

Times Have Changed— Has Your Career Plan?

Not that long ago, careers in the corporate world were fairly straightforward. You'd earn a college degree and go to work for a company where the vast majority of your colleagues would be white and male. The company would train and develop you. You'd move up the ladder, gaining power, prestige, and income along the way. Even if you didn't work for the same firm for your entire career, you'd probably stay within the same industry. You'd retire at around 65, perhaps collecting a generous pension and the proverbial gold watch, or perhaps not, but certainly planning to live off your ample savings.

Those days are long gone. Now, workers spend an average of only four years at a job and often have more than one career during their lifetimes. Most careers aren't linear upward climbs any more; instead, they resemble lattices or labyrinths, as employees have greater freedom to change industries, freelance, take sabbaticals, return to school, opt for part-time work, or pursue business ownership as their life circumstances change. Companies engage in less training and a single college degree will no longer carry a worker throughout her career. The workforce is considerably more diverse in terms of race, gender, and national background. Pensions are a thing of the past, and retiring at 65 is no longer a viable option for many people.

But many workers behave as though the old paradigm is still in place. They assume they'll stay with one company until they retire or are forced out, and believe that their education ended with their bachelor's degree. They don't keep up

with trends in their industry and are caught off guard when they're laid off or their company goes out of business. They believe that being good enough at a static set of skills will ensure their employability, and are surprised when they aren't hired or when more agile workers are promoted over them. They see working for a large corporation as their only employment option, and anticipate their career will end when they retire in their mid-60s.

This mindset is long out of date, and can be a barrier to employability in today's career marketplace. If it sounds like yours, even a little bit, we suggest changing the way you think about your working life. View yourself not as a worker bee who'll be rewarded for diligence and talent but as an entrepreneur: someone who sets a clear strategy for his or her career, but isn't afraid to make changes when things aren't going as planned; who understands and markets his or her strengths; who takes calculated risks; who researches his or her "customers"—potential employers—and gives them what they want; and who's always innovating.

In this book, we'll share some ways you can move towards this entrepreneurial mindset. In Chapters 1, 2, and 3, we'll show you the cultural and technological factors that are changing work forever, what that means for your career, and which skills and characteristics you need to cultivate to be successful in the world of do-it-yourself career planning. Chapter 1 discusses the impact of four societal factors on work: technology; globalization; longevity (and its corollary, members of multiple generations sharing the workplace); and demographics, including the rise of women, the increased ethnic diversity of the United States, and changes in gender roles and family patterns. Chapter 2 describes the shift from linear to labyrinthine careers, one marked by multiple changes in industry and employment type over the course of a working lifetime. It covers such topics as the new values that are driving people's careers; different work patterns within large corporations; and some of the many employment options individuals can choose from, including freelancing, entrepreneurship, and working for small or medium-sized companies. Chapter 3 explores some of today's most prominent technologies, such as big data, social media, cloud computing, and solar power and discusses how they're changing careers by creating new jobs, destabilizing industries, and increasing skill requirements.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, we'll share insights from human resources (HR) professionals and recruiters on planning your career, finding jobs, and staying employed. Chapter 4 draws upon interviews with HR professionals to inform you about the latest trends in career development and best career development practices for both individuals and companies. Chapter 5 brings together interviews with recruiters and the results of a survey of successful job seekers to give you insider advice on how to find a job in an employer's market. Chapter 6, written by co-author Gary Daugenti, founder and president of recruiting firm Gent & Associates, is a primer on working with recruiters: the people who have a pipeline

to some of the best compensated and most interesting jobs. Daugenti explains how recruiters operate, how to contact them, what to do if they approach you, and some things *not* to do when working with them.

In Chapter 7, we provide you with a simple but powerful framework you can use to plan a career that may last 50 years or longer. This framework will help you visualize the connections between work, education, finances, health, leisure, and your relationship with friends and family, and to foresee a life where all these different strands are brought into balance.

Societal Forces

How Technology, Globalization, Longevity, and Demographics Will Impact Your Career

Four forces have converged that have changed the workplace forever: the astonishing ascendancy of communications technology, particularly the Internet; globalization, which has increased competition but also opportunity for both companies and individual workers; demographic shifts, including increased ethnic diversity, the growing presence of women in the workplace, and a rise in the number of nontraditional families; and extended longevity, which has reshaped the concept of retirement and made it possible to have more than one full-scale career in a lifetime. In this chapter, we look at each of these forces in depth, illustrating how they've changed the workplace and what new skills and characteristics you'll need to acquire as a result.

Technology

If you've ever used your smartphone in a store to check if the price of an item was cheaper online, you've participated in the practice known as *showrooming*. You're not alone: Some 70% of customers say they've researched merchandise on the Internet while shopping offline.¹ Showrooming has proven a blow to brick-and-mortar retailers, who spend vast amounts of money stocking and displaying items only to lose sales to Amazon. The practice has been considered a factor in the demise of such companies as Circuit City, Borders, CompUSA, and Tweeter.²

Savvy retailers, however, have adapted to showrooming by changing their business practices. Nordstrom, Target, and Best Buy, for example, compete with

online retailers by using such tactics as price matching online competitors, offering superior customer service, improving the shopping experience, implementing reward programs that encourage customers to buy in-store, and introducing mobile payments.³

In like fashion, workers need to learn to adjust to new technologies, or risk being left unemployable. Technology has made the employment landscape volatile, as innovations have the potential to disrupt or even eliminate entire industries. (We'll discuss a few of these game-changing innovations in Chapter 3.) Consider, as a cautionary tale, the freestanding GPS device. Just a few short years ago, these gadgets were considered state-of-the-art. Now, sophisticated navigation apps may render them obsolete.⁴

Technology advances with breathtaking speed. To reach 50 million households, it took radio 38 years, television 13 years, the Internet four years, and Facebook just two years.⁵ In 2005, just 8% of Americans used social networks; in 2011, 65% did.⁶ eBay was only launched in 1995, Google in 1998, Facebook in 2004, Twitter in 2006, and Instagram in 2010, and yet it's hard to imagine life without them.

Thus, to stay employable today, you must not expect that your company and industry will remain static for long. Think of the household-name companies that have gone out of business in recent years because they were unable to adapt to the changes technology brought about. Blockbuster could not compete with Netflix, Borders with Amazon, or Tower Records with iTunes. Kodak invented digital photography but could not capitalize on it. Even that venerable institution, the newspaper, is losing ground to the Internet. Two hundred and twenty newspapers closed between 1990 and 2009, the most recent year for which figures are available, largely because of competition from online news.⁷ Some futurists predict that the last print newspaper will go out of business by 2040.⁸

At the same time, the Internet has also created jobs, companies, and entire new industries. The number of jobs in the Internet sector grew 634% over the past decade, more than 200 times the rate of the economy as a whole.⁹ US software jobs have grown 562% over the past two decades,¹⁰ while cloud computing services will generate nearly 14 million jobs worldwide by 2015.¹¹ Facebook, founded in 2004, employs 4,900 people; eBay, founded in 1995, employs over 20,000; and Google, founded in 1998, over 53,000.¹² The Internet has also driven massive economic growth. McKinsey estimates that the Internet was responsible for 21% of the GDP growth in mature economies between 2006 and 2011.¹³

Even as new technologies have reduced the need for such employees as bank tellers, travel agents, and tax preparers, they have created new job categories. Jobs like social media strategist, user experience designer, online community manager, search engine optimization specialist, and app designer, for example, didn't exist

10 years ago. An estimated 53,000 people are now employed making applications for Facebook alone.¹⁴

In such a fluid environment, you'll need to continually keep abreast of changes in your company and sector, staying informed about innovations and upstart competitors with the potential to destabilize your field. Neither you nor your firm can afford to be complacent. You should be prepared to evaluate and upgrade your skills on an ongoing basis. You'll also be considered a more valuable employee if you cultivate your problem-solving skills, think quickly on your feet, and offer creative solutions to the challenges your company faces.

The Information Revolution

If there's one word synonymous with the Internet, it may well be *information*. The Net has exponentially increased the amount, type, and accessibility of information available to us. Now, with a quick Google search, anyone can uncover information once known only by experts or insiders, from what perks a company offers its employees to what a job candidate thinks of a certain political party, from what twelve different retailers charge for the same product to how tasty the steak is at a bistro in a distant city, from detailed instructions on how to program a computer to how much it costs to ship freight from India. Vast amounts of scientific, technical, business, and personal data are now at the fingertips of anyone with a wireless card or an Ethernet cable.

