**How to Live Long and Prosper**

*“Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength.”  –Betty Friedan*

**Leonard Nimoy and the Changing Face of Growing Older in America**

When Leonard Nimoy left us earlier this year, the whole world mourned the passing of a beloved cultural icon. Even though he originally played Spock, the unemotional Vulcan, for a mere three years during the original TV run of Star Trek, he used it as a launching pad to explore a wide spectrum of interests.

More than just a beloved sci-fi actor, Nimoy had over 130 acting jobs to his credit. He also directed such films as *Three Men and A Baby* and *The Good Mother* when he was well into his fifties and sixties. His five music albums on Dot Records were big sellers. He published two autobiographies, nine books of poetry as well as a series of photography books.

What few people realize is that he was also a mold-breaking role model for active and productive living beyond age 65. In 2002, at the age of 71, he published his ninth collection of poetry. When he was 75, he produced *Shekhina*, the first of three fine-art collections of his photography. Even after he announced his “retirement” in 2010, he continued to do narration and voice work into his early 80’s, as well as putting in one last appearance as Spock in the rebooted Star Trek series.

Nimoy was as generous as he was accomplished, extending his influence and legacy beyond the boundaries of his physical life. His philanthropic enterprise, The Nimoy Foundation, supported (and continues to support) the arts. A million dollar donation also helped to renovate the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles.

Today, there is a seismic societal shift in attitudes towards growing older. If you are exploring possibilities for life in your senior years, you can join Leonard Nimoy in being an agent of change and an example of reaching the mythical retirement age and becoming more, not less, productive.

**Seniors, Start Your Engines!**

During the first US Senate Joint Committee Hearing On Senior Entrepreneurship in 2004, Elizabeth Isele, co-founder and president of [SeniorEntrepreneurshipWorks.org](http://seniorentrepreneurshipworks.org/), was asked what her one recommendation would be if she only had one. Her reply? “It’s time to stop the prevalent gloom and doom attitude coursing the hallowed halls of Congress as senators and representatives speak of the huge demographic shift as a ‘silver tsunami’. We need to change that mindset by recognizing that seniors are assets not liabilities and, as such, they represent a ‘silver lining’, yielding golden dividends.”

According to the Ewing Marion Kaufman Foundation, a US entrepreneurship think-tank, entrepreneurial activity has been at its highest in the 55-64 age bracket for about a decade now. As a matter of fact, those aged 55 or over are starting businesses at a much higher rate that the 20-30 demographic.

One AARP survey revealed that one in twenty workers who are 50+ and already employed planned on starting their own business, while one in five unemployed 50+ workers had similar aspirations.

(picture caption: People age 55 and older start more businesses than those in younger age groups!)

**Who is the Best Candidate for Becoming a SeniorPreneur?**

Have you ever gone out with co-workers at the end of the day and talked about what you would do if you could quit your job? Then you already have a possible idea for a start-up.

Do you have a secret passion that fills your idle thoughts and/or your spare time? Then you might have the basis for developing a business model that will sustain itself well into your seventies and eighties.

Have you ever shared a project with friends and been told, “This is amazing! You could sell these and make a fortune!”? That should be all the encouragement you need to get those wheels turning.

**Why Seniors Make Excellent Entrepreneurs**

1. **Deep skill sets**. After spending 25+ years in the workforce, most seniors will have built up a vast store of knowledge. Depending on their previous vocation, a lot of skills such as system management, budget planning and problem solving are second nature to most older workers. This is a distinct advantage over the 20-30 year old demographic just beginning their professional lives.
2. **New perspectives on start-ups**. Many senior start-ups are more apt to grow out of hobbies and keen interests. Whereas younger entrepreneurs might rightfully concentrate on rapid growth and wealth accumulation, the seniorpreneur might put more emphasis on personal satisfaction and long-term viability.
3. **Networks already in place**. All those years of networking contacts and business relationships do not suddenly disappear when an initial career comes to an end. Even if the new career is in a completely unrelated field, there are still people to reach out to for advice, referrals and support. Younger entrepreneurs will spend years building up the kind of networks that most older workers take for granted.

**Senior Success Stories**

Here are just a few tales of seniors who took that leap of faith and found success.

Dick Hansler worked for GE Lighting for 42 years. After he retired, he was troubled to find out that the bulbs he helped manufacture were keeping people awake. This inspired the 88 year old to found [LowBlueLights.com](https://www.lowbluelights.com/index.asp) for the express purpose of developing and making healthier bulbs. As Dick says, “We hear from customers that they’re sleeping like babies.”

[Pulpworks](http://pulpworksinc.com/) is the brainchild of 68-year-old Paul Tasner. His company makes packaging by recycling paper and cardboard and molding the packaging to fit the product. The result is a practical and green alternative to those maddening plastic blister packs. He started the business in 2011 by partnering with someone many decades younger. Tasner notes, “I just loved the idea of turning [what is] basically garbage into packaging.”

[Mannequin Madness](http://www.mannequinmadness.com/) was started by Judi Henderson-Townsend after she impulsively bought a used mannequin online. Her ‘body shop’ operates out of Oakland, CA, where she now rents, repairs and blogs about mannequins. She offers to recycle used mannequins for free, tunes them up and then resells or rents them to other stores. Townsend, 58, no longer contemplates retirement. With the help of Jay, her 68-year-old husband, she’s busy expanding her business nationwide!

**Some Things to Keep in Mind When Gearing Up...**

1. **Social media is a must in the 21st Century**. It is essential that your new business have an online presence. Also bear in mind that a brick-and-mortar office is now optional. Most phones and devices can be turned into portable offices that handle communications as well as processing credit card transactions.
2. **Continue to learn.** Take classes, listen to podcasts and participate in webinars. It is healthy for you and your business to stay as current and well-informed as possible.
3. **Explore new avenues of creative funding.** There are ways to finance your next adventure without blowing through your nest egg or losing the family home. Research any grants that might be relevant to your new business. Also check into the possibility of utilizing the crowd-funding phenomenon, best exemplified by Kickstarter and Indiegogo.
4. **Hire a mentor, and/ or join a mastermind group.** The guidance, feedback and support someone can gain from an organization such as [Strategic Coach](http://strategiccoach.com/) is difficult to put a price tag on!

**Resources to help you “Live Long and Prosper”**

[SeniorEntrepreneurshipWork.org](http://seniorentrepreneurshipworks.org/), mentioned above, has an extensive website that looks at all aspects of starting a business at 50+. PBS NewsHour recently launched *New Adventures For Older Workers* which features articles and stories about the modern non-retiree. And [Kim Butler’s *Busting The Retirement Lies*](http://partners4prosperity.com/BRL), available on [Amazon](http://partners4prosperity.com/BRL), is the go-to textbook for the 21st century senior.

***"Prosperity Economics" recognizes that we do not live in a scarce reality in which seniors and younger adults much fight for limited resources. Instead, as each person brings value to the society, we are ALL richer because of it.***

If you want to live long and prosper, remember Leonard Nimoy’s words: “That is the exploration that awaits you! Not mapping stars and studying nebula, but charting the unknown possibilities of existence.” Don’t be afraid to pick a dream and boldly go where no senior has gone before!

[Contact Winnie Lau](https://www.winnielau.com/) at Empowered Life Financial to discuss any of the ideas in this article, or contact us if you are in need of an advisor to assist you in creating a strategy for sustainable, generational wealth.

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tags: Leonard Nimoy's life, Leonard Nimoy's accomplishments, SeniorPreneur, Seniors starting businesses, senior citizen role models