

Bank Advisor magazine

Retirementors: New Heroes for a New Era

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After speaking to a client gathering in California, I was approached by a gentleman who looked to be in his early 60s. He'd run a successful dental practice and was showing up "now and then" at the office because he was busy with a number of other causes. These other causes include a real estate company, a benevolent association, regent at the local college, president of the International College of Dentists, as well three other professional associations, chairman of the board at a local bank... and more.

He also has returned to his childhood village in China to build a school, a modern water system and a temple. Stunned by his productivity at such an age, I asked him how old he was.

"I'm 83," he informed me, "and I think I have a lot of good years left. I appreciate very much your message because I think many people have many more good years than they think -- if they will stay with it."

At 83, he had the complexion of a man in his 40s, the articulation of a talk-show host and the perspicacity and acuity of a surgeon at work. I walked away from that conversation with a new hero, and new role model, for how I want to be in my 80s.

He is a Retirementor -- and we need more like him for inspiration. At my Web site, www.newretirementality.com, we're gathering retirementor stories for this purpose: to inspire those who think differently to act differently, to be masters of their own destiny, to refuse to accept society's norms for when the game is finished, and to be enthusiastic with the belief that while aging continues, being old is in their locus of control.

Chances are that you know someone like this. I would like you to do two things:

1. Share stories like this with your clients. Tell them about people you have met who are flourishing in their so-called "retirement" years. By sharing these stories, you form an inspirational, as well as an advisory, bond with your clients.
2. Ask the question, "What will you do to challenge yourself in your retirement stage of life?" You may end up being the one individual who asks the question that will be critical to your clients' retirement success.

I have an unusual and privileged vantage point on this issue as I travel throughout the country inspiring people to make their own rules and decisions. After I'm done speaking, the best examples of what I'm talking about walk up to introduce themselves and their amazing stories. These bright, articulate, purposeful individuals are grateful to still be productive and connected.

I love to spend time at the local gym shooting baskets. I often see another gentleman shooting baskets as well. One day we fell into a conversation about how much we enjoyed staying active in basketball. I mentioned that I hoped to be able to shoot baskets when I was 80. He told me he was 68 years old and said, "I'll tell you the key. It's very simple -- don't ever quit. I've watched a lot of people use little pains as excuses, and so when they try to take it up later, it's too hard. They never should've allowed themselves to stop completely."

I looked more closely at him. He looked limber, much younger than his age and fluid in his motion, and I knew he was right. No extended time completely out of the game for me. No time to think up excuses. I enjoy it all too much.