This information revolution cannot help but change the way we work. For one thing, it's shortened the shelf life of knowledge. In 1986, the typical employee could store 75% of the knowledge she needed to perform her job in her head; now, employees can only store 10%, and knowledge workers spend up to one work day per week looking for information.¹⁵

It's also altered the way we gain and process the information we need to do our jobs. Workers today need to obtain information both from *knowledge stocks*—static bodies of information like books and training manuals—and *knowledge flows*: ever-changing, constantly updated streams of information like wikis, message boards, and social media. Knowledge flows can often be more useful than knowledge stocks because they change in response to new conditions or discoveries, and draw upon the experiences of many people rather than one or a few.¹⁶

In an age where the Internet acts as our collective repository of information, employees who are skilled at tapping knowledge flows will be in high demand. In fact, *what* you know is becoming less important than your ability to find and make meaning from information. The information revolution also means that you can no longer expect one college degree to serve you for your entire career. While the critical thinking and researching skills you honed while earning your undergraduate degree will still prove valuable, be prepared to become a lifelong learner who gathers knowledge in both formal and informal settings.

Globalization

The world's nations, markets, and technologies are now interconnected to an unprecedented degree, which is having a profound impact on the way we work. Many multinational businesses no longer have home countries: Chinese-owned Lenovo, for example, is headquartered in New York, runs factories in Beijing and Raleigh, North Carolina, and is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange.¹⁷ Small businesses can now serve international markets almost as easily as they can local companies. Indian, Chinese, and Brazilian firms successfully compete with US and European ones for knowledge work. The Internet has enabled firms to assemble virtual teams of workers from all across the globe, while microwork platforms like oDesk let freelancers bid for projects in hundreds of nations.

Globalization means that you need to put your career in its global context no matter what field you work in. Your competitors for jobs are no longer just people who live in easy driving distance from your city: They're in the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, India, China, and Kenya. Your firm, be it large or small, is likewise competing with companies from around the world. You're almost certainly working with or for, or selling to or buying from, people from outside your nation, who may not speak your language and who may possess some very different cultural values.

In such a climate, you need to market yourself effectively and make yourself as irreplaceable as possible to remain employed. You also need to be culturally sensitive and learn the business etiquette, customs, and possibly even languages of the nations you most often work with. And, as globalization is making work infinitely more complex and uncertain, you should cultivate agility, staying abreast of global events, thinking quickly on your feet, and adapting to changing circumstances.

An Interconnected World

Billions of people worldwide now have access to the Internet, and their numbers are growing. By 2025, more than five billion people will own Internet-enabled mobile devices.¹⁸ This connection to a worldwide network of information allows individuals to be global consumers, employees, and businesspeople. A person's physical location and country of origin now have less impact on his working life than ever before: Almost anyone with Internet access can buy and sell products, track shipments, find information about products and companies (often posted by fellow consumers), apply for jobs, pursue learning and training opportunities, and work with virtual team members, regardless of time, place, or nationality.

Microwork platforms like oDesk, Elance, Freelancer.com, GetACoder, Guru, PeoplePerHour, and iFreelance enable independent contractors to perform knowledge work on a pay-for-performance basis for companies worldwide. Such platforms are highly transparent, letting potential employers view individuals' work histories and performance reviews. They are rapidly growing in popularity.

The number of workers on Elance has more than doubled since 2010,¹⁹ and over \$500 million worth of work has been performed on the platform.²⁰ The number of project management hours logged on oDesk has soared from 1,000 in 2009 to about 50,000 in 2012.²¹ Elance, in fact, predicts that professional services will be “America’s next great export.”²²

Another growing trend is the formation of virtual global teams. Ninety-four percent of employers in one recent survey said that, in the future, most businesses will use blended teams of online and on-site workers, while 95% agreed that soon, skills, not location, will determine who gets hired. Fifty-eight percent plan to double their spending on online workers in 2013.²³

Technology has rendered the market for talent truly global. You may find yourself competing for work with similar professionals from around the world—a daunting prospect, especially when these workers can do the same things you can for less money. The key to survival is distinguishing yourself and offering something no one else can deliver. As *The World Is Flat* author Thomas Friedman puts it, “plain vanilla” won’t cut it anymore: You need to set yourself apart by discerning and marketing your unique blend of skills, talents, and experience.²⁴

Prosperity and Opportunity

But globalization brings opportunity as well as competition. Now, enterprising individuals and companies have vast new markets to sell to. Globalization has led to an increased standard of living for hundreds of millions of people. The global poverty rate has been cut more than in half since 1981,²⁵ and 35 million people worldwide joined the middle class between 2003 and 2009.²⁶ China’s middle class is now larger than the US population.²⁷ This increased prosperity is shifting the balance of global economic power. Very broadly speaking, developed nations, particularly the United States and Japan, are losing their economic dominance, while developing nations, especially China and India, have growing clout. Since 2009, in fact, emerging nations have made up half the world’s economy.²⁸ In 2012, 117 companies based in developing countries appeared on the *Fortune* Global 500 list, compared with just 13 in 1999.²⁹

Companies have raced to do business in these promising markets. IBM expects to earn 30% of its revenue in developing countries by 2015, up from 17% in 2009, and Unilever already does 56% of its business in emerging regions.³⁰ The opening of global markets represents tremendous opportunity for companies large and small: Ninety-six percent of the world’s population and three-quarters of its spending power exists outside the United States.³¹

And it’s not only giant corporations that are profiting from globalization. Enterprising individuals and small firms are also entering new markets. Sites like eBay, Etsy, ArtFire, Ruby Lane, and Storenvy make setting up a global e-commerce store almost as simple as starting a blog. Business-to-business trading plat-

form Alibaba connects small importers and exporters from over 240 countries. Logistics providers like FedEx and UPS allow small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to trade overseas without having to establish sales teams and distribution networks.³² These advances have led to steady growth in the extent of SMEs' participation in the global economy. SMEs accounted for 30% of US merchandise exports between 1997 and 2007,³³ and the number of US small exporters has more than doubled since 1992.³⁴ By 2018, half of US SMEs are expected to participate in global trade.³⁵

Complexity and Competition

Doing business has gotten vastly more complex since globalization took hold, as the number of partners, collaborators, and competitors any company has to deal with has increased exponentially. More and more countries now have the resources, drive, and knowledge needed to compete for knowledge work on a global level. Brazil has become a hotbed of digital collaboration,³⁶ South Korea of digital media and genomics, and China of nanotech and biotech.³⁷ Companies in more developed nations have been forced to become more innovative and cut costs to stay competitive.

Many firms now outsource business functions to external providers, a process known as *disaggregation*. These providers may be US-, foreign- or multinationally based. A company might hire UPS to synchronize its global supply chain, for instance, or Evalueserve in India to perform market research for its medical or technical devices.³⁸ A decade ago, disaggregation mainly meant offshoring manufacturing to nations with lower labor costs. But disaggregation has become a much more complex phenomenon than simple outsourcing. When hiring service providers from abroad, companies do not merely choose the lowest bidder, but take into account such factors as quality, cultural similarities and differences, shipping costs, and time zones. Recently, North American companies have been looking to Latin America, and Western European firms to Eastern Europe, for business solutions, a phenomenon dubbed *nearsourcing*.³⁹ Though high- and medium-skilled workers in countries like Argentina and Poland may cost more than those in India, they often, employers say, have a greater understanding of how to interact with clients and a higher level of problem-solving skill.⁴⁰

Disruptive innovations are also increasing the complexity of global business. Advances in 3D printing and robotics may bring advanced manufacturing jobs back to the US.⁴¹ Rethink Robotics has invented a robot called Baxter with the capacity to perform repetitive work, adapt to changes in its environment, and work safely alongside humans. At \$22,000, Baxter is affordable even for small manufacturers.⁴²

Advances in telecommunications and transportation have allowed companies to create global supply chains and source materials, goods, and services from the

producers who best meet their needs regardless of location. Savvy supply chain management can save businesses money, decrease time to market for goods, and increase customer satisfaction. Spanish fashion retailer Zara, for example, a master of supply chain management, is able to bring styles from runways to stores in just a matter of weeks by manufacturing some of its lines in Asia and others in nearby European and North African countries. Though the clothes made closer to headquarters are more costly to produce, they can be shipped more quickly and in smaller batches, so if items don't sell well, Zara doesn't lose much money on them. The higher labor costs incurred by sourcing clothes in Europe are offset by greater flexibility.⁴³ However, global supply chains have considerably increased the number of variables companies need to deal with, involving as they do everything from cultural, language, and time zone differences to unpredictable events such as strikes, political uprisings, and natural disasters.

This new complexity means workers will need to be adaptable and willing to change if they are to stay employed. In a rapidly changing global climate, you can't rest content with the status quo. Instead, anticipate and even welcome changes to your department, company, or entire industry. Keep abreast of trends in your industry and of global events which may affect your firm. In particular, stay informed about which skills are in demand, and be prepared to continually upgrade your skill set.

