

How to make the end a grand entrance

Margaret Beaton 28 February 2012

Every day many partners in their 50s and 60s in professional service firms ask themselves this taxing question, “What’s next?”. The question refers to 10, 20 or even 30 years ahead of them, the era some authors now call the ‘Third Chapter’.

Whether consciously or not, the question worries them because they- and their firm – think in 20th century ways while facing 21st century reality. The new reality is much longer, more healthy life spans and the will to work for the individuals. And for their firms, it is the reservoir of talent and unique knowledge that resides in these individuals.

Old paradigm thinking all too often sees these ‘pre-retirement’ individuals as a problem, a cause of uncomfortable conversations. New, Third Chapter, thinking sees opportunities to forge fresh and challenging next careers, whether in the firm or beyond, or both. No ‘retirement’ mindsets exist here, just energy to explore and contribute.

Possibilities abound. Health, vigour and accumulated wisdom offer the individuals opportunities to further develop themselves and to put back into their families, their firm and their communities. The generativity of this age is energising. The trick is to find the best ways to channel their energy. This is a joint responsibility of the individual and the firm. The firm’s leaders need to recognize the need – and the opportunity. To realise the opportunity, leaders need skill and sensitivity to have the conversations that are essential to opening up and exploring what has all-too-often been an unspeakable area.

The Third Chapter era of life holds much promise. Too many are destined never to realise it because of stereotypes and old thinking. For good reason there’s truth in the, popular saying that the ‘new 70 is 50’, so start working now on making a grand entrance to your Third Chapter.

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