local needs.

Social enterprise – Starting a social-purpose organization, usually a nonprofit but sometimes a socially conscious for-profit or hybrid structure, connects entrepreneurship to social action. As with other businesses, these organizations can be easy to start but challenging to fund and grow. More nonprofits are started each year than any other type of business and some remarkable innovations surface as a result. But the cautions that apply to for-profit business formation doubly apply in this sector, since few social innovators have significant nonprofit experience to build on and the funding and operating models are so different from the for-profit world.

Consulting – These are often one-person businesses built on the specific expertise and industry relationships of a principal. They may offer advice, information, specialized services or functional expertise. Additional capacity, when needed, is usually created by using stringers who contribute their time and skills on a project basis. “Single-shingle” businesses of this type may or not be incorporated, are scalable over time, and retain value only as long as the principal is involved.

The myths of entrepreneurship

As this list demonstrates, there are many ways for older adults to exercise their entrepreneurial muscles. So what holds people back? The stereotypes we link to entrepreneurship are as untrue and misguided as those applied to age in our society. As with most stereotypes, these create a fundamental misunderstanding that limits the ability of many to embrace entrepreneurship as a vocational choice.

Here are some of the myths that stand as barriers to entrepreneurial action and what makes them untrue:

1. ***Entrepreneurs start with a big idea*** – This is true some of the time, but mostly, entrepreneurs begin with something else: wanting to make a difference, control their own work schedules, use their skills and resources in new ways, do something better than was previously possible, create a legacy, fulfill a lifelong dream or prove something to themselves.
2. ***Entrepreneurs are mostly young and brilliant*** – By now, we know that most entrepreneurs are older and there's a good reason for that. As a rule, older people have greater maturity and better judgment, more experience and skills, larger networks of people who can help them, better problem-solving skills, more resources to put into the business, and in some cases, reduced income needs.
3. ***Entrepreneurs are single-minded, devoting their lives entirely to building their businesses*** – Many myths contain a grain of truth. But for the most part, entrepreneurs live very normal lives and their work schedules look just like everyone else's. And many entrepreneurs specifically design their businesses to fit other priorities and may even run their businesses on a part-time or seasonal basis.
4. ***Entrepreneurs require significant amounts of start-up money or capital investment*** – Many businesses require little or no capital to start and build. Many Internet businesses can be started for a few hundred dollars. Service businesses, like consulting and project work, can be started and run with no up-front investment. Of course, some businesses, including retail, food and products, do require significant initial outlays.
5. ***Entrepreneurs take big risks*** – Almost none of the entrepreneurs I know have taken outlandish or even significant risks. What may appear risky to others has been carefully thought out and controlled. Entrepreneurs are as risk-averse as the rest of us; they don't want to fail any more than we do. So they either stay away from or plan meticulously to avoid the things that could go wrong.
6. ***Entrepreneurs need to know everything about their business in order to run it*** – There are very few soloists in the world of entrepreneurship, and those who try it on their own often find themselves in trouble. Almost all recognize what they don't know and what they need help with. They acquire advisors, partners, collaborators, vendors, employees and other supports to fill in the blanks and to round out the skills they need to succeed.

7. ***Entrepreneurs want to make a lot of money*** – Money is not a primary motivator for most. More than half of small businesses are “micro-businesses,” with revenue of less than \$50,000 a year, with some just covering their costs or operating in the red. While most entrepreneurs would agree that making money is a nice reward, any of the motivations listed above under number 1 are likely to be given a higher priority.
8. ***Entrepreneurs must wait a long time for their businesses to become profitable*** – It is true that many businesses must wait for products, services, markets and partnerships to develop before they become profitable, but there are many businesses that are immediately cash-positive. This applies to many service businesses, existing businesses you may buy, and commission or Internet sales businesses.

Tips for working with clients over 50

Individuals exploring entrepreneurship in their 50s, 60s and 70s can be intimidated by both the word and the idea. The challenge for advisors is to help clients get comfortable with the concept, let go of stereotypes, build confidence and understand how to proceed. In a few cases, the challenge is just the opposite: keeping client outlooks and actions realistic, reasonably bounded and restrained against the temptation to move too hastily and too aggressively. For this group, the coach is a brake. For the former group, the coach serves as a gentle accelerator.

Here are some thoughts gleaned from working with a diversity of entrepreneurs and small businesses over recent years:

Assets: *helping clients understand and take ownership for the strengths they bring to the table.* These strengths might include business or professional experience, specific skills, connections to people who can be helpful, resources of various kinds (not only financial), or the judgment, resourcefulness and pragmatism that comes with age and experience. They could also include a range of other things that link to the entrepreneurial proposition on the table. Encouraging clients to itemize their assets can build their confidence and serve as a reference point for decisions to come.

Motivation: *helping clients clearly identify both their purpose and apprehensions.* What’s driving their interest or what’s holding them back? If their motivation is realistic and a good match for their strengths and circumstances, it’s on to the next step. If you have questions, even if they seem obvious, raise them now so your client

can take them into account. If there are concerns or fears, those need to be on the table so they can be addressed as the process unfolds. If they're unfounded, they may be resolvable with time, learning and reassurance. But they may also signal a more fundamental barrier, which is best addressed now and not later.

Scoping: *helping clients think broadly about possibilities and how taking this step fits into their lives.* First impressions are not always the most reliable and without research, exploration and due diligence, a client may miss an option worth considering. This applies to scouting potential entrepreneurial opportunities as well as testing any single option for viability. Creating a set of boundaries around a target can help a client stay on track. It can also make room for parallel possibilities.

Networking is the key activity at this stage and should be carried out long enough for ideas to be refined and reinforced by others. An informal “kitchen cabinet” or “personal board of advisors” can create a place to ask questions, address issues and gain support as information becomes available. This is also the point at which to scope the impact of this direction on family and other commitments. Better to anticipate now the interplay of these elements than to back-pedal down the line.

Planning: *helping clients move forward quickly, but not too quickly* – At this point, clients may be tempted to strike at the first glimmer of opportunity or to get stuck in an endless cycle of analysis. Digging into the details is an important part of this process, but not if they block out the big picture. One question often asked is how detailed a business plan to prepare. The answer varies.

No plan at all may be needed for businesses where too little is known at the outset to support more than speculation or when the first customer is in hand and will, by definition, drive the direction of the business.

On the other extreme, detailed plans are required when other people's money is involved or when strategic partners need the cover of a formal document. The real value of business plans for most entrepreneurs is the discipline of knowing that all bases have been touched in the early going (checklists and templates are available for this purpose).

But all should realize that trial and error is key to the early success of most enterprises, and business plans, no matter how thorough, are destined for change. Whatever form a plan takes, every would-be entrepreneur should have a framework in mind for the first few months and should not be let off the hook if important questions are left unanswered.

Advisors: helping clients recognize the value of input from others early in the process. No entrepreneur is an island and the list of people most should consult, either for a fee or for free, can be a long one. For most, this begins with an accountant and a lawyer. For these disciplines (and others), make sure your clients are dealing with professionals who specialize in early-stage or small businesses. The need for other advisors will depend on the kind of business, its stage and complexity, and the decisions required to move forward. Certain decisions must be made in a certain order and having the right advisors on hand early can help avoid costly mistakes and re-dos. Even the simplest of businesses need to be concerned to some degree about exposure to taxes and liability, two technical matters few of us are equipped to deal with on our own.

Diligence: helping clients manage the ups and downs, ins and outs of the process. Very few would-be entrepreneurs end up exactly where they thought they would be when they started. New information, unforeseen opportunities and unexpected barriers generate a shifting landscape that requires adjustments or opens the way to alternate directions. Managing change is a critical entrepreneurial competency, and so too are patience and persistence.

The most valuable role a counselor can play at this stage is to help clients maintain perspective, see the big picture, and place events, especially those creating frustration or setbacks, into a larger context. And as with all coaching, another critical role is to help clients recognize and celebrate their successes.