Longevity

In 1800, a 60-year-old would have been considered elderly. Today, that's middle-aged—in fact, 40% percent of 60-year-olds agree with the statement “60 is the new 40.”⁴⁴ Since 1950, life expectancy has risen by four years for women and five for men,⁴⁵ and, by 2050, the average American man is expected to live to see 83 to 86 while the typical woman can expect to reach 89 to 94.⁴⁶ Britain's Office for National Statistics has even projected that one-third of babies born in 2012 will live to 100.⁴⁷

Such extreme longevity is already having an impact upon careers. With so many of today's workers living and staying healthier longer, the concept of retirement at 65 is now outdated. Many people will find themselves working long past that age, some out of necessity but others out of a desire to remain productive and stimulated into their 60s, 70s, and beyond. Longevity also means members of multiple generations often share the same workplace, which can be a source of tension, especially in companies whose policies have not changed to reflect new demographics.

Redefining Retirement

One consequence of extreme longevity is that individuals and companies have had to change the way they think about retirement. The traditional concept of re-

irement, in which a person stops working entirely in his or her 60s and embarks upon a life of leisure, is largely an artifact of the early and mid-20th century, when individuals tended to have more physically demanding jobs and shorter lifespans. In 1930, for example, a person who reached the age of 65 could only expect to remain disability-free for nine more years. Today, in contrast, 65-year-olds have an average of 14 disability-free years ahead of them, and that number's expected to rise to 17 years within a decade.⁴⁸ Someone who leaves the workforce at 65 today has a good chance of spending the next 25 years retired, a prospect that few people find psychologically satisfying or economically feasible.⁴⁹

Individuals will also find they have to work longer to support aging relatives, as well as to provide for themselves in lengthier old age. By 2050, people over 65 will comprise 21% of the US population.⁵⁰ Many members of this elderly population will require medical care and assistance with everyday activities, putting further strain on the healthcare system and the family members who take care of them. The dependency ratio, or the proportion of children and retired people to working adults, is expected to increase from 59:100 to 72:100 by 2050.⁵¹ That means working adults will have to carry the additional financial, physical, and emotional burdens of caring for both young and old. As a result, workers will need to structure their careers to manage these added pressures, and employers will need to adjust their career development policies to take into account their employees' responsibilities at home.

Longer lifespans also mean that people need to work longer to afford retirement when it does occur, and, unfortunately, not many Americans are financially prepared for lengthy old age. Only 21% of 50- to 64-year-olds are very confident that their income and assets are enough to support them in retirement.⁵² The recent recession has further eroded the retirement savings of many, causing employees to stay in the workforce longer than they predicted. In 2009, in the midst of the recession, over half of workers aged 50 to 64 contemplated delaying retirement, and 16% believed they would never be able to retire.⁵³ Those who did plan to retire predicted they would do so at 66—five years later than they anticipated in 2006.⁵⁴ A 2012 survey of over 3,000 managers showed similar results: The majority of respondents named 65 to 69 as the ages they were most likely to retire, while a remarkable 33% of managers from the Baby Boom generation stated they would not retire until after 70.⁵⁵

Yet financial necessity isn't the only reason older workers decide to defer retirement. Many find work too intellectually and socially stimulating to give up. A 2004 survey of Baby Boomers found that over three-quarters intended to earn money in retirement, and two-thirds listed mental stimulation and challenge as the top reasons why.⁵⁶ These employees are choosing a variety of alternatives to full retirement, including part-time work; phased retirement (working in a reduced capacity in the same industry or for the same company prior to full retirement);

returning to the workforce after a period of retirement; mentoring, advising, or consulting; freelancing or working on a project basis; and, as we discuss in the next section, entire second careers. Now, only about half of all employees go directly from full-time work to not working.⁵⁷ In fact, as Marc Freedman, author of *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*, justly notes, “retirement” is not really the correct term for a phase of life that so often includes work.⁵⁸

One Long Lifetime, Many Careers

Already, Americans are working longer. Labor force participation rates for people in their 60s and 70s have risen steadily over the past 15 years, especially for women,⁵⁹ and the percentage of the workforce over 55 will likely reach 20% by 2020.⁶⁰ The World Health Organization estimates that, today, healthy 60-year-olds are physically capable of working until their mid-to-late 70s.⁶¹

This unprecedented longevity has increased the likelihood that individuals will have multiple careers in their lifetimes. In fact, this shift is already occurring: The Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that even Baby Boomers, a generation not known as job-hoppers, held an average of 11 jobs before reaching age 46.⁶² Far fewer people hold long jobs than in decades past. In 1980, 51% of workers had been in their current job more than 10 years; by 2005, only 39% had such lengthy job tenure.⁶³ The typical worker today has held his or her current job for only 4.4 years.⁶⁴

Enter the phenomenon of the *encore* career: a full-fledged second career that a person embarks upon in the latter half of his or her life. Anywhere from 5.3 to 8.4 million Americans have such careers, which can last for 10, 15, or even 20 years—enough time for a person to complete a full career cycle, including training, returning to school, maturing into a new position, and then stepping down.⁶⁵ Many encore careerists, having spent their first careers pursuing money and power, view their second careers as opportunities to serve others. One study found that half of people over 50 were interested in jobs that would help their communities, and that 60% planned to reorder their priorities to emphasize social justice.⁶⁶ Teaching, nursing, childcare, and working for nonprofits are all popular choices for encore careers. Other examples of encore careerists include a finance executive who became a superintendent of a low-income school district, a car salesman turned activist, and a former hospital executive who now works with the homeless.⁶⁷

Older workers derive great satisfaction from their second careers: 84% describe them as extremely fulfilling, and 94% say their jobs allow them to make a difference.⁶⁸ Interest in encore careers, not surprisingly, is growing. Half of Boomers not currently in encore careers want to have one.⁶⁹

Generations Collide

For the first time, members of four and even five generations coexist in the workplace: Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials⁷⁰ comprise the majority

of the workforce, but some representatives of the Silent Generation (born between 1928 and 1945)⁷¹ have yet to retire, and Generation Z⁷² teenagers are now landing their first jobs. These generations were influenced by different historical events and parenting styles, and often have widely divergent approaches to technology, communication, office etiquette, leadership, and learning, which can lead to intergenerational tension. Boomer bosses, for example, may not understand why their Millennial subordinates want so much feedback and coaching, while Millennials may be frustrated by Xer teammates' preference for email over instant messaging. Sixty percent of HR professionals at large corporations report witnessing conflict between members of different generations.⁷³

The mix of generations in the workplace has also forced employers to rethink career development and succession planning. The recent recession has caused many Boomers to delay retirement, much to the frustration of Xers, who had hoped to take over departing Boomers' leadership positions. Millennials expect rapid career advancement and may choose to leave a company if they aren't making as much progress as they'd hoped.

But having multiple generations in one workplace can also set the stage for rich transfers of knowledge and experience. Many older employees enjoy mentoring younger ones. Boomers and Millennials, for example, tend to share a love for self-expression, challenge, and new experiences, and can be especially effective mentor-mentee pairs.⁷⁴ Some companies even practice reverse mentoring, in which younger employees teach older ones about technology and how to market to younger generations.⁷⁵ The variety of perspectives brought about by generational diversity can also spark innovation. Eighty-two percent of HR professionals say the interaction of multiple generations leads to better quality work.⁷⁶

The Generations at Work

Working with members of different generations can be challenging as well as invigorating. Learning about the work styles and motivations of each generation can help you better understand, manage, or collaborate with your colleagues.

Naturally, individuals differ, and not everyone shares the characteristics associated with his or her generation. But researchers have noted some general tendencies manifested by members of different generations, especially in regard to how they behave in the workplace. Here, in a nutshell, are some of the career issues facing each generation.

