

## Fulfill the Dream of Leading a Nonprofit

By David Simms and Wayne Luke

*(This article originally appeared in the **January 2009 issue** of the Harvard Business Review.)*

For the untold numbers of corporate executives who dream of soul-enriching second careers in the social sector—but have no idea how to make that dream come true—our advice is to lend your expertise: Volunteer for temporary positions or board memberships at several different organizations until you find your joy and discover what you are really good at.

And our advice to employers: Start lending these executives a hand. Programs to help people move into nonprofits or education can make restless managers more productive until their departure, further the corporation's corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals by aiding the community, and benefit the company's image.

Some 9.5 percent of US workers between the ages of 44 and 70 have moved into the social sector (nonprofits, schools, and other civic institutions), and half of "trailing edge" boomers between 44 and 50 say they, too, want to make the switch, according to a recent survey by the MetLife Foundation and Civic Ventures.

Executives' knowledge and leadership are desperately needed. The nonprofit sector in the United States alone must find at least 330,000 senior executives by 2016 to fill the gap created by managers' retirement from nonprofits and growth in the number of such organizations, even assuming slowing retirements and sector consolidation in tough times, according to a recent Bridgespan Group study.

In our work with several hundred private sector executives seeking social-sector leadership positions, we have seen many people heed our advice to lend their expertise. After Keith Weaver took an early-retirement package as a senior vice president and chief financial officer in Asia for Canada-based insurer Manulife Financial, he lined up opportunities to serve on several nonprofit boards, including one at Opportunity International's MicroEnsure, which provides affordable life, credit, health, and crop insurance to poor families in Africa and Asia. There he became involved in a major grant proposal to the Gates Foundation, and when the proposal got a green light, he began to play a more direct role. He saw that this type of organization brought him joy, and he ended up joining the staff as chief financial and administrative officer.

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A few large corporations, Hewlett-Packard and Agilent among them, are beginning to offer employees help finding the right nonprofit second career, which sometimes requires extensive preparation and networking. Vickie E. Szarek, a project manager at IBM's facility at Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, was scouting for a second career in 2005 just as IBM was creating a program called Transition to Teaching to help employees find postretirement careers in education. T2T, which costs the company up to \$15,000 per participant, introduced Szarek to a program at North Carolina State University that assessed her transcripts and identified the courses she still needed to complete in order to receive her teacher's certification. IBM paid her tuition and gave her leave to learn to be an educator.

T2T and other transitions to public service that IBM now offers allow managers to "stay focused in their latter years" because they have a clear idea of what they will do when they retire, says Stan Litow, IBM's vice president for corporate citizenship and corporate affairs.

At the same time, he says, the teachers trained under the program "build IBM's brand in the community."

**Bridgestar** ([www.bridgestar.org](http://www.bridgestar.org)), an initiative of the Bridgespan Group, provides a nonprofit management job board, content, and tools designed to help nonprofit organizations build strong leadership teams and individuals pursue career paths as nonprofit leaders.