Doug Dickson leads the *Encore Boston Network*.

The Accidental Entrepreneur

Mary Radu

In 2009, my husband and I moved from our previous home in Northern California to a new community about an hour away. We had chosen it as our home base for the rest of our lives. We rented until after about a year we finally found a property that served our purposes.

Our joint vision of a future home would give my husband the space to farm grapes for wine and provide me land to garden both vegetables and flowers, my lifelong hobby. In fact, the property we found had all of the elements on our dream-home list and more!

What we hadn't counted on was a seven-acre parcel that looked like "tobacco road."

While the property was rundown, it had a home that we could remodel to our liking—and a fruit orchard that included 90 poorly maintained peach trees. At our prior home I had maintained one heirloom peach tree and sold the premium fruit to a nearby grocer. After considering the alternative of pulling out these ailing peach trees and replacing them with grape vineyard or leaving the fields fallow we decided to give it a try and see whether we could bring these trees back into healthy production. We named it Rusty Gate Farm.

So now, in addition to my day job as a life coach and my extensive volunteer work, I found myself becoming a peach farmer!



Over the past five years we've gone from having a very small crop to eat, to can and to share, we *now* have an abundance of beautiful peaches from June through early September. They are available for sale to local restaurants, an educational ecology center and to local friends and neighbors who all have a passion for real fruit that taste luscious and sweet straight from the orchard.

On the finance side, we started in the red, investing in bringing back the orchard with pruning and thinning and tilling and spraying. And last year we finally covered our expenses and are even paying ourselves a small amount for our labor. Quite a feat for a small farming operation!

But then, there have been many benefits that came along with the hard work, emotional stresses and financial investment. Among the best, we found many new friends amongst the locavore restauranteurs, the chefs, other farmers and neighbors. And we've had the emotional pleasure of seeing the expression of spontaneous satisfaction when someone tastes one of these wonderful pieces of fruit and savors the juices and the sweetness that Mother Nature provides in a fully ripened peach. We've even had a restaurant owner share a sensuous dream she had one night where she was indulgently eating our peaches!

“There have been many benefits that came along with the hard work, emotional stresses and financial investment.



This has been a very full five years, and each season we reconsider what we will do with the orchard. Will we continue to replant to maintain the volume of produce as our trees age? Will we expand our varieties and plant new trees that could have a 15-20-year life span? Will we be able to do the physical labor involved as we age and will we be able to find help to take over the tasks we can no longer do ourselves? Will it make economic sense to keep going?

And as we face each of these questions, we ask ourselves how will we deal with the loss if we no longer can share the experience of awe that arises when we deliver each new harvest to our circle of clients and friends.

As I look back on my experience as an entrepreneur I find clear parallels to the life planning process as well as the creative process of the artist. Borrowing from the artistic process and skills described in the book *Becoming a Life Change Artist* by LPN member, Fred Mandell, Ph.D and Kathleen Jordan, Ph.D., here are thoughts about becoming an entrepreneur:

“Entrepreneurialism is a creative and messy process.

Entrepreneurialism is a creative and messy process. It requires that one find a calling for an entrepreneurial endeavor or business to which one commit for the purpose of exploring a new occupation and for many, a new source of income.

When we begin to explore we discover new pieces of the puzzle that can be integrated into our understanding and used to fine-tune our vision and plan. Eventually we take actions to create a product or service, making changing to our

priorities and tasks that lead to refinements in our design or even to new directions and sometimes in our outcomes.

In addition to needing numerous business skills to navigate this process, there is an additional set of personal skills that can make or break us as entrepreneurial artists. I found several of the personal **creative skills** of an artist useful as I went through my entrepreneurial experience.

First, I had to **Embrace the Uncertainty** that was presented by purchasing the property with a bonus 90 peach trees. They were part of a package that I felt was absolutely right for both my husband and me. I also was taking on something that I had never done before, especially on that scale but felt that between my husband and me we had a foundation of farming experience that would help us to pull it off.

As we considered what to do with this opportunity we had to **Take a Risk**. We had to do so without knowing for sure what the outcome would be and what total costs and benefits might result, personal and financial. As we went through each step, help came from unexpected directions.

I found it easy to find people who wanted to **Collaborate** with me, to provide me with helpful information about markets for selling my locally grown fruit, about growing peaches in this climate and dealing with the numerous diseases, pests, and seasonal variations, and finally about running a farm business. None of us have all of the skill sets and knowledge it takes to run any business. It was important, I found, to focus on my strengths and what roles I could best undertake. From this place of self-knowledge I could involve others to build a successful endeavor. The side benefit was that I added to the wealth of friendships and my increased feeling of belonging in this new place that I called home.

The final skill required was **Discipline**. To take on this new business, I had to find ways to keep myself in action day in and day out. I needed to integrate peach farming with my “day job.” I needed to keep track of the ever-growing checklist of small tasks, some of which required precise timing to match Mother Nature’s changeable schedule.



Forget that one spraying and peach leaf curl would damage the foliage cover needed to keep the peaches from sunburn. Put the netting on too late and the birds would get the fruit before it could be harvested. Put off making the call to the potential new client and end up with fruit that would ripen before it could be sold to a top wholesale client. Wherever this peach farming takes me in the future I know that it has been worth the effort.

Mary Radu, MS, MSW, CPCC, Founder of the NorCal chapter of LPN, is a life coach in addition to being a peach farmer.

Notes:

To learn more about the process and other creative skills of entrepreneurship, read [*Becoming a Life Change Artist*](#) by LPN member, Fred Mandell, Ph.D and Kathleen Jordan, Ph.D.

To learn more about the adventures of peach farming you'll enjoy reading the exquisite [*Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm*](#) by David M. Masumoto

Social Innovation Isn't (Only) for the Young: The Rise of the Encore Entrepreneur

Jim Emerman and Cal Halvorsen

In 2011, Encore.org conducted its second [Encore Career Survey](#), a nationally representative phone survey of 930 adults ages 44 to 70. One of the most striking findings: One-quarter—approximately 25 million people—said they were “somewhat interested” or “very interested” in starting their own businesses or nonprofit organizations in the next five to ten years.

Surprised by the high level of interest in entrepreneurship, we decided to investigate this phenomenon to see how many were interested in entrepreneurship that focused on social and community needs. This was especially important given Encore.org’s mission to build a movement of those at midlife and beyond to improve communities and the world.

We followed up with an [online survey](#) of an additional 400 individuals who reported interest in starting a business or nonprofit venture in the next stage of their lives. Social purpose was the dominant motivation for nearly half of those surveyed. We dubbed this group “potential encore entrepreneurs.”

What makes someone a “potential encore entrepreneur,” willing to launch a new venture for social change at an age when many opt for a more traditional or easier path? How do these purpose-focused entrepreneurs differ from other potential older entrepreneurs, those who focus less on social impact and more on traditional business? What can we learn about how best to support them?

Here are some of our findings:

- Of all potential entrepreneurs, nearly half (48 percent) were potential encore entrepreneurs, because having a positive social impact was very important or they were seeking to meet a need in the community, meet a social challenge or provide a service to others. In 2011, this meant a pool of more than 12 million potential encore entrepreneurs in the U.S. between the ages of 44 and 70.
- More than three-quarters (76 percent) of potential encore entrepreneurs, or roughly 9 million Americans, said they were very interested in starting socially-impactful ventures.
- Over half (54 percent) of potential encore entrepreneurs, or roughly 6.5 million Americans, said it was very likely they would start a business or nonprofit venture within the next five to ten years.

The role of experience in shifting focus to social problems

- Aspiring encore entrepreneurs reported an average of 31 years of work experience (roughly equal to entrepreneurs not primarily focused on social purpose) and far greater community involvement (15 years, compared to 9 years for those not strongly motivated by social purpose).
- Five out of six (87 percent) reported having an average of 15 years of experience managing people.