Baby Boomers: Vital Well Past Middle Age

Born during the years 1946 and 1964, and influenced by the idealism of the 1960s, Baby Boomers have refused to accept traditional working patterns. Many are staying in the workplace past typical retirement age: some due to financial necessity, but others because they cherish the intellectual stimulation and sense of purpose that work provides. Long considered hardworking, ambitious, and

driven,⁷⁷ Boomers do tend to place a high value on work. They are almost twice as likely as members of younger generations to be work-centric as opposed to family-centric or equally concerned with work and family.⁷⁸

Yet, as their interest in socially redeeming encore careers demonstrates, Boomers want more from work than salaries and titles. Studies have revealed that Boomers value flexibility, recognition, access to new experiences, opportunities to give back to society, and working with respected colleagues more than they do compensation.⁷⁹ Boomers also need flexibility as much as employees with young children do. They constitute a “sandwich generation”: one simultaneously taking care of both older and younger family members. Seventy-one percent of Boomers have eldercare responsibilities while 41% provide financial support to young adult children.⁸⁰

Well-educated and in good health, Boomers tend not to view themselves as “old” or “aging”; some scholars claim that Boomers experience a “second middle age” between 60 and 80.⁸¹ Forty-seven percent of Boomers say they are only in the middle of their careers, and 68% expect to be promoted once more before retiring.⁸² Eighty-five percent desire new experiences at work.⁸³

Companies are struggling to cope with Boomers’ lengthy working lives. Many Generation Xers find themselves unable to advance because Boomers still hold top positions. When Boomers, the largest generation in American history, do retire, they will leave a leadership gap in their wake as there are not enough qualified Xers to replace them. Companies must carefully craft succession plans to ensure that Boomers’ experience and knowledge are not lost, and that younger workers are prepared to take their places.⁸⁴ Many have implemented initiatives such as phased retirement programs, mentoring programs, and opportunities for retired and semi-retired employees to contribute through mentoring, consulting, or short-term assignments.⁸⁵ Others are retaining Boomers longer by offering them the kinds of career development programs usually granted to younger workers, such as job rotations and opportunities for project-based work, which satisfy Boomers’ thirst for knowledge and new experiences.⁸⁶

Generation Xers: Frustration in Mid-Career

Born between 1965 and 1980, Generation Xers grew up during troubled times. Events like Watergate in 1972, the Gulf War in 1990–91, and the recession of the 1990s, which put many of their parents out of work, eroded their trust in authority.⁸⁷ Forty percent of Xers saw their parents divorce. Many had working mothers, and fully expect that they or the women in their lives will pursue careers; growing up as “latchkey kids” also fostered their independence.⁸⁸

The “slacker” label affixed to Xers in the 1990s has proved unfounded. Xers are extremely hardworking. Thirty-one percent have “extreme jobs” requiring long hours and 24/7 availability, and 28% work 10 more hours a week than they

did three years ago.⁸⁹ They're also entrepreneurial: 39% of Xer men and 28% of Xer women aspire to own their own businesses.⁹⁰ Such key Internet players as Amazon, Wikipedia, Google, and YouTube were all founded by Xers.

Generation Xers, having seen how hard their Silent Generation and Boomer parents worked, are committed to work-life balance. Fifty-two percent describe themselves as family-centric rather than work-centric or equally committed to work and family,⁹¹ and many would choose better work-life balance options over higher salaries if given the choice,⁹² partly because many are currently raising young children.

Xers are in or reaching the prime years of their careers, and are poised to replace exiting Baby Boomers in leadership positions. However, many of them are unsatisfied with their opportunities for advancement, partly because Boomers are staying in the workforce so long. Forty-nine percent of Xers say they feel “stalled” in their careers,⁹³ and 37% plan to leave their current employers in the next three years.⁹⁴ Over a fifth were actively job hunting in the past year.⁹⁵

To retain Xers, companies may need to rethink their career development strategies. But not all Xers have the same needs. While many are clearly hungry for career advancement, others prefer flexible working arrangements to perks such as bonuses.⁹⁶ In fact, in keeping with their self-reliant spirit, Xers are more likely to pursue individualized careers than members of other cohorts.⁹⁷ Individualized career development options like mass career customization may be key to keeping this generation engaged.

Millennials: Hyperconnected and Ambitious

Millennials, born between 1981 and 1993, grew up in a world saturated with technology. Often called “digital natives,” Millennials excel at multitasking, and using communications technology is second nature to them. Three-quarters of them have a social media profile, versus 50% of Xers and only 30% of Boomers,⁹⁸ and at work, 41% of them prefer to communicate electronically rather than face-to-face or over the phone.⁹⁹ A hyperconnected generation, they are heavy users of mobile devices who see little distinction between work and home life.¹⁰⁰

Raised by highly involved parents who enriched their development by enrolling them in sports, classes, and other adult-organized activities, Millennials tend to value structure and frequent feedback on the job.¹⁰¹ Achievement-oriented (they were the first generation to receive trophies for participation) Millennials also expect to move quickly through the ranks at work. Fifty-two percent name fast career progression as the quality that most attracts them to an employer.¹⁰² “Millennials expect much faster advancement than the typical corporation expects to provide,” says Nancy Sullivan, senior vice president at Lee Hecht Harrison. “Many young people look at colleagues in their 50s and wonder why it took so long for them to get where they are.”

Survey: Boomer Job Seekers Pursue Skill Development, Gen Xers Want Higher Salaries

A 2013 survey of job seekers performed by national staffing firm Juststaff revealed some key differences in what Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are looking for in their next jobs.* Job security was both Boomers' and Xers' top priority, with 33% of Boomers and 35% of Xers naming it as the most important attribute they sought in a job. However, Boomers appear to value opportunities for skill development somewhat more than Xers, whereas Xers value salary slightly more. Thirty-one percent of Boomers and 25% of Xers named opportunities for experience and skill development as the criterion they most sought in a job, and 12% of Boomers and 18% of Xers named salary as their important criterion.

Likewise, Xer job seekers were more likely than Boomers to name salary and dislike for their current job as reasons why they were on the job market. Sixty-five percent of Boomers said they were seeking jobs because they were out of work, compared to only 47% of Xers. Twenty-two percent of Xers said they were looking for work to increase their salary, versus only 10% of Boomers, while 15% of Xers said they were seeking work because they disliked their current job, versus 6% of Boomers.

These findings may reflect Boomers' and Xers' different life stages. Many Xers may be looking to increase their income because they're raising children, or because they are in mid-career and believe they should earn more, while Boomers may be more willing to stay put as they're contemplating retirement. The results may also indicate broader generational differences regarding loyalty towards employers: Boomers may be less likely to leave a job unless they're forced out, whereas Xers may be more likely to leave an employer for what they consider a better deal.

* In Juststaff surveys, Baby Boomers are defined as those born between 1943 and 1960, Generation Xers as those born between 1961 and 1981, and Millennials as those born between 1982 and 2004.

“Younger workers need faster promotions, more rewards, and greater mobility than older ones,” says Megan Remark, vice president at not-for-profit HMO HealthPartners. “They tend to move around more than Baby Boomers: After they’ve learned all they can from an experience, they want to move on.” This desire for rapid advancement can sometimes cause friction between Millennials and their employers.

Millennials are family-oriented and idealistic. In one survey, 51% of Millennials said the most important thing in life is being a good parent, and 30% said having a successful marriage was most important. Only 15% named having a high-paying career as most important.¹⁰³ Millennials also view their careers as opportunities to give back to society, and are drawn to employers who share their values.¹⁰⁴

Millennials are already a crucial demographic in the workforce, and are one that will only grow in importance. Almost as large a generation as the Baby Boomers, they will comprise nearly half the workforce by 2014.¹⁰⁵ They may also be the most educated generation in history: A record 40% of 18-to-24-year olds were enrolled in college in 2008.¹⁰⁶

To recruit and retain the best Millennial talent, companies need to offer a mix of what this generation most desires: technology, flexibility, and opportunities for development. Millennials want to be able to use social media at work, and see little reason why they can't work remotely. Eighty-nine percent desire flexibility,¹⁰⁷ and two out of five would accept a lower-paying job offering flexibility and access to mobile technology and social media over a higher-paying one without these perks.¹⁰⁸ Accustomed to structure, Millennials also value clear-cut career paths,¹⁰⁹ and one-third name training and development as the benefit they most desire from an employer.¹¹⁰ "Millennials resemble the Silent Generation in that they respond well to structure," says Sullivan. "They don't push back against authority and they want to know what the boundaries are."

Looking Ahead: Generation Z

The leading edge of Generation Z, or those born between 1993 and 2010, has just begun to enter the workplace. This generation has never known a world without the Internet, and they're even more technology dependent than Millennials. They grew up with social media, mobile devices, and online gaming, and they consider traditional television and email old-fashioned, far preferring texting and video-on-demand.¹¹¹ Seventy-nine percent of 13- to 15-year-old girls own mobile devices, and 81% of Gen Z members prefer blended or online education to learning from books alone.¹¹²

The Gen Z cohort inhabits a post-9/11 world and has never known a time when the United States was not at war. Media coverage of terrorism, global warming, and the recession has many of them uncertain about the future.¹¹³ They are also one of the most sheltered and carefully parented generations in history, and, as a result, they are similar to the Silent generation in their respect for authority and desire for security.¹¹⁴

Though it's too early to say exactly how Generation Z will respond to the workplace, in certain ways they can be expected to behave like more intense versions of Millennials: constantly connected, highly tech savvy, and desirous of clearly defined career paths.

