



Retirement Advice: Don't Even Think About It!

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

If you can watch more than 30 minutes of television without hearing the word "retirement," you are better than I. (Actually, if you can watch more than 30 minutes of TV at any time, you are different from me.) The number of advertisements for people willing to charge you a fee for doing what you could be doing for yourself is amazing. You can even sell your home without really selling it (called a reverse mortgage), so you can "enjoy your retirement - and the best part is you still own your home." If you believe that line, give me a call; I have a bridge I want to sell you. Actually, if you look closely, there is an asterisk that leads to about two inches of fine print that is so small nobody can read it on the screen, and they only show it for a second.

The other phony line is where they want to sell you death insurance. I call it that because that is what you are insuring. "You cannot be turned down, your benefits will never go down, and your rate will never go up due to age." (Of course your rate probably will go up because the insurance company is going broke, but why should they tell you that when they are trying to sell you the death insurance?) It is total hogwash.

Another frustration is "Long Term Care Insurance." I purchased policies for myself and my wife over 15 years ago because our financial advisor told us that "You want to get in when you are young and the rates are low because you can lock in that rate for life."

So, after paying the premium for over 15 years, last year they jacked up my rate by something like 13%. What? I was told the rates would never go up! I just received the bill for this year, and my rate has now been **doubled**. Whoops, I call this "Long Term Screw Insurance" because I am already invested and cannot get out of it without sacrificing what I have already put in. Basically they are saying "Tough luck you banana. We promised something we cannot deliver so you pay, or you do have the option to drop your coverage." Time to call a lawyer.

When I left my day job at the large company where I had worked for 31 years, I was not sure what I wanted to do with myself, except I was sure "retirement" was not going to be

it. The statistics for how long people live after officially retiring are pretty scary, but I think there are a lot of old wives tales in the figures you hear.

The last time I Googled the word "retirement," there were over 96 million hits, and the majority of them were for groups telling us how not to outlive our money in retirement or trying to convince us to spend some of our money with them so our retirement will be happier. I think the way to live a longer life is to stay alive, and I firmly believe retirement (if it means just relaxing all day) takes us one giant step toward death.

I am not advocating that everybody should work at a full time job until the day they die. Rather, I am suggesting that it is the passion for doing whatever you like in life that is the stuff of living. Some people like to travel, or paint, or play golf. Some people like to build homes for Habitat for Humanity. Whatever your passion is, that is what should consume your time and energy. If your passion is to just do nothing but "retire," meaning do nothing useful, then you are most likely taking a shortcut to the grave.

Some people really do enjoy their working environment and cannot wait to get to work every day. Many organizations know how to treat people well and value their contributions. People who work there are the lucky ones.

For others, work is something that is to be endured. It is no fun having to turn off the alarm clock every day and drag out of bed so you can trade your time for the dollars needed to survive. You drag into the workplace after surviving the daily "parking lot" on the freeway, and you endure the clueless morons who run the place and your juvenile coworkers for eight hours, but not a minute more. That existence is for the young and desperate, and those people are even better off than the throngs of people who would like to work but cannot find a job.

Instead, I think the ideal life is to wake up when your body wants, full of energy knowing that this day you get to do whatever you wish in life, and that wish is to do something useful. To wake up with nothing constructive to do rings as hollow to me as an empty silo.

I hope never to retire. I will keep working at my craft as long as my body holds out and as long as someone will benefit from my effort. If I make some money as I help others, that is fine, but that is not my purpose for living and working.

When people fixate on the joys of relaxing in retirement, they might as well be wishing their lives away. The promise is false; I like the bumper sticker: "Golden Years My Ass."

I think the world would be so much better if we all replaced the notion of retirement with the concept of "my next passion in life." Find out how to contribute in a way that makes you feel fulfilled. Pour yourself into activities that keep you young instead of encourage

you to get old before your time. Why focus on marching toward the grave when the alternative is to march constantly toward greater satisfaction in life.

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