Encore entrepreneurs' motivations and interests

- Potential encore entrepreneurs want work they “are passionate about” (84 percent) and that provides “a sense of meaning and a feeling of accomplishment” (83 percent). (This compares to 59 percent and 57 percent, respectively, among those who are not focused on social impact.)
- Impact makes a big difference: Four in five (80 percent) said that it was very important that the work allow them to have a positive impact in their communities. This compared to only 31 percent of those without a social-impact focus.
- Potential encore entrepreneurs were interested in social services (37 percent); poverty alleviation (28 percent); working with at-risk youth, economic development and health care (all at 24 percent); the environment (19 percent) and human rights or social justice (18 percent).

Compared to aspiring entrepreneurs in this age group without a social mission, potential encore entrepreneurs are more likely to be women, African-American, involved in their communities, motivated by faith, interested in working for faith-based organizations as well as nonprofits and serious about getting started. They are also more likely to volunteer at least once per week and less likely to be motivated by income to return to work.

“Potential encore entrepreneurs are more likely to be women, African-American, involved in their communities, motivated by faith, interested in working for faith-based organization as well as nonprofits and serious about getting started.”

Ventures that attract encore entrepreneurs

Encore entrepreneurs generally have realistic financial expectations and plan local, small ventures to meet needs in their communities.

- Two in three (67 percent) planned on having a local, state or regional (as opposed to national or international) impact.
- Most potential encore entrepreneurs (72 percent) expected to create small ventures, employing up to 10 people.
- Two out of three potential encore entrepreneurs (68 percent) would have considered their potential businesses or nonprofit ventures worthwhile if they earned less than \$60,000 a year.
- Nearly one in five (18 percent) said they would consider a venture worthwhile if they earned less than \$20,000 per year.

These potential encore entrepreneurs have modest financing needs.

- Two out of three (67 percent) reported that they needed \$50,000 or less to get started. Only one in five (20 percent) said they required more than \$100,000. A large group (47 percent) expected to tap personal savings to launch ventures.
- Surveyed in the depth of the recent recession, about half (52 percent) said they had delayed launching ventures because they did not feel secure enough financially and nearly as many (47 percent) said they believed they would not be able to obtain adequate financing. But nearly six in 10 potential encore entrepreneurs (58 percent) said the economic climate made them more likely to start their own businesses or nonprofit ventures.

Learning from The Purpose Prize®

While these data from a broad national sample are instructive, Encore.org has additional sources of information about encore entrepreneurs, gathered much closer to home.

Ten years ago, we began to identify, reward and honor people over the age of 60 who were exemplary social innovators, primarily encore entrepreneurs. The Purpose Prize was launched in January 2006, when the first baby boomers were turning 60. Today, the program has received nearly 10,000 nominations of people working to change their communities, the country or even the world. By the end of 2015, nearly 500 social innovators will have been selected for recognition, either as Purpose Prize winners (awarded cash prizes up to \$100,000) or as Purpose Prize fellows.

To better understand Purpose Prize winners, fellows and nominees, Encore.org partnered with researchers from the Center for Social Innovation and the Center on Aging & Work at Boston College in 2013. About 200 Purpose Prize winners, fellows and other applicants responded to a survey with information that included what they had done before embarking on their current “purpose work,” how they started their current work, what skills and resources they brought to the new work – and how they felt now about the work for which they had been nominated.

The [answers provided a new level of validation](#) for narratives of personal and social change that we have observed over the life of The Purpose Prize.

Many paths to “purpose work”

Purpose Prize nominees take different paths to discern their social-impact work. In this way, they are typical of potential encore entrepreneurs. About one-third (34 percent) had worked for nonprofits for most of their adult lives; an equal number had mainly worked in the for-profit sector. Nearly one-third (30 percent) volunteered at least half a day a week for most of their adult lives.

Although the survey didn’t capture individual narratives, we know from our experience with Purpose Prize nominees that some made the shift to social-purpose work after encountering institutional bottlenecks that they felt they knew how to overcome. We also know that many had focused on social-purpose work earlier in their careers but made different choices for financial or family reasons; others had always wanted to do something of social benefit but were denied the chance when they were younger by other circumstances; some discovered their desire to make a difference later in life.

Planning for impact

Here, too, the paths to planning social-impact work varied. Some respondents said they initially spent time engaging in solitary thinking; some had spent more time discussing preliminary ideas with others; some had pilot-tested prototypes of their programs in collaboration with other individuals/organizations. For many, a combination of these kinds of ideation occurred.

Regardless of the primary mode of developing their ideas, a majority (72 percent overall) “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Once I developed my initial ideas for my purpose project, I discussed thoughts with family, friends, colleagues, and mentors who helped me refine my thinking until project implementation.”

Our takeaway: The process of ideation can feel risky. Sharing preliminary ideas with others seems to help encore entrepreneurs put their ideas into action.

“The process of ideation can feel risky. Sharing preliminary ideas with others seems to help encore entrepreneurs put their ideas into action.”

Transferring existing skills and competencies

Given the varied backgrounds of our Purpose Prize survey respondents, it's not surprising that they had different feelings about how well their existing skills translated to their new efforts.

Nearly half (47 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they were using familiar skills developed in previous work, and also that they “had to learn some new competencies, so this transition required moderate adjustments to [their] occupational competency set.” Almost another one in five (19 percent) said their new work was so different that it required a “really different” set of skills.

Several of the interviewees commented that although they had some expertise related to their Purpose Prize projects (for example, familiarity with the needs of specific population groups) and the skills they needed to launch their ideas, they had less experience than they would have liked in managing a nonprofit start-up. This is a persistent theme in conversations with Purpose Prize nominees and honorees, regardless of their prior work experience.

Some useful advice to anyone contemplating an encore career, which applies to potential entrepreneurs as well those working in organizations they didn't found, is to fully appreciate that their personal experience and established competencies could apply to an initiative with social impact. Even if social entrepreneurship is a new arena, there are many transferable skills.

Purpose Prize work and personal values

No surprises here: The later-life social entrepreneurs in the Purpose Prize survey have an almost irrepressible drive to make the world better. As the researchers [wrote](#), “In most cases, their work seems to be a manifestation of who they are as people.”

A majority of respondents agreed that their Purpose Prize work is “close” or “very close” to an “ideal job.” As the researchers noted: “One interviewee balked at using the term ‘job’ at all, because he felt that the words ‘job’ and ‘work’ suggest that the tasks are arduous and unpleasant – the antithesis of his attitude toward his encore career.”

At least three-quarters of those surveyed “strongly agreed” with the following statements:

- “My line of work/career is an important part of who I am” (77 percent).
- “This line of work/career has a great deal of personal meaning to me” (82 percent).
- “I feel emotionally attached to this line of work/career” (74 percent).
- “I strongly identify with my chosen line of work/career” (78 percent).
- “If I had all the money I needed without working, I would probably still continue to work in this profession” (81 percent).

And this is the best news of all: Whatever challenges people may face in achieving their dream of a next act of social innovation, once they get there, the personal and societal rewards are huge.

Jim Emerman is executive vice president at Encore.org.

Cal Halvorsen, currently a doctoral student at the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, is the former director of research at Encore.org.

Things No One Ever Told Us (But Wish We Had Known): Purpose Prize Winners Advice In a Rearview Mirror

Conchy Bretos, Randall Charlton, Rev. Lottie Jones Hood,
Rev. Patricia Foley Hinnen, Lenda Lannon,
Violet Little, LeRay Umashankar, Mary Wallace

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By Conchy Bretos, Randall Charlton, Rev. Lottie Jones Hood , Rev. Patricia Foley Hinnen, Lenda Lannon , Violet Little, LeRay Umashankar, Mary Wallace



[Randall Charlton](#)
**Former Executive Director, Techtown,
2011 Purpose Prize winner**

Good Advice No One Gave Me:

Here it is: “Your encore career may be a lot longer than you think. Plan for a marathon, not a sprint.”

