

# Finding Good Work After You Retire

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As retirement portfolios shrink, it's inevitable that some older Americans will consider going back to work. That's a good thing, says Marc Freedman, author of "Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life." He told NEWSWEEK's Caitlin McDevitt why retirees shouldn't polish their golf clubs just yet.

## **MCDEVITT: Why is the concept of work-free "golden years" anachronistic?**

**FREEDMAN:** That was very well suited for a time when people weren't living as long and weren't as healthy as boomers are today—and a time when we had labor surpluses, when there was a strong desire to get people out of the labor market. Now the conditions are almost completely inverted. People need to work longer to make ends meet. And there are labor shortages that are opening up across whole sectors of society. There is also a very powerful impulse among boomers who are looking for work not only as a source of a daily paycheck but for daily meaning, a sense of connection and identity.

## **What are the hot sectors for retirees?**

Education, health care, human services—all areas that are critical to the national well-being, but are experiencing profound labor shortages ... [This] is an opportunity to recapture the boomer generation's vast repository of time, talent and experience.

## **Do people new to these fields have to start at the bottom?**

Not necessarily. In the nonprofit sector, there is a projected shortage of 640,000 people to fill leadership positions in the coming decade. There are so many opportunities for people to translate private-sector skills into working in the social sector at a high level. There is a chance to have work that is a kind of practical idealism—that blends the financial need with a spirit of service.

## **What about companies like Wal-Mart and Home Depot, which aggressively recruit retirees?**

My worry is that those will become the only opportunities, because they have been among the few to embrace this talent source. I don't like this idea that working in the retail sector will become the default position, the only option.

## **With the economy shaky, are people tempted to take any job they can get?**

Even though the current crisis is acute, people need to take a longer-term perspective, to think about this as a stage of their working lives that could last from 10 to 20 years.

## **Is there a hesitancy to hire retirees?**

I do think there is. I think that the group that is coming though now [who will be among the first to work much later in life] have it particularly tough. Especially if they are shifting careers, employer attitudes tend to be stuck in an earlier era. They have notions of older workers that suggest people who are on the downward trajectory.

## **So in an interview, what should retirees mention as their strengths?**

Well, the great benefit of experience is pattern recognition. You have seen various kinds of problems over time and you start to see connections that can't be made without having been around the block. I would say that one of the great assets of people at this stage is that they tend to be more settled. When they find work that provides the sense of meaning and purpose, they are not in a position to scramble up the ladder. These people are looking for more essential qualities from work—work that has integrity, that helps them leave a legacy and leaves the world a better place than they found it.

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