

## Refirement eZine November 2008

"18 till I die" is a mantra that many Boomers quote. Over the past year I have had many events, talked to many 50+ men and women and often wondered why so few feel that I am addressing issues and challenges that may affect them. I am grateful for the article this month written by my good friend Caroline Tointon. Many of this generation are in complete denial and will relate to what she has written.

The financial crisis over the past few weeks has caused much discussion and fear. Many of us have all of our hope in our investments. Some of the conversations I have had have been with people who felt they could retire and now wonder if they ever will be able to do so. Would it not be better to change your paradigm and see this next life stage as a new adventure where there will be seasons of work and play? This type of journey will take some adjustments and conversations but can open up a whole new world. In every crisis there is also opportunity. Make the right choices for your future. The journey will be an adventure.

This past week, we managed an event for one of the major companies in South Africa. The group that attended was the "Over 50" senior executives who are starting to look at what life beyond the office may look like. Pete Laburn shared PrimeTime a great one hour presentation to help the boomer generation understand why the world has changed and to highlight the challenges and opportunities that await. Rob Rusconi shared a broad outline of the Retirement Landscape of South Africa and what the challenges are for us as a nation as our population ages. These two speakers certainly bring clarity and hope and are a MUST for any EXCO group wanting to ensure that they have these strategies on the agenda for the future. Please feel free to chat to me if you would like to book them for 2009. We will manage an open conference with this group in February 2009 as well for those that missed the event last year.

I have been asked to help find some candidates for a focus group. We are looking at the issues of women re-entering the workplace after a long gap. This could be after being at home with your children or brought about through death of a spouse or divorce.

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The focus group will take place in Johannesburg on Friday 21 st November from 14h00 till 17h00. Please email me if you are keen to attend or know anyone who may fit this profile.

Please feel free to send this newsletter on to your Boomer friends. I value your input and any comments you may like to send me as I start to plan what this platform needs to offer in 2009. Enjoy the last two months of the year as we enter the silly season.

*Lynda Smith*

## Walking backwards towards the future

What a day. Deadlines, all consuming. Sapping life's energy, relentlessly. Slumped in front of my faithful laptop, spine collapsed into the worn leather chair, another mug of coffee satisfying the need for a sugar spike.

Glancing at the "inbox" I'm reminded of the speed of communication. I'd emptied it only yesterday, dealing with what needed to be dealt with, deleting the rest. Now it was full again, another hundred or so messages. Delete. Don't need that, delete. What's this one? No, delete. It taps on the screen to get my attention. The Refirement Network "don't Retire ... Refire." What *is* this? I know it's from my wonderful colleague Lynda, but why does she send to *me*? Delete.

There are some things that need to be assessed and addressed, and other things that are, well, just packed away. It had been a long day, it was 2am, and all I could think about was the soft pillows and warm duvet, and drifting off into dreamland.

Sleep evaded me. I don't want those emails. Why do I have to keep reading about Baby Boomers, and being 50 or 60 or beyond, or worse, retiring? I'm not anywhere *close* to retiring, and why on earth would I want to give all my knowledge away. *It's mine*. I worked hard for it.

I felt anger, fear, and an overwhelming sense of panic. "I don't want to talk about it, *OK?*" resonates around my head.

There's an old saying, "living your life through rose coloured spectacles." It's a place of denial, where life is seen as hassle-free, sweet and rosy. But not reality.

Deep in the night, I dared ask the question of me: Where is my reality now?

*"Facing backwards in denial of what is."*

Facing backwards while walking towards the future gives a kind of warped sense of comfort. It reflects back an adventurous spirit, youthful looks, a toned and energetic body, an endless time zone to make moves in career, a "never say die" approach. So much energy to dance, everywhere, to gallop across vast plains on wild horses, to swim with dolphins, to climb giant hills and jump and splash in puddles on the road. Keep looking back, then there's nothing to fear ahead.

*"It's funny how better the future looks when you walk backwards into it. Or so I thought. Stepping out of denial was the hardest step to take."*

Facing forwards was the scariest reality. Oh, in your twenties and thirties, it's easy. But not now. It's all that stuff you hear. Like the "bright young things", those young and feisty up-and-coming career movers and shakers who are ready to take over the office and squeeze you out. The depressing conversations around so what are *you* going to do when you retire? (*Me? When?* No!). Even worse, picturing groups of stagnant immobile old people with vacant expressions - their knowledge and wisdom sucked out of them, left as a hollow body with stooped shoulders and a walking frame.

STOP! Such flashes of irrational thought had kept me in denial. These were morbid, totally inaccurate pictures of my future world. I was not in reality. It was time to face my worst fears (old age, dependency, immobility). Assess them and address them. Take ownership. Become empowered. It may take time, but it can be done.

I checked the recycle bin and looked at the emails, late into that night. I found words such as "alive with possibility", "stretching to my full potential", "a time to look for ways to make a difference", "encore career", "prime time." And so it was: this age, this time, is good. I felt a spark of excitement. Joyous feelings. An uplifted spirit.

Now, I walk confidently towards the future with arms outstretched embracing the beginning of a new, lively, energetic adventurous journey!



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