I began my encore career when I was 67. I had just retired from a job that I enjoyed to hand it over to a younger person and I did not really think of my new role, exciting though it was in prospect, as anything more than a short-term job. After four-and-a-half years, loving every minute of a hectic schedule that required a great deal of energy, I needed a hip replacement.

So a few months later I stepped aside, only to discover that, with a new hip and cataract surgery, within a few months, I had increased energy and a renewed appetite for challenges.

I have fortunately been able to build a second encore career, as a volunteer trustee of a foundation that supports older adults as well as a director of a health-care company. Now, at 75, I am going to think very carefully before I step aside again.

So the advice I would give now is, “Forget about your actual age and listen to your heart age. You may be younger than you think and there may be many more miles before the end of the marathon.”

[Reverend Violet Little](#)
**Pastor and Developer,
The Welcome Church,
2013 Purpose Prize
winner**



**The 3 Most Important
Things Every Aspiring
Entrepreneur Should
Know:**

#1 - People – not money – are your most valuable resource in starting anything. Look at those you already know, those who share a common passion, those whom you might like to know and build those relationships. The money will come as a result of building relationships.

#2 - You don't have to have it all figured out when you start. Do your homework, have a plan, but allow yourself to wander in the possibilities.

#3 - Be flexible and open to change. Use every obstacle as an opportunity to learn.



[Ray Umashankar](#),
**Executive Director, Achieving
Sustainable Social Equality through
Technology (ASSET),
2008 Purpose Prize winner**

**“NEGU” Is Social-Entrepreneur For
Succeed:**

Many will say your project is too risky, will be difficult to find funders and others have failed trying, but if you are passionate and totally committed to your cause, you will succeed. Develop a powerful story and be bold to share it with people.

At the same time, be creative in fundraising; do not follow the beaten path of submitting grant applications. Offer to drive busy executives to airports, run errands with them on weekends to get time with them. And **never, ever give up (NEGU).**

[Conchy Bretos](#)

CEO, MIA Senior Living Solutions,
2006 Purpose Prize winner

Advice From A Stranger I Wish I Had Taken

“Do not forget to take time off. If you don’t, the constant emotional stress of what you are doing will consume you.”

At the time, I thought it was silly, I loved what I was doing, did not mind forgetting about everything else in my life. Now, I think I would have enjoyed the trip more if I had kept my sense of identity outside my work.



[Linda Lannon and Mary Wallace](#)

Co-founders, PeopleTowels,
2014 Purpose Prize fellows

Have You Got What It Takes: Three Critical Questions (And Eleanor Roosevelt’s Good Advice)

1. Understand your personal-risk tolerance. Being an entrepreneur requires a certain leap of faith and what it takes to translate that idea into viable concern. More than likely it will require a commitment of time, money and mindshare. Are you willing to do whatever it takes?
2. Whether you’re 23 or 63, being an entrepreneur takes an incredible amount of time, work and ingenuity. Contemplating an encore career is a good indicator that you’ve probably worked hard most of your life. However, as an encore entrepreneur, you’ll most likely experience a different level of responsibility and hard work. It is important to ask yourself, at this stage of your life, are you willing to devote the time necessary to bring your idea to fruition?
3. Regardless of the experience you bring to your entrepreneurial venture, there will be challenges. We were both senior business executives with extensive sales and marketing experience before we started PeopleTowels. Yet we encountered almost daily challenges that require constantly adapting and adopting new skills. We still do! We frequently evoke Eleanor Roosevelt, who said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.” As an encore entrepreneur, are you willing to do things that will stretch, challenge, and yes, scare you?

[Patricia Foley Hinnen](#)

Founding CEO, Capital Sisters International,
2014 Purpose Prize fellow



When In Doubt Follow These Instructions

One day early in my encore journey I shared my doubts with someone I trust and admire. "I wonder if I can do this – if I have what it takes to launch a social enterprise of this magnitude. I wonder if I will do justice to the recipients; if someone else might do it better; if my donors, investors, board and staff will look back someday and be glad they got involved."

My wise friend responded: "Stop making this about you. This is not about you; it's about the message you need to carry on behalf of the women you represent. You are simply a vehicle for their cause. They don't get to hem and haw and neither do you. You've been 'tapped on the shoulder' to do this work because you have honed your skills over a lifetime of experience. You have the passion and determination to stay the course. Those are the ingredients for success. Go sit at the head of the table where you belong."



[Reverend Lottie Jones Hood](#)

**CEO and Sr. Minister Emeritus,
Underground Railroad Living Museum**

Who, Whose and Saying the Entrepreneur's Prayer

Be willing to "pay the cost to be the boss." It's advice drummed into my head by my grandma, beginning when I was three years old. It means be willing to invest whatever is necessary to achieve your goal: Time, talent, finances, etc. I presently have eight degrees, including three doctorates, and invest a portion of my "retirement" income in my Encore program.

Know *who* you are and *whose* you are. *Who*: what you bring to the table. *Whose*: have and continue developing a strong internal spiritual foundation. It's an inside job. Always remember "the TRUE source of supply is unlimited!" When you live by the grant, you die by the grant. Know that you are made in the image of the Master Creator. It creates, consequently you have that same power.

Say the *Entrepreneur's Prayer*: Pray with faith, emulate your successes, call on experiences when you have been at the top of your game, ask and allow your higher power to help you achieve your goal – and work like hell!

Are You Cut Out To Be An Entrepreneur?

Sandra Timmermann

The joys of being on a payroll and having a salary are taken for granted by many of us—until that day when we retire, are downsized, or decide to branch out and start our own business. Dreaming about being an entrepreneur is one thing. Making it happen is another.

As someone who has been salaried all of my life and who is now consulting, I've decided entrepreneurship is a lot harder than I thought. I've been analyzing what I see as indicators of success through new eyes as I've watched a former colleague embark on a new venture. Let's start with her story.

Ann (not her real name) started with just an idea—trying to figure out how to keep her grandmother, diagnosed with mild to moderate dementia, engaged. Each time she visited, her grandmother told her how bored she was. Fast-forward a few months. Ann turned the problem into a product solution.

Quickly getting to work on her idea, she met with experts in the field to assess behaviors and needs then moved determinedly through a succession of steps. She honed in on adult day-care activity directors and set up appointments with those in her area. She researched other tools and activities designed for children as well as for those with Alzheimer's disease. She made her own mock-ups of engaging puzzles and tools. She found a person to create a kit and build the prototypes. She is now testing the prototypes with families and in group settings. She did all of this while working a full-time job as a marketing manager in a financial services company.

Why is Ann's story so compelling and how is it applicable to those who are thinking of starting a business?

I've come up with my five indicators of success that might serve as guideposts for people who are thinking about embarking on an entrepreneurial journey.

1. **Focus** - It may take a while to figure out exactly what we want to do, but at some point we need to decide specifically what the product and service will be and be laser-focused on it. People suggested other ideas to Ann but she didn't get distracted and stuck to her knitting, totally focused on her end goal.

2. Commitment - The joy of having flexibility and free time or the pressure of holding down a job can whittle away at an entrepreneurial venture. We need to ask how committed we are to our idea. Is it a passion and "must have" or is it a "nice to have?" Ann started her business to help her grandmother. She saw a need, couldn't find suitable products and discovered both her passion and a business opportunity.

3. Risk Taking - Financially, some investment will be needed to start a business. Whether it's a franchise requiring an operating budget or the development of a series of workshops, spending money and valuable time is part of the game. Ann set aside money to travel to conferences, to buy games, puzzles and tools, to hire someone to build prototype kits, and to create a website and marketing materials. She's prepared to invest more to make her idea work

4. Chutzpah - Putting yourself out there, making cold calls, and not listening too much to what the competition is doing takes a certain kind of nerve. Though not from the field of aging, Ann was not intimidated by experts on aging and clinicians. She did her research and called them—and they were surprisingly open to giving her advice and connecting her with others. She wasn't swayed by uninformed opinions, but had confidence that what she was creating was needed and better than what was on the market.