Diversity

Perhaps part of the appeal of *Mad Men* is the way it acts as a time capsule, giving us a window into a workforce very different from our own. It's rather remarkable to look back at how, during a time within the living memory of many people,

to stay home with their children. Fifty-three percent of fathers say they would consider staying home if their spouse made enough money to support them.¹⁷⁶ There are an estimated 147,000 stay-at-home dads in the United States, though this estimate is likely low because it does not include the many stay-at-home fathers who work part time.¹⁷⁷ The number of stay-at-home dads has increased threefold in Canada over the past 30 years.¹⁷⁸ Like working mothers, stay-at-home fathers find many creative ways to balance work and home lives, such as working part time or becoming self-employed. They typically re-enter the workforce once their children are old enough, and may alternate time off with their spouses. Some mothers, for instance, stay home for their babies' first year of life, after which they return to work while their husbands take care of the children.¹⁷⁹

Work-Life Balance: Not Only for Parents

Households composed of single people and couples without children have, like almost every other type of living arrangement, grown in number in recent years. The number of single-person households, in fact, has steadily increased for the past six decades, driven by delayed marriage, growing divorce rates, and the rising elderly population. Only 14% of Americans lived alone in 1960; in 2011, 28% did. And, as choosing not to have children becomes more widely accepted (41% of Americans say children are “very important” to a successful marriage, down from 65% in 1990¹⁸⁰), more couples are opting not to become parents. Forty-three percent of Gen X women and almost a third of Gen X men do not have children.¹⁸¹ Twenty percent of women ages 40 to 44 have never given birth, including 27% of women with graduate and professional degrees.¹⁸²

Though single and childless employees may have fewer family responsibilities and perhaps more time to devote to their careers, they, too, are voicing needs for greater work-life balance. Some are leaving high-pressure jobs for freelance or contract-based work precisely because they want greater control over their schedules and more time for volunteering, exercise, education, relaxing, socializing, hobbies and creative pursuits, and other aspects of their very full lives.¹⁸³ Millennial women without children, studies show, value work-life balance as much as Millennial moms,¹⁸⁴ and mothers and non-mothers both cite the need for balance as a key reason for switching jobs. Employers, however, may not be paying sufficient attention to single employees' need for flexibility: 62% of singles say they are treated differently on the job than workers with families, and 35% feel they are perceived as lacking responsibilities.¹⁸⁵

Putting It Together: VUCA

Technology, globalization, diversity, longevity, demographic factors, increased competition from around the world—all these forces combined have made doing business, as well as planning careers, more complicated than ever before. Today's

companies have to tackle vaster and thornier problems than they have previously faced. Consider what it takes, for example, to implement an international supply chain. A firm might need to take into account not only price and quality but such factors as:

- Language, culture, and religion (Who'll communicate with suppliers, and in what language? Can you expect delays around Ramadan or Chinese New Year?)
- Politics (What are the risks of hiring a supplier in a politically unstable company?)
- Weather, climate, and natural disasters (How will monsoon season affect your shipping routes?)
- Energy (Who'll absorb the cost if fuel prices increase?)
- Labor relations (What happens to your deliveries if the truckers' union goes on strike? Do your suppliers provide fair wages and working conditions?)
- Economics (What if one of the countries in your supply chain is hit by a recession? How much will your prices be affected if the dollar's weak against the euro or the RMB?)
- Public relations (If the press discovers one of your suppliers is subcontracting to sweatshops, how will your company respond?)

In an IBM survey of over 1,500 CEOs from 33 industries in more than 60 countries, 79% said they foresaw business becoming even more complex in the future.¹⁸⁶ In fact, the new business climate has become so unstable that writers have adopted an acronym from the Army War College to describe it: VUCA, which stands for *Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous*.¹⁸⁷

In a VUCA world, companies need to be lean, agile, and innovative to stay competitive. They have to streamline operations, continually evaluating legacy processes and eliminating or tweaking those that are no longer optimal. They must scan the environment for signs of incipient change, particular in regard to competitors and disruptive innovations. And they must innovate, quickly developing new products, services, and ways of relating to customers in response to shifting conditions.¹⁸⁸ CEOs in the IBM survey named creativity—not assertiveness, vision, or experience—as the most important characteristic for leaders to possess.¹⁸⁹

And the same is true of employees. To succeed in a VUCA world you'll need to be innovative, informed, alert to changes in your environment, and open to change. Companies seek employees who can help them stay afloat in an uncertain market: flexible creative thinkers who continually add to their skill sets and

knowledge bases. To increase your chances for success in a VUCA workplace, try the following tips:

- *Reject the status quo.* Expect change. In fact, embrace it. Technological innovations, new competitors, political or economic happenings abroad—all can change your industry, your company, or your role in an eyeblink. Stay informed about trends in your field so they don't catch you off guard. Evaluate the currency and portability of your skills. Be an early adopter. Plan for your next career or role while you're still in your current one.
- *Embrace lifelong learning and skill development.* As you can expect to have many jobs and even multiple careers over the course of your working lifetime, be prepared to continually learn new skills and information. You can do so formally, through earning degrees and certificates or taking classes, or informally, by attending seminars and conferences in your field, reading the latest books and articles about your industry, or taking advantage of the wealth of tutorials and how-to videos available on the Internet.
- *Cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset.* With so much competition, it's important that you learn to market yourself. Develop a personal brand. Determine what makes you unique and make it your main selling point.
- *Be financially prudent.* In an age of increased longevity, you'll likely need to train for a second career, and, when you do retire, it'll probably be for a longer period of time. You'll need money put away for all these possibilities. Having a little extra in the bank can also give you added peace of mind in case you want to make a career transition, or if a life change such as the birth of a child or the illness of a family member forces you into one.
- *Be a hybrid worker.* As technology permeates more and more fields, and as scientific and technical companies become more consumer-oriented, jobs have come to require a blend of both hard and soft skills. If you work in a people-oriented industry, become conversant with key technologies; if you're in a technical field, you can make yourself a more valuable employee by developing your communication and collaborative skills.
- *Become T-shaped.* The problems faced by today's companies are so complex they must be addressed by experts in multiple disciplines. Many firms now expect employees to break out of their silos and function well on interdisciplinary teams. *T-shaped* workers have deep knowledge of one subject (the vertical bar of the "T") and shallower knowledge of a broad variety of subjects (the horizontal bar of the "T"). To become a T-shaped individual, cultivate knowledge from fields outside your own that pertain

to your job. If you're a marketing professional at a pharmaceutical firm, for example, learn something about medicine, chemistry, public health, or health insurance. You don't have to be an expert: The key is to be able to speak the same "language" as colleagues in other disciplines. Learn how people in those disciplines think, communicate, generate new ideas, and test hypotheses, what their main concerns and goals are, and what trends are current in their field.¹⁹⁰

- *Expect to have a borderless career.* Today's employees should view themselves as competing against workers all over the world. But it's also likely that they'll be working with people from other countries and even taking on international assignments. McKinsey predicts that, by 2020, global mobility will become "the new normal" as companies develop talent abroad and relocate workers.¹⁹¹ To prepare for such global careers, you should cultivate such competencies as a global mindset, cultural intelligence, strategic thinking, and adaptability.¹⁹² Keep yourself well-informed about global politics, world affairs, and cultural differences.¹⁹³ Consider taking expatriate assignments, which are "amazing for development," suggests Elizabeth,* who was formerly an executive working in business development for a Silicon Valley-based coaching firm. Katherine Markgraf, assistant director of executive recruiting—tax at Ernst & Young, says her company offers one-year rotations to other countries. "Our employees return with many ideas we can implement in the US market," she says.

Notes

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* Name changed at the interviewee's request.

From Ladder to Labyrinth

New Ways of Working and the Rise of the Do-It-Yourself Career

Walter was born in 1920. He received an engineering degree at age 22 and took a job with a textile firm in New England. Walter's talent was quickly recognized, and he was soon promoted to a management position. He spent the next 43 years with the same company, moving up the ranks. His job required him to move several times over the course of his career, and he spent much of his time on the road inspecting the company's mills, but, as his wife was a full-time homemaker, this did not present a hardship. When Walter retired at age 65, he had attained the rank of senior vice president.

Walter's daughter, Debbie, was born in 1954. She earned a nursing degree from a hospital-based diploma program, and went to work as a staff nurse for that same hospital. After she gained more experience, she was promoted to nurse manager. In the early 1990s, Debbie noticed that more of her younger colleagues had bachelor's degrees, and how their skills and knowledge helped them on the job. She enrolled in night school, earned a BSN, and found it so intellectually stimulating that she continued on for her master's degree. This degree enabled her to take a less physically demanding, but higher-paying, job as a case manager in her 50s. Debbie doesn't want to retire for at least 10 more years, but, when she does, she plans to volunteer for a nonprofit patient advocacy organization.

