

Best Jobs If You're Over 50

NEW YORK (Money Magazine) - March 22 2007 - Maybe you're financially secure enough to try a career you've only dreamed about. Or you're burned out after toiling away in the same field for three decades.

There's gotta be more to work and life: right?

"Most people over 50 plan to continue working beyond traditional retirement age," says Howard Stone, co-founder with his wife Marika of 2Young2Retire.com. "A high percentage want to do something more satisfying than what they've been doing."

The search for meaning prompted AC Warden to become a celebrant - an officiant at life events who isn't necessarily affiliated with a particular religion - after 25 years as a documentary producer."

With budgets shrinking, timelines speeding up and the quality of productions diminishing, I began looking for a more fulfilling option," says Warden, 55.

She took classes for a year that cost about \$1,800 and earned her certification in 2003. Warden officiated at more than 60 weddings in 2006, and also does funerals, house blessings and commitment ceremonies. Though she makes just \$30,000 a year after expenses, she loves the work so much that she can see doing it for the rest of her life.

It might be hard to imagine making a switch at this stage, but the biggest job gains for the past few years have been among older workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. And some industries, including health care and education, are actively recruiting people over 50.

Still, when you're making a big change, you've often got to overcome stereotypes about older workers being stuck in their ways.

Here are five essentials to making a successful transition.

1. Make Age An Advantage

Sure, bias is out there. It's up to you to put your age in a positive light. Talk up your experience and how it fits into what a potential employer is looking for. Is the company trying to launch a service, cut costs or find new customers?

Use examples from your work history that show how you tackled similar problems, and explain how that will help in your new job.

After a 20-year career at Polaroid that included stints in sales, marketing and operations, Roberta Hurtig, 58, became executive director of Samaritans, a suicide-prevention organization in Boston, in 2002.

Best Jobs If You're Over 50

"A lot of my corporate skills translated. The heart of what we do at Samaritans - training people to provide great customer service - is essentially the same," she says.

2. You're Cool! Prove it!

Half of hiring managers in a 2006 survey said the biggest disadvantage of taking on older workers is that they don't keep up with technology. In an interview, talk about the Web research you did on your prospective employer or the new software program you mastered.

"It's critical to show that you're knowledgeable about even basic things," says Deborah Russell, director of economic security at AARP.

"Put your e-mail address on your resume or mention that you pay your bills online."

3. Look the Part

Wear an up-to-date suit for interviews, and during small talk drop in your weekly tennis game or that 10-k race you ran. Appearance counts, but energy is more important.

"You can dye your hair and minimize your wrinkles," says Russell. "But really it's about being enthusiastic and showing you can help a company succeed."

4. Plan Ahead

If you're going to take a lower-paying job, you need to prepare financially. On the flip side, transitioning to a career that you can see doing beyond 62 or 65 may allow you to put off tapping your savings.

5. Get Real

Don't get too seduced by the idea of saintliness. It's easy to romanticize life as a teacher, a minister or an environmentalist. It's still work!

"People are looking for greater meaning," says Marc Freedman, CEO of Civic Ventures and author of "Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life".

"Unfortunately, some of these fields are the most dysfunctional and low paying."