5. Action and Follow-Through - Many of us have ideas that we talk about, over-research and then develop at a snail's pace to make sure we get it right. Companies funded by venture capital are a good model: launch the business idea even if it's not perfect and test it at the same time that you move it forward. Ann turned an idea into action, setting aside time to work on it every week, despite the fact that she has a full time job and a family. She perfects her idea as she goes along, but the momentum doesn't stop.

Will Ann or other budding entrepreneurs succeed? No one can make predictions with any certainty, but it's worth looking in the mirror and assessing our life goals, our skills, and our finances to see whether entrepreneurship is the right path.

There are those in their encore years who have a burning desire to start a non-profit or business. Think of the Purpose Prize winners. There are others who have different talents and might be more suited for a contract assignment or job, especially if they are unable to take financial risk. And then there are those who play with entrepreneurial ideas and take on projects but have different priorities. They are happy with newfound free time and the flexibility to combine consulting or volunteer work with opportunities to try new things like piano lessons or courses

and to enjoy friends and family more.

Most ventures involve some degree of entrepreneurship, whether it's securing an assignment or leading a non-profit committee or event. We can all benefit by adapting some of the entrepreneurial characteristics mentioned above to be more effective in our day-to-day life. The most important thing we can do as we age, however, is to "know thyself" and to use our talents in the most productive and fulfilling way that fits us, whether that means plunging into entrepreneurial waters or taking another path.

Sandra Timmermann, EdD, is a gerontologist, educator and speaker focusing on the retirement life stage and its connection to business.

Thinking Like An Entrepreneur Is A Basic Life Skill

Jan Hively

Adapting to a World without Jobs

Half of working Americans are earning income from sources other than traditional jobs—as freelancers, consultants, contingency workers, independent contractors, and temps. Labor-saving technologies along with offshoring have eliminated the jobs of full-time employees who fulfilled strictly prescribed duties for unvarying pay during regular hours. In this fast-moving economy, employers focused on cutting costs are not going to hire full-time employees when the work doesn't require full-time attention. Already, employers have laid off most of the middle managers who once were needed to supervise employees.

Those hardest hit by the loss of traditional jobs have been older workers and young adults. Many of the older, primarily male, workers laid off from heavy labor industries (such as construction, transportation, and manufacturing) have not found replacement jobs, largely because of ageism. Young adults with modest education, lacking vocational guidance, without seasoned work skills and habits, flounder as they follow traditional routes to find non-existent traditional jobs.

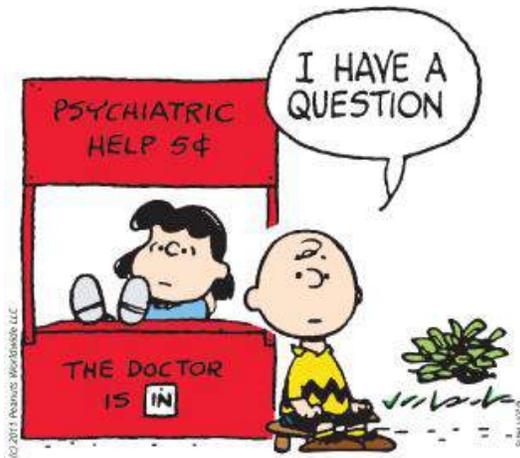
Those hardest hit by the loss of traditional jobs have been older workers and young adults.

The ageist expectations creating barriers for older workers are built into public practice. The U.S. Census Bureau, for instance, has reported as “dependents” all those under the age of 16 and those age 65 and older. The absurdity of measuring “dependency” solely by age is well illustrated by my own family. My mother and grandmother years ago laughed when I told them that they were officially described as “dependents.” They had both been employed and supported their families at the age of 14. Cancer forced my mother to retire at 67, but my grandmother was employed through her 70s in a tailor shop and as a home care provider. I've worked into my 80s on consulting contracts. It's past time for institutions to get rid of their restrictive policies that preserve and protect ageist bias.

Economic Self-Reliance for the Young and the Old

Without belittling the negative impact of the loss of traditional jobs, it's very important for our economic future to recognize the prolific opportunities for both young and old to be economically self-reliant.

Older workers who are creative and entrepreneurial are taking advantage of the labor market shift, seizing on it as an opportunity to work past retirement age without being tied to a nine-to-five schedule. For example, a worker can perform a specialized task for a number of employers on contracts that do not require the service on a full-time, permanent basis. New ways of doing work have given encore entrepreneurs the flexibility to take charge of their work schedule, work environment, and work focus.



The share of workers planning to continue employment past the age of 65 has quadrupled over the last 20 years, from 10 percent to 40 percent. The shift is due, in part, to the need for income throughout life, thanks to the shrinking of savings accounts and pension plans. Many older adults, however, seek only personal satisfaction through meaningful work, choosing to forge new careers in fields that interest them or work for causes that they believe in. Why not...when they have received the gift of 20 active, healthy years added to the middle of the life span? Why not... when they have

health care coverage and some pension income to cushion a gap between contracts or the failure of a risky enterprise?

Whether young or old, focused on long-term career opportunities or pension supplements, the path toward productivity and success requires the pro-active planning associated with entrepreneurs. There are plenty of role models among teenagers as well as among seniors. In a recent article in the March 29, 2015 *New York Times* titled "Make Way for Generation Z", the workforce consultant Alexandra Levit describes the diverse members of that still under-age generation as "independent, curious, mature, driven, and ready to change the world." Describing a few hundred teenagers attending a Generation Z career exploration conference at American University in D.C., Levit mentioned their preference for in-person rather than on-line interaction, schooling in emotional intelligence, and preparation for a global business environment. Clearly, Levit's sample is a select group, but its members point to the potential for a new generation of mature young adults who learn fast and want to take an active role in their communities.

This economy provides the setting for both young and old to be economically self-reliant and thrive—if they have learned to think and act like entrepreneurs.

“This economy provides the setting for both young and old to be economically self-reliant and thrive—if they have learned to think and act like entrepreneurs.”

Who is an Entrepreneur?

Most people see entrepreneurs as risk-takers who start-up and control for-profit companies. In a broader definition, an entrepreneur is someone who exercises initiative and organizes ventures to respond to opportunities.

Maki Kawase, an associate professor at the University of Hiroshima in Japan, has been engaged in entrepreneurship education with both youth and adults. She focuses on cultivating a venture mindset that moves innovators to participate in society through various entrepreneurial opportunities, no matter what types of internal and external enterprises engage them. She and her academic colleagues have brought to light seven specific capacities contained in a portrait of the innovative mindset: resilience, decisiveness, problem finding and solving, risk management, communication, challenge, interdisciplinary networking, and collaboration. For Professor Kawase, entrepreneurship education promotes the process of “fermenting the venture mindset” through experiences, ideas, skills, and systems.

Cultivating the Venture Mindset

I agree with Professor Kawase that “thinking like an entrepreneur” involves a venture mindset. That mindset is reflected in the habits and attitudes of people who are positive in their outlook for the future and innovative in their pro-active responses to opportunities for creating benefits for themselves and their communities. Learning to be effective as a risk-taking entrepreneur assumes acquisition of the skills, habits and attitudes associated with productivity. Those attributes are learned lifelong, in the home, school, workplace, and community. We grow into them.

Lifework planning is an essential element of “thinking like an entrepreneur.” Long-term thinking into the future about trends that generate opportunities is interdisciplinary—crossing geographic, cultural, and generational boundaries. Periodic and thorough self-reflection—relating one’s own sense of direction, of “what’s important to me,” to the continually shifting context of “what’s going on”—is essential to proactive adaptability.