Debbie's daughter, Carly, was born in 1979. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism and became a staff reporter for a local newspaper. At that job, she discovered an interest in design and layout, earned a certificate in graphic design

online, and was asked to design several special sections of the newspaper. In the early 2000s, the growth of the Internet took a heavy toll on the print news industry, and Carly lost her job when her paper went out of business. Her design portfolio, however, helped her to land a position with a small marketing and communications firm. After working there for a few years and building up a base of clients, Carly decided she wanted more flexibility over her time and the types of projects she worked on, and went into business for herself as an independent contractor. Her clients are scattered all across the country, and, as she mainly works online, she's never met most of them face-to-face. In her spare time, Carly is teaching herself web design as a way of adding value to her business.

The Do-It-Yourself Career Path

As these vignettes illustrate, the way we conceive of the career path has changed dramatically over the past few decades. The era of the gold watch—if it ever really existed to begin with¹—is long over. Now, out of desire and necessity, more and more people are crafting customized careers, moving with increasing fluidity between corporate jobs, stints with small companies or nonprofits, self-employment, business ownership, part-time work, and time spent out of the workforce altogether. No longer do they feel constrained to remain within one industry for life: They may retrain or return to school, repackaging some of their skills and experiences and acquiring others, in preparation for work in affiliated or entirely new fields. Their career moves are dictated (for the most part) not by their employers but by their needs, values, and life circumstances. They may seek a new job or type of work, or ramp their workload and salary expectations up or down, due to having a child, needing to care for an elderly family member, pursuing an opportunity, wanting to learn a new skill or content area, or simply out of desire for change.

In this section, we'll discuss the shifts in priorities that brought about this fundamental alteration in the concept of the career path; the new trajectories careers now follow; the many options workers have for customizing their careers, both inside and outside the corporation; changes in the structure and hierarchy of the corporate workplace; and the skills and characteristics you'll need to successfully forge your own do-it-yourself career path.

Changing Priorities

The term “midlife crisis” has been part of the American lexicon since 1965.² As the stereotype goes, a midlife crisis occurs when an ambitious person reaches his (or sometimes her) forties, realizes that he's spent his entire adult life in pursuit of money and power, and undergoes a transformation. Perhaps he tries to recapture his lost youth by buying a fancy sports car, perhaps he becomes more spiritual

Changing Trajectories

An in-house editor for a small publishing firm becomes a contractor after she has a baby, giving her greater control over the hours she works. An advertising executive at a Fortune 500 company leaves to found her own niche marketing firm. An engineer returns to traditional corporate employment after a stint as an entrepreneur. A retiring vice president of sales retrains for an encore career as fundraising director at a nonprofit which works to protect endangered species, a cause he's long admired. A recent college graduate never works nine-to-five at all but jumps straight into a career as a freelance graphic designer.

As career moves like these become the norm, the way we conceive of the career path changes. Once, the dominant metaphors for the career path were the ladder and the bell curve. The ladder image, with its connotations of continuous upward movement, implied that employees were motivated primarily by a desire for advancement. The metaphor of the bell curve likewise suggested that the ideal employee's career would follow a predictable arc: from entry-level work in his 20s, to middle management in his 30s, to peak power and salary in his 50s, to a slow stepping back from responsibility until retirement in his 60s.²³ Neither the ladder nor the bell curve allows for career breaks, reversals, or second (or third) careers.

But, as we've seen, many individuals' careers do contain these elements. Thus, new metaphors have been developed to describe the career path, such as the lattice, the zigzag, and the labyrinth. Careers today are so unpredictable and individualized that some experts believe we should abandon spatial imagery altogether, and instead depict careers as boundaryless, protean, or kaleidoscopic. Though difficult to map, these new types of careers have certain things in common. They're driven by workers' values, needs, and desires rather than by companies' agendas. And the individuals who pursue them don't derive their identities from the firms they work for but from their skills, experiences, and personal characteristics.²⁴ They're not Apple IT specialists but IT specialists who happen to work for Apple—for now.

Boundaryless careers also change as workers' life circumstances change, helping weave work and home life into a more seamless whole. In fact, women, who shoulder the biological burden of pregnancy and traditionally have been expected to be the primary caretakers of children, have pioneered the movement towards the boundaryless career. Forty-one percent of women, versus only 21% of men, have made changes in their career for family reasons, and 29% of women change jobs or careers to achieve greater work-family balance, compared with 14% of men.²⁵ Fifty-eight percent of highly qualified women describe their careers as nonlinear,²⁶ and 45% of women change jobs, start businesses, or consider doing so at midlife.²⁷ Men, in contrast, are less likely to have interrupted careers, work part time, or change industries than women.²⁸ Twenty-six percent of men but only 18% of women say their careers both were linear and took place within the same industry.²⁹

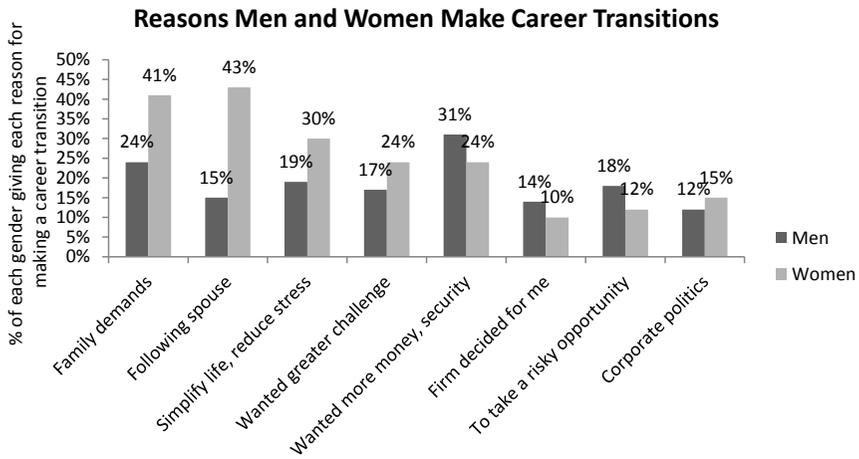


Figure 2.1. Source: Lisa A. Mainiero and Sherry E. Sullivan, *The Opt-Out Revolt: Why People Are Leaving Companies to Create Kaleidoscope Careers* (Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black, 2006), 310.

However, though rearing children is a primary reason women seek alternatives to traditional jobs, it's far from the only one (see Figure 2.1). In fact, just 35% of women who leave the workforce name childcare as their *sole* reason for doing so.³⁰ Women also step out of the workforce due to downsizing, medical crises, lack of challenging work, and to pursue education, among myriad other reasons;³¹ their motivations for career transitions include travel, reducing stress, money, security, and new opportunities.³²

Lisa Mainiero and Sherry Sullivan, authors of *The Opt-Out Revolt: Why People Are Leaving Companies to Create Kaleidoscope Careers*, observe that the trajectories of today's careers are often linked to gender. Different values, they posit, become primary at different points in many women's lives. Women tend to be most strongly motivated by the value of *challenge* in early career, when they seek advancement and are more willing to put their careers first. If they choose to become mothers, *balance* becomes their main driver as they seek work that will allow them flexibility for raising their children. *Authenticity* drives them after their children are older or leave home, when they have renewed energy for pursuing fulfilling work.³³

Men, Mainiero and Sullivan say, have typically followed a different pattern, being driven by challenge in early career but seeking authenticity at mid-career, a time when they often reassess their values. Men tend to be driven by balance in late career, when they are contemplating retirement and view family as more of a priority. However, generational differences may be altering this pattern. Generation X and Millennial men, who tend to be more interested in hands-on fatherhood, have career patterns more similar to women.³⁴

Changing Options

Workers now have more options than ever for putting together these do-it-yourself careers. No longer is working for a large corporation considered the surest route to success. Self-employed individuals may freelance, start businesses, or operate franchises, while employees of progressive companies have great flexibility in where and when they work and how much responsibility they want to shoulder, and those working for small- and medium-sized companies often find they have more opportunities for innovation. Public sector jobs often offer workers greater security and better benefits packages than large companies can, and jobs in the nonprofit sector enable them to give back to their communities, while providing ample room for advancement. Below, we take a closer look at many of these exciting options.

