

# The view from a corporate baby boomer

**Commentary by Webb McKinney**

Webb McKinney, a long-time executive at Hewlett-Packard, is now a management consultant and a board member of two nonprofits, Resource Area for Teaching and the American Leadership Forum of Silicon Valley.

**T**hroughout my career in the private sector, I had little opportunity to be involved with the nonprofit sector. Unfortunately, working 60+ hours a week didn't leave much time for community involvement.

When I retired from Hewlett-Packard (HP) in 2003 after 34 years with the company, I wanted rest and relaxation, yes, but also work, specifically work for the greater good. Like many of those interviewed in the *MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures Encore Career Survey*, I sought a pathway to flexible and interesting work in the nonprofit sector.

I was fortunate to have joined the Silicon Valley chapter of the American Leadership Forum, a network drawing on talent from all sectors to improve community life, just before retiring. As a result of my Leadership Forum connections, I became a consultant with a variety of nonprofits and joined the board of Resource Area for Teaching (RAFT), an organization focused on improving math and science education. RAFT draws on surpluses from local companies to create "learning kits," which are delivered to K-8 teachers to promote hands-on education.

I've used my skills and learned new ones to help RAFT open a second office in Sacramento, begin expansion efforts in Denver, and accelerate expansion in the Bay Area and statewide. It's been a very rewarding experience and right in line with the goals I set for my post-HP life.

Through my work at RAFT, I have come to believe that there is a large, mostly untapped opportunity to leverage the skills of people retiring from the corporate world to help nonprofit organizations. The *MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures Encore Career Survey* confirms my intuition.

The new research shows that nearly a third (30%) of those interested in encore careers are currently working in or have recently retired from for-profit jobs. On the whole, those retired from the for-profit world tend to have higher incomes and are slightly more likely to be white and male. But, in other ways, they are quite similar to their counterparts in the nonprofit or government sectors, especially in terms of the types of social purpose work they are interested in pursuing. They have a desire to work as advocates for issues they care about (36%), work with children and youth (32%), teach at any level (31%), and work to preserve the environment (31%).

We already know that needs exist: teaching and nursing shortages have been making headlines for years, the environmental movement is growing exponentially, and predictions about impending shortages in the nonprofit sector are well-documented. Looking at the list of older adults' interests reminds us that the capacity and motivation to meet these social needs exist as well. The trick will be in bringing the supply and demand together.

A number of companies are already devising creative ways to create bridges. IBM's Transition to Teaching program, which helps veteran IBM employees make the switch to math and science classrooms, has been so successful that the company created the FedExperience Transitions to Government program as well. In collaboration with the Partnership for Public Service, the FedExperience initiative will start in July 2008 to help the government match critical hiring needs with the talents of IBM retirees looking for stimulating encore careers.

Other corporations are seeking entrepreneurial models of corporate philanthropy as well. In 2007, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called upon California companies to get behind a groundbreaking public-private partnership dedicated to increasing the number of math and science teachers in the state's public schools by recruiting retiring math and science professionals through their employers.

Thus far, Amgen, Bank of America, Boeing, IBM, Intel, Marcus and Millichap, Northrop Grumman, Qualcomm, Roll International, and Southern California Edison have stepped up to support the program. And the list continues to grow.

With support from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Civic Ventures' Silicon Valley Encore Fellows "launch and learn" pilot is exploring how to create a replicable process for transitioning experienced corporate employees into nonprofits that could use their expertise and enthusiasm. Later this year, a targeted group of retired or soon-to-be retired corporate employees will be recruited by their employers to do part-time and full-time "social purpose internships" with local nonprofits in need of marketing, financial, management, technical and other skills to help further their missions. As a senior advisor on this initiative, I expect it to prove that a scalable approach to matching the needs of the nonprofit sector with the talents in the for-profit sector is possible and even sustainable.

I was very fortunate to work for Hewlett-Packard, a company with a strong focus on giving back to the community. There is no doubt in my mind that this corporate-wide philosophy influenced my desire to focus on the nonprofit sector after leaving HP, in what would have, for prior generations, been my "retirement" years.

Corporations, take note: I'm not alone. The *Encore Career Survey* demonstrates that for-profit employees want challenging, rewarding opportunities to give back in the nonprofit and public sectors. I'm here to say that it's possible and extremely rewarding. There are a lot of baby boomers headed toward second careers, and the opportunity to use their formidable skills is one that both corporations and nonprofits must not miss. ■

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