People who think like entrepreneurs need to possess or develop the personal attributes of self-esteem, self-efficacy, flexibility and adaptability in order to negotiate change and organize ventures. Of course, effective communication and

networking are important, buoyed by a spirit of collaboration that exchanges wisdom with others. Learning skills that incorporate technology skills are critical to gathering necessary resources.

There is a growing number of programs teaching and honing specific entrepreneurship skills. They respond to the pervasive emphasis on economic growth and growing anxiety about talent shortages in pipelines supporting future growth. Among such programs are these three:

- For older adults: LPN Member Elizabeth Isele is founder and president of Senior Entrepreneurship Works, a forum for education, training, and advocacy supporting senior entrepreneurship. As a senior fellow at Babson Institute, Elizabeth has co-developed a curriculum titled [eProvStudio](#), which offers in-person workshops, supplemented with personal coaching for budding entrepreneurs.
- For young adults: David Bornstein, author of *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, wrote in the March 8, 2015 *New York Times* about [Build](#). In partnership with public schools in several cities, Build offers a full credit 9th grade course in entrepreneurship for low-income students, followed by work with student teams that conceive, test, and ultimately operate their own small businesses.
- For older adults: The [SHIFT](#) Network in Minnesota that supports vocational transitions in midlife and beyond offers a seven session course titled *Make>Shift: From finding a job to crafting a livelihood*. Participants brainstorm ideas for products and services stemming from current demographic and market trends. Members form teams to research the feasibility of business concepts based on the ideas. Some go on to develop business plans.

All three programs teach participants to think like entrepreneurs. The latter two could be intergenerational, involving both young and old adults working together to complete the tasks.

“The challenge is to shift from ingrained expectations that limit adaptation to pro-active life planning that builds on interests and assets and responds to changing conditions to maximize economic self-reliance”

The Basic Challenge

Whether the goal is business development or self-advocacy in job-seeking or self-management for aging-in-place or initial planning for retirement, life planning professionals should be teaching people to think like entrepreneurs. Getting to the basics, the challenge is to shift the focus of clients from ingrained expectations that

limit adaptation to change to pro-active life planning that builds on interests and assets to maximize growth and economic self-reliance. Interdisciplinary networking is essential for life coaches as well as for clients to identify the support services and employment practices that no longer work, as well as opportunities for creative ventures that lead to self-actualization.

Thinking like an entrepreneur has become a basic life skill, for all of us.

***Jan Hively** (Janet M Hively, PhD), Encore Entrepreneur, has developed education and advocacy networks that support positive aging such as the Vital Aging Network, the SHIFT Network, and the global exchange, Pass It On Network.*

Minority Entrepreneurs: Still Struggling to Maximize Opportunities for Ownership and Innovation

Meta J. Mereday

Despite the many innovations that are changing the business and social landscape in which we live, work and play, there are still challenges that impede the growth of minority entrepreneurs and reduce the diversity of products, services and innovations in that landscape.

Lack of Access to Capital

One of the major challenges is the lack of access to the capital needed to launch and sustain a new business venture. Minority entrepreneurs comprised less than nine percent of individuals who pitched their business opportunities to angel investors in 2013, according to a study by the University of New Hampshire's Center for Venture Research. The study further reported that minority entrepreneurs – classified as African-American, Hispanic, Asian or Native American—were less likely than Caucasian to receive investments.

“Starting and promoting a business is difficult for older people of any ethnic group, but minorities are seen as a financial risk so the funding options are limited and the business size is small,” says Tiffany Braxton, Founder of Midnight Management, a Public Relations and Media Branding company based in New York.

According to a 2013 report by American Express on the State of Women-Owned Businesses, “Minority-owned firms grew 156 percent from 1997 to 2013 and now account for one in three women-owned firms in the United States, but the businesses are small in size.

Minority entrepreneurs are more likely to use personal funds or loans from relatives due to the limited access to opportunities to connect with investors. “Most minority and women entrepreneurs,” Braxton adds, “lack collateral to get initial funding so they are too often not even at the level that would interest angel investors.”

Only 15 percent of minority-owned businesses are successfully generating funds based upon a pitch to angel investors compared to 22 percent of all businesses that successfully pitch for investments, according to the University of New Hampshire study.

Unfortunately, minority angel investors accounted for less than five percent of the angel investment pool with a smaller funding pool, making it difficult to provide a wide range of investments. With angel investments involving a significant level of

risk as well as compatibility, minority entrepreneurs too often have very little to offer in terms of collateral, and minority angel investors have less of a cushion to fall back on, thereby making them more averse—or less able—to take on the risk.

Penalties of Under-Representation

The old adage that “people do business with others they are most comfortable with and resemble” painfully holds true in investment circles and the barrier is often closer to an “iron curtain.”

The double whammy of too few minority entrepreneurs in the pipeline and too few minority angel investors is the crux of the challenge, experts and entrepreneurs agree.

Among industries, aspiring entrepreneurs are most attracted to technology. However, minority entrepreneurs continue to have limited access to the major players in the investment arena who will take a chance on their product or service idea.

Women are also underrepresented in the technology industry, particularly women of color. In 2013, women-owned businesses comprised approximately 16 percent of all businesses seeking venture capital with only 24 percent of that group being blessed with an angel investor, according to the Center for Venture Research. Women of color continue to have the least representation:

Hispanic women comprise 1 percent of the tech workforce; 3 percent are African-American women and 4 percent are Asian women based upon findings collected by the National Center for Women in IT.

Entrepreneurial alliances are formed from these small pools. Unfortunately, with so few participants, minorities and women are often overlooked.

The failure to invest in entrepreneurial minorities and women is mirrored in America’s C-suites and at the top of major corporations. The is true despite the occasional appearance of minorities leading major corporations, including Ken Chenault (American Express), Barry Rand (former head of Xerox), Andrea Jung (former head of Avon Products), Richard Parsons (Citigroup, Time Warner, L.A. Clippers).

Under-Representation of Minorities, Women, Veterans

Only 1 percent of the nation’s Fortune 500 CEOs are black; only 4 percent are women. The connection between gender and ethnic imbalance and the lack of diversity within corporate America is striking. “From the entrepreneurs pitching to the angels investing all the way up to the C-suite, gender and ethnic imbalance is pervasive,” Natalie Robehmed writes in a Forbes.com article, “There are Few Minority Entrepreneurs, And They Rarely Get Funding.”

“In case one needed a reminder, the scales are tipped – and if you’re a female or minority seeking investment, they aren’t weighted in your favor,” she adds.

Another segment of the population often overlooked by angel investors is veteran-owned business. Too often, government and private industry focus on providing jobs for veterans, when the more effective objective would be to increase the dismal number of veteran-owned businesses that represent the true “job creators” for veterans.

Stephen Bailey, Managing Partner, Top Flight LLC and President of Bailey Contracting Services based in Atlanta, GA, is an MBE and a United States Air Force veteran. He understands the challenges that MVBs face in the business world. “Veterans have unmatched camaraderie, but the resources are still lacking for veteran business development and long term sustainability. I know what it feels like to come back and not having a support system. Many minority businesses are still struggling despite being in the game for a number of years.” Bailey works with other minority entrepreneurs through Top Flight and community advocates to implement initiatives to help minority, women and veteran-owned businesses gain access to the resources and connections to “stay in the game.”

“Because the reduction in employment opportunities increased the necessity for older minorities as well as returning veterans to seek entrepreneurship, we have to redirect efforts to help each other to build up networks and resources to be successful,” added Bailey. “We are all in this together.”

According to the United States Census’ Survey of Business Owners (SBO), non-employer veteran-owned businesses account for 80 percent of the total pool of veteran-owned businesses. Sole proprietorships are not attractive to angel investors. It is generally believed that the majority of veteran businesses are without the depth that is attractive to investors looking for growth models.

Some Bright Spots

Not all is doom and gloom. Recently, there have been a few bright spots. Northwestern Mutual, the financial services giant with \$230 billion in assets, announced at the end of March that it was acquiring LearnVest. The company, which was started by a WBE (a certified Women Owned Business) in 2009, provides financial tips and advisors to young women to help them to better manage their money and direct their investment options.

Also, a number of organizations are using multiple platforms to connect minorities, women, and veteran entrepreneurs to be better prepared and promoted for investment opportunities and to change mindsets to highlight the bottom-line value related to diversity in investment. There is one organization in particular—the National Minority Angel Network (NMAN)—which is an investment firm that is geared towards creating diversity and inclusion for the investment community through investment in minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses. The

founders provide an extensive array of service supports for diverse businesses that can help them to bridge the gaps to business start up and growth. NMAN, which was founded in 2012, also provides educational supports to aspiring entrepreneurs and investors through the NMAN Foundation Corp, featuring a non-profit program in the form of an academy that provides information from business formation to funding opportunity.

With the global footprint taking on a more diverse perspective, it is crucial for investment opportunities to be inclusive of all interested parties to insure that new technologies and innovations have access to the resources to become the products and services that we can use and make our lives more enjoyable and empowering. No good idea should be left behind! While the struggle continues for minority entrepreneurs – and other diverse groups – to maximize opportunities and overcome obstacles, for many who pursue the path of ownership the fun is in the challenge itself.

Meta J. Mereday is an award-winning editor and writer with a focus on supplier and workforce diversity.

Experience Economy

Moira Allan

Some get it. Most don't. But overall, more and more are getting it. Retirement as an imposed sentence to stop functioning professionally is insane! Not only does it inhibit healthy aging, but it may be suicidal for our shifting economy that is struggling to get a lift off and suffering from a labor/skills mismatch.

As stated by more and more scientists ¹ studying the unprecedented aging of society that we're experiencing, "Stop thinking chronologically; think functionally."

I went to Brussels recently to participate in one of the global mini-summits on Senior and Intergenerational Entrepreneurship co-partnered by Jeff Skoll's Participant Media, and Elizabeth Isele's Senior Entrepreneurship Works and eProvStudio. Similar events have already taken place in London, Washington DC, New York City and Dublin. Later in the year, five more will be held in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, China and India. The series accompanies Participant Media's social action conversations about issues facing retirees and older workers and their new film sequel, *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*.

The mini-summits draw creative and action-oriented experts from government, banking, finance, business, education, non-profits, research and public policy. The participants collectively identify strategies to advance senior and intergenerational entrepreneurship—key drivers in our 21st century "experienced economy."

The goal is to synthesize what's happening globally in intergenerational entrepreneurship and to produce a "Blueprint for Action."

The timing is right. The International Labor Organization (ILO), in its *2014 World of Work* report, estimates that some 88 million young women and men throughout the world are unemployed (representing 47% of the 186 million who are unemployed globally). It describes a growing gap between the skills currently acquired through education and the nature of jobs available.

The ILO fosters entrepreneurship through its [Know About Business \(KAB\)](#) , a program that opens the eyes of 15-25-year-olds to the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship and self-employment. Since launching in 2004, more than 1100 teachers and 40,000 students in 20 countries have been reached. The important influence of both role models and mentors is stressed.

Here are my major take-aways from a recent global mini-summit on Senior and Intergenerational Entrepreneurship I attended in Brussels:

- The “Experienced Economy” is the new descriptive title for what’s happening. The term has emerged from the outstanding work of Elizabeth Isele and her team, including Jeanne Sullivan who has been backing entrepreneurs with venture capital for a lifetime.
- The 55+ age group is the most prolific in creating enterprises.
- The same group is also more prepared to take risks than any other age group.
- The European Union sees entrepreneurship as a strategic issue and has created policies to facilitate it. The USA has yet to do so. The three legs of European policy are: (1) reaching out to under-represented groups including women and migrants, (2) teaching entrepreneurship, and (3) creating a facilitating environment for new ventures. Role models and mentors are sought after as resources. Yet, despite this, Europe (37%) lags behind the United States (51%) and China (56%) in entrepreneurship.

It’s a myth that seniors deplete the economy. On the contrary, professionally active seniors contribute massively to the economy. In the United States alone, the estimate is that more than \$2 billion is paid in income taxes each year by 55+ professionals.

- It is also a myth that seniors are robbing jobs from the younger generations. If only one in three seniors were to start a small enterprise with one employee, we would be well on our way to putting an end to unemployment.

What a challenge! A whole new mindset! Shouldn't we all be thinking about what skills and/or expertise we have that can contribute to starting/supporting a small enterprise to give someone else a chance?

Moira Allan is a solo entrepreneur and co-Founder of *The Pass It On Network*
(www.passitonetwork.com)

1. Scientists such as Dr Sara Czaja, Leonard M. Miller Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the University of Miami, whose research focus is on aging and cognition and functional performance, family caregiving and e-health.

Seniorpreneur...Really? Despite Success of Older Entrepreneurs Mindless Ageism Still Reigns

Dick Ambrosius

As if it were some type of an anomaly, a local television station recently reported, on a 50-something woman who had started a successful business. The reporter referred to her, not as an entrepreneur but as a “Seniorpreneur,” which is both overly cute and ageist. With a little research, the reporter might have discovered that age 50-plus adults start roughly 10,000 new businesses a month in the U.S.

For over three decades, Baby Boomers were the darlings of the media and Madison Avenue. As a result, courting 18- to 39-year-olds became the Holy Grail of business success. Now that all Baby Boomers are over age 50, they seem to have lost their favored status and Millennials have replaced them as media darlings. What’s more, the first members of Generation X joined the over age-50 demo with almost no media nor business publication comment.

With those over age 50 controlling the vast majority of the discretionary money in the United States—up to 80% by some estimates—you would think businesses would make them a priority and try to employ older adults as advisors and members of specially designed operating teams.

Sadly, this is not the case. Ageism continues to rule in HR departments and employment firms. In spite of a growing body of evidence to the contrary, older job applicants are perceived as either too old or over qualified. As a result, large numbers of older adults are either giving up or forming their own companies. In 2012, as the leading edge of the baby boom was turning 66, nearly a quarter of all new businesses were started by Boomers between the ages of 55 and 64, which contradicts the older worker stereotype. According to the Marian Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City, business creation by older Americans grew more than 60 percent between 1996 and 2012.

Baby Boomers who pioneered most of current business technology realized it was much easier to start a business for a minimal investment, such as incorporating online and partnering with others in remote locations with no relocation expense. Older adults not only have more discretionary money; they also have large networks of contacts that can be turned into either customers or collaborators. Of course, they are less likely to take bigger risks than when they were younger. On the plus side, they are also aware of the pitfalls and how to avoid them due to a lifetime of experience.

The aging of the population is creating incredible opportunities for younger entrepreneurs seeking to use technology to meet the needs and desires of older consumers and the companies that serve them. The “retirement years” have long been perceived as a time to sit back and watch the world go by with no involvement, but that ship has sailed and today’s older adults pursue their passions and continue to pursue purpose right up to the end of life, whatever their age.

In the past, retirement was perceived as a safe and secure path to travel after a successful career, although not very rewarding. As John Shedd observed, “A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

As our nation sails into the first era of world aging, we are missing out on the greatest treasure trove of wisdom in our history by not keeping people actively employed well into their 70’s. Research indicates that upwards of two-thirds of those over age 65 prefer to work at least part time. Sadly our business systems were built by a youth culture to serve a youth culture and it may take older entrepreneurs to demonstrate what they are missing.

***Dick Ambrosius** has been an evangelist for positive aging for over 35 years.*

How to Boost American Business Creation: An Answer In Intergenerational Entrepreneurship

Elizabeth Isele with Nancy Henkin

This past March, I participated in [The 2nd Annual POWER of COLLABORATION Global Summit](#) on "Women, Technology and Social Innovation: Creating the Future of Inclusive, Sustainable Economies" at the United Nations, in New York. It was a fascinating program focused on developing more collaboration across business, government, education and technology sectors, across genders, and across nations to tackle and solve some of today's most pressing challenges in our fast-changing, hyper-connected world.