Beyond the Corporation

Large companies—those with revenues over \$1 billion—are providing more flexibility and career path options all the time, and are empowering their workers through technology. But millions of people have recently chosen to pursue flexibility, freedom, and control over their work outside the boundaries of traditional employment by going to work for themselves. The numbers of both freelancers and entrepreneurs have risen dramatically over the past few years, largely because technology has lowered the bar for entry into self-employment. Freelancers can post portfolios online and instantly connect with potential employers all over the world, and small business owners can sell goods and services to almost anyone with an Internet connection. Economic and generational changes have also contributed to the self-employment boom. Many people who were laid off or had a hard time finding jobs during the recession turned to independent work to support themselves, and discovered they were more satisfied working on their own than for large companies. Value-driven and independent Generation Xers and tech-savvy Millennials also tend to find self-employment appealing, as do Boomers contemplating encore careers. All these factors have converged to make freelancing and entrepreneurship increasingly popular alternatives to traditional employment.

Freelancing

LiveOps's 20,000 employees are all contractors who work from home on a part-time, as needed basis.³⁵ Sites like oDesk and Elance bring together millions of independent contractors with the companies that want to hire them. The “gig economy” is taking off, and it's poised to experience even more rapid growth in the near future. Between 1995 and 2005, the number of self-employed people increased 37%, to almost nine million.³⁶ Now an estimated 12 million people freelance, and two million more are expected to join the contingent workforce by 2015.³⁷

These independent workers run the gamut from creative types like graphic designers, writers, and photographers to professionals such as engineers, consultants, and IT specialists to temporary clerical or factory workers. Many are highly skilled. Forty-four percent hold bachelor's degrees, and 20% have master's degrees.³⁸ Their motivations for choosing self-employment vary widely. Some 14% to 17% turned to freelancing after being laid off or downsized, often during the recent recession.³⁹

But, for increasing numbers of people, freelancing is a deliberately chosen career strategy: a valid alternative to, and not a substitute for, traditional employment. Many individuals turn to freelancing after becoming disenchanted with corporate life, or because they view it as an avenue to greater freedom and control over their work. In one national survey, 28% of freelancers named wanting a more flexible schedule as the main reason they became self-employed, while 23% said they did so to pursue a passion.⁴⁰ Most of those who had worked full time prior to going independent were satisfied with their decision. Ninety percent said they were happier than they had been as employees, 46% said they had more free time, and 55% said they'd never consider returning to traditional employment.⁴¹

Technology, more than anything, has made freelancing a viable career path. In the past, freelancers had to rely on word of mouth and distributing business cards and fliers to find jobs.⁴² Now, they can easily create websites advertising their work, post professional multimedia portfolios online, use social media to network and promote themselves, search job boards or sites like Elance for gigs, and hire online services to handle their paperwork. The Internet has expanded their reach from their local area to the globe.

More work, too, is now available for freelancers, as companies have discovered that using contractors enables them to hire for just the skills they need, when they need them.⁴³ They may opt to bring in a marketing specialist, for example, to help them with a rebranding effort, or an expert in supply chain management to consult on a new product line. Hiring contractors spares organizations the expense and complexity of taking on full-time employees, making them more agile. In the future, more organizations will likely have "blended workforces" composed of both permanent and contingent workers.⁴⁴ Fifty-eight percent of firms plan to use more temporary workers over the next five years,⁴⁵ and 40% say they can find better talent online than they can locally.⁴⁶ Using contractors can be especially advantageous for small and medium-sized businesses, 85% of which report that hiring online gives them a competitive edge.⁴⁷

Freelance work is not without its drawbacks. Independent contractors must pay for their own health insurance and manage their own retirement savings, and they have fewer legal protections against problems such as wage theft.⁴⁸ Some freelancers feel less financially secure than they did as full-time employees, with 21% citing the "feast or famine" nature of contingent work as their biggest challenge.⁴⁹

Others, though, note that having a diverse portfolio of clients protects them from the contingencies of the business world, as they aren't tied to the fortunes of one company.⁵⁰ Freelancers also have to develop entrepreneurial skills to be successful: They must be able to promote themselves, stay attuned to the market and anticipate its needs, maintain strong networks, create compelling personal brands, and carefully manage their professional reputations.

Entrepreneurship

As with freelancing, entrepreneurship has become more popular as an alternative to traditional employment in recent years. And it's no wonder why. Technology has made it easier than ever to start a business. Millions of people have set up shop on eBay, Etsy, and Amazon, or by simply starting a website and signing up for online financial transfer services like PayPal. Social networking and cost-efficient marketing tools like Google AdWords allow small business owners to reach broad, even worldwide, audiences; software, some of it free, enables them to handle everything from bookkeeping to invoicing to inventory control; and software-as-a-service frees them from heavy up-front infrastructure costs. Entrepreneurs can even use crowdfunding sites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo to seek capital.

As with freelancing, individuals cite varied reasons for going into business for themselves. Some have had a lifelong dream to own a business, while others feel that typical jobs didn't give them enough freedom or control over their schedules. Others turn to business ownership after being laid off or downsized. A good many entrepreneurs start out in corporate jobs, but become dissatisfied with traditional employment, want greater independence, or simply hatch an idea for a product or service they wanted to sell. Making the jump from traditional employment to entrepreneurship can be fruitful. According to one survey, 87% of successful entrepreneurs started their companies in areas where they already had business experience.⁵¹

Though interest in business ownership waned during the recent recession, it's making a comeback as the economy recovers. In 2011, 12% of working-age adults were starting or running a business, 60% more than did so in 2010. Nearly 40% of these business owners said they planned to hire five or more employees over the next five years.⁵² Plus, if generational trends hold, the country may soon be seeing a surge in entrepreneurship. Between 1999 and 2009, Baby Boomers had the highest rate of business creation of any age group, starting firms at a rate one-third faster than younger people. Millennials, too, are avidly interested in entrepreneurships. They launched 160,000 startups a month in 2011,⁵³ and 54% of them say they have started or are considering starting a business.⁵⁴ Younger Americans' enthusiasm for business creation is reflected in the growing number of college programs on the subject. Entrepreneurship majors and minors were

HR:

“Companies are breaking down their HR departments by function: for example, having one HR division oversee sales and finance and a different one oversee IT. Firms are looking to hire specialists such as directors of benefits and compensation, training and development, or diversity.” —Lazarus

Marketing:

“Companies are looking for people with experience in social media marketing and digital commerce. They’re not as interested in traditional marketing experience any more.” —Brent

Nursing:

“Highly specialized nurses are in demand, but they tend to be so well-paid that they’re not willing to change employers. There’s also increased demand for basic home health RNs. New nurses now have more job options outside the hospital setting.” —Smith

Finance:

“Regardless of your role, employers expect you to have a bachelor’s degree in accounting or finance, excellent communication skills, interpersonal skills, advanced Microsoft Excel skills, and a flexible attitude.” —Maultsby

“There’s great demand for people who understand the US government’s compliance regulations or international compliance regulations.” —Brent

“Companies are placing a lot of emphasis on lean principles and Six Sigma.” —Lazarus

“In the tax arena, companies are looking for CPAs and people who can move into operations.” —Lazarus

IT Sales:

“Companies want people who have worked for well-known companies, but people with jobs at brand name firms tend to not want to leave.” —Redman

and they don’t want to repeat that experience,” says Greenberg. “They now consider lifestyle and corporate culture when deciding whether to accept a job offer.”

Best Practices for Job Seekers

Recruiters talk to job seekers day in, day out. From setting career goals to perfecting your resume, from using technology to networking, they know what works and what doesn’t. Here, they share some of their best practices for finding a job that’s right for you.

Every job search starts with goals, says Jim Stroud, director of sourcing and social strategy at Bernard Hodes Group and author of *Resume Forensics: How to Find Free Resumes and Passive Candidates on Google*: “Figure out who you want

Where the Jobs Are

Recruiters expect hiring to remain brisk in these fields:

- STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), especially information technology and biotechnology
- Healthcare
- Nursing
- Physical and occupational therapy
- Lab technicians
- Biotechnology
- Sales
- Technical marketing and sales
- Business development
- Corporate tax
- Quality assurance

Recruiters name these positions as their hardest to fill:

- Global vice presidents
- Specialized engineers, especially chemical, metallurgical, and oil and gas
- Specialized nurses, especially those specializing in pediatric and neonatal intensive care, cardiovascular nursing, and catheterization lab nursing
- Physical and occupational therapists
- People willing to take jobs in rural or less desirable locations
- Women for key roles in finance
- Mobile, especially Android, and Java developers
- Software architecture roles
- Analysts, especially senior financial analysts

to be when you grow up. There is no way you can go from point A to point B without a reference point.”

If you don't have a dream vocation in mind, Stroud suggests doing some research and determining which jobs will be hot in the future. “Consider 3-D printing, for example, which is something which could have a profound effect on the global economy,” he says. “If people start printing clothes with a 3-D printer, many clothing retailers and manufacturers could go out of business.” But, he points out, other jobs would be created designing and repairing 3-D printers and designing items for others to print. The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational

Outlook, Stroud says, is a helpful resource for determining how popular certain jobs will be over the next decade.

