

Boomer Reinvention

By John Tarnoff

Review by Laurel Mildred

I highly recommend *Boomer Reinvention* for Boomers, GenXers and anyone interested in strategic thinking about the new economy and changing world. It is an invaluable asset for people faced with perpetual unretirement and an important exercise in thought leadership on the future of aging.

I picked up the book because I work in the aging space and follow author John Tarnoff on Twitter, where he posts interesting and useful information and does not spam people about his book (authors, take note!) Over time I came to appreciate his perspective and wanted to hear more.

The world has changed, and we are headed for a future where many of us can never afford to stop working. Compounding that bleak reality is ubiquitous age discrimination and a technology-driven economy that older adults weren't trained to navigate. The huge demographic of Boomers mean that these forces are coming together in what could potentially be a humanitarian crisis of enforced poverty, as older workers scramble to stay afloat by sending out resumes and "pounding the pavement" – old school strategies that aren't working in the new economy.

Tarnoff has been there. One of the strengths of the book is the insight he's developed from personal experience; over his career as a Hollywood executive he was fired 7 times. He's thought deeply about career reinvention, processing adversity and how to move forward. His non-judgmental perspective will be a welcome relief for anyone struggling because of shame, stigma or a feeling of failure. He writes, "...we have to just chalk this stuff up, wear our battle scars proudly, have a sense of humor about our misfortunes, and be grateful for the lessons." He believes that second-act careers can be even more purposeful and fulfilling, and that older adults can develop meaningful and sustaining roles by moving on from the past with new skills and new thinking.

The gold of *Boomer Reinvention* is a section of seven vignettes of people who have done it. Facing down a variety of hardships, challenges and personal quests to find something better in their lives, these four women and three men have walked the walk. By implication, Tarnoff's journey is the eighth vignette. I loved every one of these reinvention stories; they are as rich and instructive as you would guess. (My personal favorite was the journey of Marilyn Friedman, who lost her job at DreamWorks Animation University after 20 years of building a ground-breaking talent and recruiting program. She's finding her way through a variety of career developments, including work as an assistant kindergarten teacher. It's a gig that may be a bridge to the next thing but that she is surprised to find that she loves.) These Boomers become entrepreneurs, embrace podcasting, turn their career expertise into consulting practices, land a

contract as a senior model. Their solutions are as varied as their careers, but Tarnoff is great at burnishing the strategies and essential qualities they needed to pull off their reinvention.

I had a couple of quibbles with the book. The third section is filled with an obligatory “5-Steps Method” with accompanying worksheets, etc. It wasn’t as useful as the first two parts. It’s also subtitled, “*How to Create Your Dream Career Over 50,*” so I expected a variety of “How To” tools and specific building blocks would be included (developing a technological business infrastructure, for example.) But that’s not really what the book is about. (I’d subtitle it, “*Developing a Growth Mindset to Create A Dream Career Over 50.*”) It’s about understanding the new career imperatives, confronting the challenges in front of you personally, overcoming any sense of failure that’s dogging you, wrapping your head around change and embracing technological and other relevant career innovations so you can continue to survive and thrive into old age. By that standard, the book is a clear success. It’s useful, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I’d recommend it to anyone.