The chamber was filled to capacity with bright young innovative minds driving out-of-the-box thinking. But until I raised a hue and cry no one was considering the powerful impact of collaboration across generations.

As a septuagenarian, I have happily shed my mantle of pretending to be polite for the sake of being nice. It is such a relief to be able to speak my mind directly, and I have found that many in my audiences also find my cutting directly to the point extremely refreshing. So it was with reckless abandon that I was able to look out at this esteemed group and ask, "Has no one here considered the value of collaborating with people 50 plus—the most experienced people on the planet?"

"When you press for out-of-the-box solutions you should not exclude the 50-plus year- olds who comprise the largest demographic cohort of entrepreneurs in the United States. This is not to brag about senior entrepreneurs. This is about a huge opportunity for younger entrepreneurs to collaborate with senior entrepreneurs to mitigate their risks and accelerate their success."

According to Gallop and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation for Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activity in the United States is at an all-time slump, but you'd never know it from looking at the data about senior entrepreneurs. They are starting business two and sometimes three times faster than men and women in any other demographic and creating jobs for people of all ages.

Senior entrepreneurship is growing exponentially while overall entrepreneurship in the United States is falling precipitously. In January, 2015 Jim Clifton, chairman and CEO of Gallup, issued some dire news in his *Business Journal* article, [American Entrepreneurship: Dead or Alive?](#) He reports that for the first time in 35 years, "American business deaths outnumber business births (employer businesses: those with more than one employer): 400,000 new businesses are born annually, while 470,000 per year are dying."

At the Kauffman Foundation's sixth annual [State of Entrepreneurship Address](#) at the National Press Club in Washington, in February 2015, Acting President and CEO Wendy Guillies called for a new entrepreneurial boom in the US to counter plummeting new business creation. During the recession that began in 2008, new business creation dropped like a rock, falling 31 percent—the biggest decrease in four decades.

One of the key findings in the Kauffman report is that young people just graduating from college are not thinking of starting businesses because they are saddled with too much college debt. They cannot afford the risk, so they are taking jobs to begin repaying those massive student loans.

Talk about an opportunity to collaborate! America needs entrepreneurs to sustain—never mind bolster—its economic growth. Why not connect these young adults who want to start a business but cannot afford to with senior entrepreneurs who are launching businesses that could grow faster if they could tap into the expertise of young, tech savvy, social-media-fluent minds.

This powerful intergenerational collaboration should be a key pillar in the creation of inclusive, sustainable economies. This is not just wishful thinking. My friend and colleague, Nancy Henkin, PhD, founded and has led the award-winning [The Intergenerational Center at Temple University](#) for the past 36 years. An expert in the basic tenets of intergenerational learning dynamics, she articulates their value across sectors and geographies more compellingly than anyone I know. I share some of her thinking unadulterated below:

Intergenerational entrepreneurship has tremendous potential to both fuel economic growth and build social capital. It can take many forms in families and in communities. Older people with specific expertise and a lifetime of experience can serve as coaches and mentors to young entrepreneurs. Young people who are digital natives can help older people navigate the ever-changing world of technology. Generations can come together in one-on-one partnerships or mixed-age teams, building on each other's strengths to create new businesses or find innovative solutions to major societal problems.

But effective intergenerational collaboration doesn't just happen. The process of building cross-age, mutually beneficial relationships takes time, energy, and an appreciation of diverse life perspectives and goals. Understanding generational differences and commonalities is key to the intergenerational learning experience.

Researchers suggest that each generation has its own “defining moments” which usually occur during late adolescence/early adulthood. Major events like the Vietnam War, the assassination of Martin Luther King and President John F. Kennedy, the threat of a nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island, the shootings at Columbine High School, Hurricane Katrina and 9/11 affect one's

world view. So, too, do race, ethnicity, gender, education and income level.

Effectively working across generations requires exploring different attitudes toward work and work/life balance, ways of communicating and getting information, and preferred management and leadership styles. It is important to know what motivates people of different ages and what success looks like.

How can we harness the entrepreneurial potential of all generations? It is clear that people at all stages of life should be offered opportunities to develop the skills and competencies required to be successful entrepreneurs. Making these opportunities intentionally intergenerational will not only enhance the learning experience, it can also dispel age-related stereotypes and build strong bonds across age, race and ethnicity in our increasingly diverse communities.

Elizabeth Isele is the Founder and President of [Senior Entrepreneurship Works](#), Co-Founder, [eProvStudio](#), Senior Innovation Fellow at Babson College and a MetLife Journalism in Aging Fellow.

Nancy Henkin, PhD, is the founder of The Intergenerational Center in Temple University, and recently retired as Executive Director.

Contributors



In 2015, **Moira Allan** began her fourth career as a solo entrepreneur, connecting program innovators and business investors, guiding encore careers, and coaching for business. She is International Coordinator of The Pass It On Network (www.passitonnetwork.org) she co-founded with Jan Hively. (Ph.D).



Dick Ambrosius is a marketing strategist, researcher, storyteller and motivator with over 38 years' experience. He is the Founder and Principal of Positive Aging® LLC, a professional speaker on the Longevity Revolution, Customer Service, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and related personal growth topics.



Joyce Cohen's goal as President of LPN is to expand value to members, increase collaboration and grow the organization. She balances this work with her position as Director of Veteran Relations for the non-profit Purple Heart Homes (www.phusa.org) for which she created **Boots to Backyards™**, a mentor program to promote financial stability and long-term home ownership for service-connected disabled veterans. Joyce can be contacted at joyce@u-wisdom.com.



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Nancy Henkin, PhD, is the founder of [The Intergenerational Center at Temple University](http://TheIntergenerationalCenter.org), and recently retired as Executive Director. In 2011, under her direction, the center became the first recipient of the **Eisner Prize for Intergenerational Excellence**, a national \$100,000 award given to an organization that has had lasting success in uniting seniors and youth to bring about positive changes within the community. She is recipient of numerous awards, including the Jack Ossofsky Award from the National Council on the Aging. In 2006, she was elected into the Ashoka Fellowship for her efforts to build *Communities for All Ages*.



Jan Hively (Janet M Hively, PhD), Encore Entrepreneur, has developed education and advocacy networks that support positive aging such as the *Vital Aging Network*, the *SHIFT Network*, and the global exchange, *Pass It On Network*.



Elizabeth Isele, Founder and President of SeniorEntrepreneurshipWorks.org, eProvStudio.com and SavvySeniorsWork.com is recognized globally as the leader spearheading a senior entrepreneurship movement. She can be reached at <mailto:elizabethisele@eProvStudio.com>.



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Mary Radu, MS, MSW, CPCC, is a certified coach whose expertise is guiding mature men and women in finding confident ways to take charge of their work, lifestyle and retirement. She is the founder of the NorCal chapter of the Life Planning Network, past Vice President of the national Life Planning Network and an editor and contributor to *LIFE SMART AFTER 50! The Experts Guide to Life Planning for Uncertain Times*. A member of the North Bay LPN Connect Speakers Bureau, she speaks on legacy and the benefits of life planning. Part of her personal legacy work has been in co-developing the ALPA Advocacy Leadership for Positive Aging project for LPN. She lives on Rusty Gate Farm in rural Sonoma County, CA where she and her husband, Rich grow wine grapes and artisan peaches. She can be reached at 707-824-8836 or Mary@PathmakerCoaching.com.



Sandra Timmermann, EdD, is a gerontologist, educator and speaker who focuses on the retirement life stage and its connection to business. She formed Business and Aging Strategies after serving as a Vice President of MetLife and the founder and director of the Mature Market institute. Devoting her career to the aging field, Sandy has held senior positions at the American Society on Aging, AARP and SeniorNet, has served in leadership capacities on national boards.