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## How do I transition from a corporate job to a nonprofit one?

### Crossing sectors can take some doing.

Career counselors offer this practical advice for those who want to make the change.

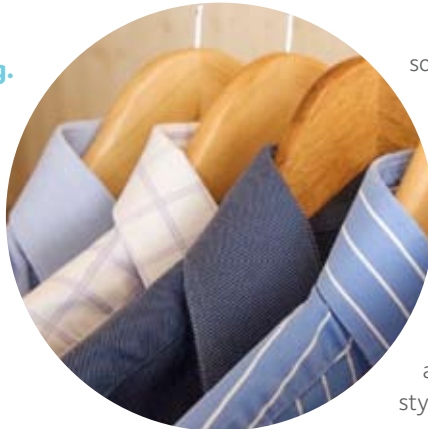
### Learn about the nonprofit world.

Look up organizations that appeal to you on the Web, and talk to volunteers or others who work there. Explore the differences (and similarities) between the business and nonprofit sectors in *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, by Jim Collins.

### Get some experience and demonstrate commitment

in the nonprofit world. You can begin as a volunteer, fundraiser, event worker, or member of a nonprofit board.

**Assess your skills and interests** and their value in a nonprofit career. Do you have experience creating a positive work environment, managing employees, or solving other workplace issues? Has



something in your personal life inspired devotion to a particular issue or cause? Check out: [encore.org/find/advice/online-tools-help-you](http://encore.org/find/advice/online-tools-help-you)

**Connect your experiences** with the organization's goals. Have a clear idea about how you can help the nonprofit you have in mind fulfill its mission. Be sure to show a high degree of respect for the work—and complexity—of the nonprofit world. Express your business savvy as an asset, and promote your willingness to adapt your style to the nonprofit's needs.

**Tailor your resume and cover letter** to the organization and position you are pursuing. Stress how your corporate experience can provide unique value for the organization, highlighting abilities and responsibilities that have prepared you for nonprofit work. Provide insight into your motivations—explaining why you're eager to work on the issue at hand.



*"Be very humble about the corporate experience you bring. Always ensure that you understand the context in which things are done before judging."*

**LYLE HURST** former corporate executive who started his encore career at Partners in School Innovation, an education nonprofit in the San Francisco Bay Area

# 5.9%

In 1994, U.S. nonprofits employed 5.4 million people, or 4.4 percent of all workers. By 2007, 8.7 million people worked for nonprofits—that's 5.9 percent of all employees.

*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

## PROFILE Scott Kariya

**After retiring at 50, Scott Kariya found himself analyzing his hobbies and interests to find a clear career choice.**

Nothing took hold until he read a newspaper article about an organization that sounded perfect for him: ReServe. He called the group, which matches experienced adults with part time, paid work at local nonprofits in the New York City area. But there were no job openings that interested him.

Kariya pivoted quickly and in the same phone conversation sold ReServe on the idea that his professional background would help the organization make more matches. ReServe agreed to a trial run, and now Kariya's working part time in the main office.

"As a job searcher, you have to anticipate what you think an organization or industry might need and how you might play a role," he says.

"Corporate sector workers can do so much good for nonprofits," according to Kariya. "It just galls me to think that there are so many valuable skills that people have that are not being used."



**"I was good at every job I ever had—except retirement."**

SCOTT KARIYA

### EXPERIENCE SAYS

#### Learn, listen, understand

With more than 25 years of work experience, many as a corporate marketing executive, Louise Smith is making her next move.

In 2009, she became an Encore Fellow at the nonprofit Community School of Music and Arts in California's Silicon Valley, one of the 10 largest community schools for the arts in the nation. Smith is helping to drive the school's new marketing plan.

With nonprofits, she says, it's important to:

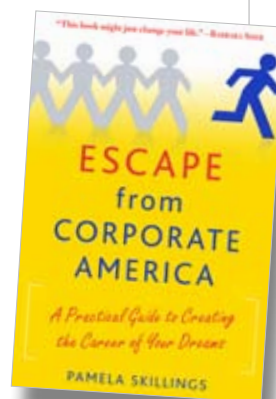
- **Deeply learn the mission**—not just what it is, but what it means to and for everyone involved.
- **Listen, ask, consider, offer your opinion**—in that order.
- **Understand the decision-making process**, then adjust your skills and outlook accordingly. It may seem clear to you that the organization could improve its methods, but recognize that change probably will happen gradually.

For more information on Encore Fellowships: [encore.org/about#encore-fellowships](https://encore.org/about#encore-fellowships)

### BOOK SMART

#### Making your move

**Does your career leave you stressed out, burned out, or just plain bummed out? You're not alone. Career expert and corporate escapee Pamela Skillings offers *Escape from Corporate America*, inspiring the cubicle-bound and the corner-office-cornered to break free and create the career of their dreams—without going broke.**



### INFORMATION

#### Essential resources

- **The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers for Sector Switchers**  
[idealist.org/en/career/guide/sectorswitcher/index.html](https://idealist.org/en/career/guide/sectorswitcher/index.html)
- **Change Your Career: Transitioning to the Nonprofit Sector**  
Laura Gassner Otting  
[nonprofitprofessionals.com](https://nonprofitprofessionals.com)
- **Bridgestar's Guide to Shifting to the Nonprofit Sector**  
[bridgestar.org/resources/toolkits/bridgers](https://bridgestar.org/resources/toolkits/bridgers)

**27%** of workers change occupations after their early or mid-50s.

AARP