

RETIRE OR REWIRE?

By James T. Ingram

“We’d love to hire you, but you’re overqualified”. That is the most commonly used reason that the over 50 job-seeking crowd hears in being rejected in their quest for gainful employment.

From a human resource perspective it is understandable. Why would a seasoned professional, particularly a former executive or manager, settle for a less prestigious position?

Dorie Clark, strategy consultant and author of the book *Reinventing You*, says that the answer may lie in actually reinventing and repositioning yourself for the next chapter in what may be perceived as a dead-end career path.

One method of reinvention may lie in exploring or learning new skills. For example, one doesn’t necessarily need to pursue a freshly minted PhD (which is a time consuming process). However, taking classes at the local community college or workshops to refine or update your current skill set may be just what the doctor ordered.

And if you’ve been dismissive of social media, realize that it is critical for professionals (especially for those over 50) to have a social presence. Not having a digital footprint on basic sites such as LinkedIn or Twitter and deficient computer skills is tantamount to having the word “dinosaur” stamped prominently on your forehead.

Then, you must revive “dormant ties” with those with whom you’ve lost touch and revive your current connections. In other words, you must network like crazy because, at the end of the day, your “network is your net worth”. Your most prominent leads, referrals and opportunities will emanate from a solid network.

Next, if you’re pondering the next act in your career, you must determine what motivates, drives and makes you happy. If you answer those questions, then review your skill set, you can, then, connect the dots and ultimately identify a new career path which will capitalize upon those interests and abilities.

Finally, take ownership of that “overqualified” label. Make a preemptive strike during interviews by stating that “You might wonder how I might respond to being managed by someone younger, especially with my experience.” Follow up with,

“That’s precisely why I want this job, because having that experience; I understand the challenges involved, which equips me to be an even better employee. And I look forward to learning from someone with a fresh perspective.”

Taking these steps and maintaining a positive attitude will serve you well in prolonging retirement mode in exchange for rewiring your career for a fresh career path and a slower transition toward your eventual exit from the workplace.