Finding the right role models can be helpful, Stroud says. “Search LinkedIn for people who are doing what you’d like to be doing, and study everything they did prior to arriving where they are now,” he suggests. “Also, consider reaching out to them and asking for their mentorship.”

Having the right attitude is important, say recruiters, as is being flexible. Our recruiters report there are many more job openings in less prominent areas. “There’s great demand for talent from small or medium-sized firms in small towns and rural areas,” says Perkins. “If you’re flexible about your title, salary, and location many more doors will open for you,” says Angelopoulos.

It’s vital to have a strong online presence and market yourself well, recruiters say. “Recruiters always look for the best candidates, but ‘best’ is relative,” Stroud advises. “You may be more qualified than the next guy, but if you don’t market yourself better than your competitors do, how will anyone know?”

“If you want to be found, leave traces online,” says Vanessa,* a technical recruiter for a well-known technology firm. “My company looks for candidates on such sites as LinkedIn, Github, Talentbin, Meetup, Facebook, Google Plus, and alumni websites.” Even Twitter can be a search tool, says Greenberg, who observes that some recruiters tweet the skill sets they’re looking for.

LinkedIn is “the king of social media, as far as recruiting goes,” says Greenberg. “Complete your LinkedIn profile,” he suggests. “Join LinkedIn groups related to your industry or your area of expertise.”

“Engineering and IT candidates are inundated with offers on LinkedIn,” says Perkins. “Some even state on their profile, ‘Please don’t contact me. I’m not looking for a job.’”

Don’t let the casual nature of electronic communications affect your attention to detail, cautions Elsa Meyer, a talent acquisition manager at Atlas MedStaff. “Candidates sometimes forget that anyone can be a gateway to their next employer,” she says. “When emailing or texting recruiters, always show a high level of professionalism. For example, remember to add salutations.”

Having a sterling resume, recruiters agree, is essential. “Recruiters receive hundreds of resumes for each position, so make sure yours stands out,” says Kyle Misiak, a senior recruiter specializing in engineering, manufacturing, operations, quality, and technical sales at CSI Staffing. “Recruiters spend as little as 10 seconds scanning a resume,” says Francone. “If I don’t see an exact match for the job criteria I’m looking for I move on.”

“Your resume should list your accomplishments, not your tasks,” says Brent. “Use metrics, such as dollar amounts or percentages, to express your results. Give tangible examples of how you improved the companies you worked for.”

* Name has been changed at the interviewee’s request.

“Your resume has to be spectacular, with solid skills and no gaps,” says Francone. “Make sure it includes the top keywords and SEO search terms.” One way to find keywords, says Stroud, is by using LinkedIn’s Skills page to determine what the popular buzzwords are in your industry. “Add these keywords to your LinkedIn profile and resume if you’re honestly able to do so,” says Stroud. “This can help employers and people in your field find you and connect with you.”

“Don’t send out a one-size-fits-all resume,” advises Vanessa. “Take the time to highlight the skill sets that pertain to the job you’re applying to.”

Heed the classic advice to network, recruiters say, as that’s a major way people find jobs. They suggest joining groups related to your industry, attending networking events, and staying in touch with your contacts. “Make sure that you’re also a good contact,” says Angelopoulos. “Help bring other people together.”

“Contribute to forums such as LinkedIn groups focused on your industry, and leave comments on industry blogs,” says Stroud. “That way, you’ll leave a trail for recruiters to follow when they Google your name.” Just as having negative information linked to your name can limit your opportunities, as Stroud points out, “positive and professional commentary reflects well on you.”

“Use your entire social network—every touch point, no matter how unlikely,” says Greenberg. “Talk to cashiers. Talk to anyone. You never know who’ll have a connection to a job.”

Before an interview, do your homework, says Francone: “Research the firm and reach out to others in the company who may know the hiring manager.”

But don’t let a good interview make you overconfident, says Redman. “Even if an interview goes really well, remember that the position could still be put on hold or filled by an internal candidate,” she says. “Keep going to interviews until you have an offer in hand.”

Learn from Successful Job Hunters

To determine what job hunting practices are most and least effective today, in the spring of 2013 recruiting firm Juststaff performed a survey of 48 people who had found jobs in the past year. The results? Classic job-seeking strategies may still be the best.

The fastest path to a new job, according to the survey, is to:

- Look for a job in the same or similar industry as your previous employer.
- Look for a job in the same or similar functional area as your previous job.
- Remain active while job hunting: freelance, volunteer, or develop skills.
- Network: join industry groups, use social media, or seek job leads from people already in your network.

A Parting Word

The new world of do-it-yourself careers brings both promise and peril. Many people long for the old days when they could expect to work for the same company, or at least in the same industry, for an extended amount of time. And, frankly, we don't blame them. Long jobs gave workers a sense of security, stability, community, and identity along with the tangible advantages of a salary, benefits, and a retirement plan they could count on. And having to train for a new job or career, particularly when you had anticipated staying in your old one, can be scary and a drain on your time, energy, and finances.

But we encourage you to also see the positive side of the new career landscape. For instance, you don't have to feel locked into the same career path you chose when you were in your twenties. Though your finances and family situation will always have a great deal to do with where you work and for whom, you still have considerable freedom to change your employer and working conditions as your life circumstances change. Thanks to the Internet, you have the ability to find or create working arrangements that suit you, you're better able to network, and you're more informed about employers, industries, and skill requirements. You can even train for little to no cost online. And learning new skills and knowledge, while challenging, is also invigorating.

Those of you who are more fond of novelty and taking risks likely welcome the prospect of reinventing your career every decade or so. But embracing an entrepreneurial mindset towards your career is helpful even if you prefer stability:

Staying current with skill requirements and keeping abreast of new technologies can help you remain with the same employer or in the same industry if that's your goal.

So, while today's fast-paced, technology-driven career landscape can seem intimidating, it's also ripe with opportunities to customize the career that's right for you. We hope the advice we've provided in this book will help you to navigate this landscape and remain employed for life.

Summary of Key Points

- *Societal shifts have changed work forever.* Family patterns are dramatically different than they were a few decades ago. More women are in the workforce and more men are interested in work-life balance. Employers who want to retain the best talent will need to innovate new career development structures that make sense for workers with family obligations. The US workforce has also become much more diverse in terms of ethnicity, country of origin, and generation, meaning employees will need to develop cultural competence, be open to diverse viewpoints, and hone the social skills that will help them build teams with diverse colleagues.
- *Extended longevity has increased the need for career planning.* To stay employable for a career that could last 50 years, workers need to continually refresh their skills and keep abreast of trends in their industries. They must also plan their finances with care to ensure they have enough savings to keep them afloat through lengthy retirements.
- *Keeping up with technology is critical.* Technology both creates and destroys jobs, and innovations continually disrupt entire industries. Today's employees need to stay current with technologies that are potential game-changers for their fields, and learn to use the most important technological tools in their industries.
- *The face of corporate career development is changing.* According to HR professionals, companies offer fewer structured career tracks and perform less training than they once did. But companies are now more open to nontraditional career tracks that allow for lateral moves and career breaks. They are also developing non-management career tracks for specialists and using social media for learning and development. Companies should strive to make their development processes transparent, HR experts say, and do more to integrate managers into career development.
- *HR professionals recommend the following best practices for individual career development:* taking initiative and not letting your career just happen; using all the resources your firm has to offer; sharing your career plan with your superiors; and expanding your network.

- *Recruiters suggest the following best practices for individual career development:* marketing yourself so you stand out against a sea of other candidates; having an impeccable resume that lists concrete accomplishments; and networking, especially by using LinkedIn.
- *To work successfully with recruiters,* know what you want in terms of salary, benefits, and responsibility; learn about the companies they suggest you work for; be professional when applying for jobs; and allow them to negotiate on your behalf. Know that recruiters' time is precious and trust that they will get back to you if they've found a job opening you fit. When recruiters read resumes, they look for clear titles, quantifiable results, and whether you've held jobs for too brief or too long a time.
- *To thrive in a VUCA job market, workers will need planning, foresight, and constant reskilling.* Like the business world itself, the world of careers has become *volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous*. To stay employable workers will need to stay agile, plan well, welcome change, research trends, and continually refresh their skills and knowledge.
- *Today is the right time to build a career that fulfills all aspects of your life.* Workers today have more choices than ever before: They can freelance, start companies, own franchises, take flexible working arrangements, work for large corporations or small or medium-sized businesses, or take jobs in the public or nonprofit sectors. All these options give employees great freedom to design careers that bring their work, family, social, financial, physical, and intellectual lives into balance. Through staying actively engaged in career planning, they can increase their chances of remaining happily employed for life.