

How To Find A Second Act With Purpose

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When Doug Rauch “retired” in 2008, he was 56. He had spent 31 years at Trader Joe’s, where he led the California grocery chain’s move to the East Coast, rising to president.

But don’t call it “retired,” he calls it “graduation.”

Here’s why: While he planned to keep active serving on corporate and not-for-profit boards from his home in Newton, Mass, he quickly realized it wasn’t fulfilling enough for him.

Today, Rauch is headlong into his second act. His new venture opened in June of 2015: the tiny, 3,500-square-foot Daily Table, a not-for-profit grocery store he founded in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston.

Rauch, now 64, is part of a growing cohort of retired workers back at work, in part due to increasing lifespans and the desire to remain relevant. The rewards are threefold: financial, mental and physical.

“Today’s workers are already anticipating the need for change with plans to extend their working lives,” says Catherine Collinson, president of the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies, who recently released a study, *The New Flexible Retirement*.

A Merrill Lynch study conducted in partnership with Age Wave, a research firm that focuses on aging, found that nearly three of every five working retirees said retirement was an opportunity to shift to a different line of work.

How workers can successfully extend their working lives is a tricky issue, but one way is through upgrading skills and going back to school to pivot to new kinds of work. That’s what Rauch did and how his idea for Daily Table came to life. In 2010, he enrolled in Harvard University’s Advanced Leadership Initiative, which selects applicants –most of whom are in their fifties and sixties — from the top echelons of their industries to return to campus for a year to develop new skills, make new contacts and reflect on what’s next.

He was fortunate to have had that opportunity. But there are lots of ways to make the move to nonprofit work at this stage of life. Here are 10 steps you can take—preferably before you retire from your old job—to find new work with purpose in your next chapter.

Get financially fit. Debt is a dream killer—one of my favorite mantras. If you’re financially fit, it gives you options. You’re nimble enough to try things out, or work for less than you did in the past, for the reward of loving what you do and knowing you’re having an impact on the world around you.

Shape-up. To fight ageism in the workplace, you must have the stamina for a new beginning; you need to be physically in shape and stick to a healthy diet. You don't have to bench-press heavy weights or run fast miles, mind you, but you do need to have a level of fitness. It will show. You exude energy and a can-do, positive vibe. People want what you have. It subtly shows hiring managers that you're up for the job.

Take time to reflect. "Carve out solitude, space, and time to consider what kind of mission speaks to you," says Marci Alboher, the author of *The Encore Career Handbook*. You need a certain amount of humility to switch to nonprofit work. There's a shared sense of the mission, a collaborative decision-making environment. If you're used to being an independent worker or a leader, this might not be a suitable fit without an attitude adjustment.

Do an inventory of your existing skills and interests. How can you redeploy your financial expertise, for example, or your tech know-how or management skills on a new path?

Consider working with a career or life coach to talk through steps needed to make the shift. Successful career shifters typically set flexible time frames of three to five years to move into a new field. Finding what you want to do next is a process, so be patient.

Study up. Return to school for a tune up or a skills refresh. In addition to the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative that Rauch attended, The Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute also offers a program for professionals in their 50s and 60s and beyond.

Be practical, though, when it comes to spending on education. If possible, take some classes while your current employer is still offering tuition reimbursement (though be sure to investigate whether there's a payback requirement if you leave).

You might easily be able to hone your existing skills for the non-profit sector with just a course or two, e.g. accounting for not-for-profits. (Seton Hall University maintains a searchable list of non-profit management courses across the country.)

Some other innovative programs: EncoreHartford, a 16-week fellowship program, begun by the University of Connecticut's Nonprofit Leadership Program and now in its sixth year, has helped more than 100 corporate professionals, mostly older than 50, convert their corporate expertise to the nonprofit world. The program costs \$2,950. It includes a crash course in nonprofit management and finance held in local nonprofits and a two month, 30-hour per week fellowship at a local nonprofit. Encore.org is working to increase learning opportunities through its EncoreU and a limited number of fellowship programs outside the classroom. Pace University in New York offers an Encore Transition Program, aimed at helping executives and professionals explore swops from midlife careers to nonprofit and public service organizations. (Pace's program, like the one at the University of Connecticut, has no ties to Encore.org.) The tuition is \$795, and classes are limited to about a dozen student

Subscribe to the Chronicle of Philanthropy. Start reading articles and follow the thought leaders in the sector of the industry you're interested in on LinkedIn and Twitter.

Develop a nonprofit-oriented resume. Your resume must show what experience you have and how it relates to the organization you're interviewing with. Your cover letter must show why you want to work for that group and precisely what skills you have in your tool kit to help the organization with its goals.

Volunteer. If there's an organization whose mission calls to you, raise your hand. "Get out of your head and into the world," says Alboher. Look into volunteer opportunities to start developing some in-depth experience in an area that interests you and taps into your expertise. Serve on a board.

This builds your network and gets people to start thinking of you in new ways. Volunteering can also freshen your skills and stretch new muscles. Once you're inside of an organization and its leaders get to know you and your skill set, it can lead to paid opportunities down the road.

To find organizations where you might get involved, check out web sites such as CommonGood Careers and The Bridgespan Group. Other helpful sites include BoardnetUSA, Handsonnetwork.org, Idealist.org and Volunteermatch.org. AARP also has a "Volunteer Wizard" match-up board. Look around your community. Where might you lend a hand?

Do some pro bono consulting. Take on a consulting assignment for a local charity gratis. This may segue to a paid consulting job and to more permanent duties once you test the waters.

Reach out to your network to ask for help. Whom do you know in the nonprofit field? Tap your LinkedIn and other social media connections to search for possible contacts. Book an advice and counseling lunch or coffee to brainstorm. Always ask for another name or two of people you might be able to reach out to for guidance.

Polish your elevator speech. Nonprofits want to hear why you want this specific job for this specific cause and how it resonates with your personal story. Your passion and commitment for the organization and cause is the thing that sets you apart from other candidates. Wear your heart on your sleeve. Getting good at explaining this is crucial.

One last tip: Do something daily to inch toward your goal. "Don't struggle to find an ideal starting point, or perfect path," says Clearways Consulting career coach Beverly Jones, author of *Think Like an Entrepreneur, Act Like a CEO: 50 Indispensable Tips to Help You Stay Afloat, Bounce Back, and Get Ahead at Work*.

Once you have some picture of where you want to go, get things moving by taking small steps toward that vision. What really matters is that you do a little something on a regular basis.

For Rauch, the impetus to start a second act was a lingering feeling that he wasn't in love with his job anymore. "I didn't have the gas left in the tank, and I had the sense that it was simply time to do something different, make a difference and make an impact."

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