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Now that I'm ready to get started, what should I expect?



"We like to think that the key to a successful career change is knowing what we want to do next, then using that knowledge to guide our actions," writes Herminia Ibarra, author of *Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career*.

"But studying people in the throes of the career change process... led me to a startling conclusion," Ibarra continues. "Change actually happens the other way around. Doing comes first, knowing second."

If you don't know what you want to do next, don't panic. Ibarra advises taking action, rather than waiting for a revelation.

What kind of action? Inspiration can lurk anywhere, she writes, so look everywhere.

Read, network, volunteer, take a class, join a nonprofit board, mine the experiences in your life (such as coaching a child's sports team or caring for aging parents), talk to people in the same situation.

"To reinvent ourselves," Ibarra writes, "we must live through a period of transition in which we rethink and reconfigure a multitude of possibilities."

In other words, it's a transition, not a transaction.

Among the hundreds of career-change stories people have shared on Encore.org—a clearinghouse and online community promoting encore careers—four basic stages have surfaced.

Job seekers explore paths they might want to pursue; prepare through formal education or other types of learning; find a job through networking and other tools; and connect to their new surroundings, continuing to grow. Keep in mind, though, progress can take a while.

"A lot of times, people come into transition and they think that they're doing something wrong because it's not moving as quickly as it should," says Linda Mercurio, founder of Transformative Impact, a leadership coaching and consulting practice in the Washington, D.C., area.

It's normal to feel that way, she says, but don't be hard on yourself. Remember: "This is a process."

ON THE FRONT LINES

The good life



A career that enriches your sense of purpose is part of living the "good life," as life coach Richard Leider describes it: "living in the place you belong, with the people you love, while doing the right work on purpose."

Leider, co-author of *Something to Live For: Finding Your Way in the Second Half of Life*, says "meaningful, absorbing work" aligns passion, talent, and values. He recommends taking stock of your life and concentrating on

areas you have neglected. Maybe, for you, that means an encore career.

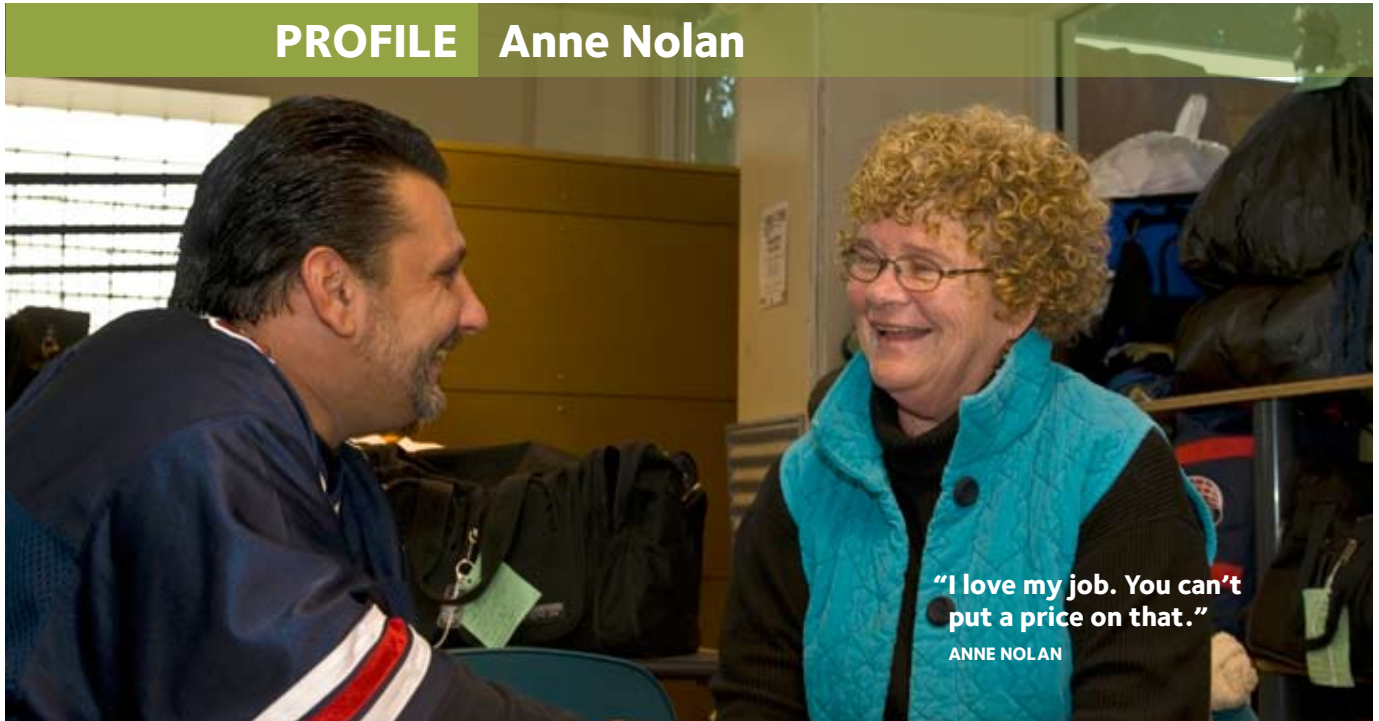
"We are looking for new maps, new models, new ways of thinking and doing things," Leider says. "Everybody... is an experiment of one."

41%

of Americans think they'll be able to live comfortably when they retire, down from 59 percent in 2002.

Gallup

PROFILE Anne Nolan



"I love my job. You can't put a price on that."

ANNE NOLAN

Anne Nolan had spent nearly 30 years working in a variety of corporate executive jobs, but the work didn't excite her anymore.

When her employer folded, she took time off and contemplated her next step. Nolan, in her mid-50s, visited the local Travelers Aid homeless shelter in Providence, Rhode Island.

Overwhelmed by the pain she saw within its run-down walls, she knew she had found her place.

In 2000, Nolan joined the board of directors as a volunteer and, less than a year later, became president of the shelter (now called Crossroads Rhode Island), the state's largest provider of services to the homeless.

The job demands the managerial, financial, fundraising, and human resources skills Nolan had acquired during her career and is a constant challenge. But her salary is about half of what she used to earn. To compensate, Nolan cut her expenses and tapped her home equity. "I love my job," she says. "You can't put a price on that."

"To find your calling in an encore career, ask yourself: 'What need in the world will ignite the passions in my heart; tap my natural gifts, educational background, and skills; and bring new vitality to all of life?'"

THE REV. SAM SHAFER California Episcopal pastor who developed "Called to Serve," a seminar designed to help participants identify what's important to them



INFORMATION

Essential resources

- **Encore.org, Find Your Encore Career**
encore.org/find
- **Idealist.org, Mid-Career Transitions Resource Center**
idealist.org/en/midcareer
- **Bridgestar's Bridging to the Nonprofit Sector**
bridgestar.org/resources/toolkits/bridgers
- **AARP Crash Course in Finding the Work You Love: The Essential Guide to Reinventing Your Life**
Samuel Greengard
- **Strategies for Successful Career Change: Finding Your Very Best Next Work Life**
Martha E. Mangelsdorf
- **Change Your Career: Transitioning to the Nonprofit Sector**
Laura Gassner Otting



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The number of workers age 55 and older is projected to grow 46.7 percent by 2016, more than five times faster than the growth expected for the work force overall.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics