

Personal Journeys / Encore Careers

- Ed Everett - June 2010

My Encore Journey / My Retirement Journey*

My journey started with the question: *When should I retire?* Since finances were not the controlling issue, I had to decide whether to work another one, three or five years. I loved what I was doing, I was having fun and I was being challenged. My council felt I was doing a great job.

The sports analogy worked for me. Do I continue to play while I am at the top of my game and still love the game or do I work longer and play past my prime? I decided to go out while I still loved the job and was confident in my abilities. It was time to challenge myself in a different arena while I was still a young age 63.

In preparing for retirement I connected with a friend of mine, Don Maruska, who is a professional executive coach. I had never “retired” before and didn’t have any experience with this shift to a new phase in my life. Don gave me the following exercise, which helped me greatly:

- 1) Write down all the possible and crazy work options that that might be of some interest. I wrote two pages of possibilities.
- 2) Put this list aside and leave it there for 2 to 3 weeks; don’t do anything about the list except read it from time to time.
- 3) After three weeks circle the 8 possibilities about which I was most passionate and excited.
- 4) Write up a one page summary of each option with the following headings:
 - Describe what deeply motivates me about that option
 - Describe myself doing that option.
 - What might I do to prepare for that option?
 - Who should I talk/consult with regarding that option?
- 5) Put the summaries aside and leave them there for 4 weeks and don’t do anything about the summaries unless I wanted to read them from time to time.
- 6) After 4 weeks choose the option(s) that truly moved and excited me.

I chose consulting, training and speaking in three areas: Community Building, Civic Engagement and Executive Coaching. I also decided that I didn’t want to associate with any existing consulting firm or group. I made this decision even though I knew I sucked at marketing. I also felt it was important not to over-plan. I wanted to stay open to unknown possibilities.

* I know this word is blasphemy to some but Oh Well!

Right after I retired I came down with fungal pneumonia, which I would like to think was not a cause and effect, rather just a coincidence. I was laid low for three months and didn’t have the strength to do much else but think, read and reflect. I don’t recommend the fungal pneumonia part but highly recommend taking two to three months to reflect, think, decompress, reorient and begin to adjust to a new life.

It was during this reflection time that I thought about how much time I wanted to spend working and how much time I wanted to spend playing. I asked myself what portion of my work did I want to be paid for and what portion did I want to give back to the profession without pay.

My journey to date has been enjoyable as a trainer, speaker, writer and consultant in Community Building, Civic Engagement and Executive Coaching. I have been very successful staying focused on these areas and saying “no” to other offers. I still suck at marketing.

My conceptual plan has allowed me to become associated with a private start-up company, GoGoVerde. They have developed a website for neighborhoods, HOA’s and neighborhood associations. The purpose of the website is to: *Build community, encourage sustainability and connect neighbors to each other and to their city.* I am learning about Angel and VC funding.

I also married my partner of 8 years and we have bought a house, neither of which was in my “conceptual plan”. I highly recommend being open to possibilities and not restricting yourself to rigid and detail plans.

What Have I Learned?

- Retire, Quit, Get the Hell Out before you Burn Out.
- Be patient: It takes time to figure out the next phase of your life. I was on a chair lift with 4 retired executives from the private sector and they all said that it takes 2 to 4 years to settle into your new life.
- Be open to change. The next phase of your life will change more rapidly than your old life.
- Take the time to reflect, decompress and quiet yourself: “Go slow to go fast”.
- Focus on your passion, your love and what “floats your boat”.

What Surprised Me?

- I worked out less the first year after leaving than I did when I was working full time. Schedule what you love to do.
- I have skied less than I expected and will be correcting this!
- I love bossing myself.

Enter retirement with excitement, possibilities and joy while also acknowledging your anxieties. Acknowledge your sadness of leaving an organization you love, people you love and a job that hopefully filled your spirit.

~~ *Best of Luck, Ed*