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“Since introducing Encore programs in 2012, we’ve helped our retiring employees explore their next stage of life and actually reimagine retirement. Participation in our Encore programs is voluntary for our retirement-eligible population, and the retiring employee response and experience have been extraordinary. Moreover, the employee-generated feedback has had a positive ripple effect, creating goodwill and excitement throughout our broader employee population.”

—Amber Wiseley, Intel Retirement Benefits Manager

Encore Careers: Unprecedented Opportunities

A Conversation with Leslye Louie, National Director of the Encore Fellowships Network

By Marci Alboher

MA: Let’s start with a pretty fundamental question. Why do you think companies are interested in Encore programs?

LL: Many companies have large numbers of employees retiring or preparing to retire in the next decade who still have plenty of productive years ahead. And for many of those employees, there’s a tug to move into a new stage of work, applying their skills to the nonprofit or social sector. That said, navigating the retirement process and making a transition to new kinds of work can be daunting. We’re seeing the need for support beyond traditional financial planning services and the desire for options beyond traditional retirement.

Offering innovative programs—such as Encore Fellowships, life planning workshops, and education support—can empower valued, long-term employees to map out and take those first critical steps forward. Through these initiatives we’ve been working with a number of companies, and Intel is a great example of how to offer Encore programs to a retirement-eligible population.

One Intel employee from Arizona described how having Encore options offered by the company made a big difference in his thought process: “I thoroughly enjoyed my career at Intel. But as with all things, it was time to explore other opportunities. When Human Resources told me about Encore Fellows, I felt that synchronicity was playing a role in my decision to do my part to help people in need.

The fact that I had Intel’s blessing made it an easier decision to retire and do what my heart felt I needed to do.”

Companies that turn longstanding employees into loyal ambassadors are contributing directly to improving the quality of life in the

ing their separation from the company. The fellow receives a stipend (between \$20,000 and \$35,000) and contributes in a high-impact assignment, leveraging their skills and experience. Fellows also benefit through a peer network of other Encore Fellows and a structured learning cohort during their Fellowship year.

The idea of Encore Fellowships was first piloted with a group of 10 fellows in Silicon Valley in 2009. After phenomenal success there, it has expanded dramatically to 250 Encore Fellows across 17 states in 2014 alone. We think this growth shows the strong need for more options like Encore Fellows.

There are a number of ways that companies have structured their support. Most participate by funding some or all of the stipend and pro-

Companies that turn longstanding employees into loyal ambassadors are contributing directly to improving the quality of life in the communities where their employees and customers live and work.

communities where their employees and customers live and work. By providing a structured bridge to desirable and meaningful work, companies engender tremendous goodwill and also promote the smooth transfer of valuable skills and knowledge from their long-term employees who are transitioning to a new and different stage of contribution.

MA: What are Encore Fellowships and how do interested companies participate?

LL: Through an Encore Fellowship, a highly experienced employee is matched with a local nonprofit for a one-year, half-time role follow-

ing participation fees for their retiring employees or alumni. Others incorporate the opportunity to become an Encore Fellow into their transition and retirement services, and many nominate nonprofits and employees to participate.

MA: What’s in it for the company? What are the major reasons you’ve found that companies participate in the Fellowships program?

LL: Companies have sponsored Encore Fellows for multiple reasons. First is employee engagement. An Encore Fellowship offers a tested, high-quality experience for smoothly

transitioning those employees interested in a new and exciting phase of contribution in the nonprofit or public sector. Encore Fellowships fit well within company retirement benefits, early retirement, employee transition, and alumni engagement programs.

The employee response to the Intel program has been outstanding. I'll quote Intel Retirement Benefits Manager, Amber Wiseley, who said, "The Encore Fellows program is now a part of our U.S. retirement benefits program. With 200 Intel retiring employees matched as Encore Fellows since 2012, the program has exceeded our expectations in terms of employee participation, community engagement, and public goodwill."

The second reason is community engagement. Corporations and corporate foundations have long been important supporters of community-based nonprofits. Encore Fellow-

ships provide a unique opportunity for corporations to provide direct, high-leverage support to those organizations by sponsoring their valued, seasoned employees who carry decades of training, education, and on-the-job experience into their fellowship and are strong ambassadors for the company into the community.

MA: What are the typical roles that Encore Fellows take at their nonprofit work hosts?

LL: Nonprofits that have hosted Encore Fellows have consistently valued the tools, skills, maturity, and new perspectives that come with an Encore Fellowship. Given resource constraints, nonprofits are rarely able to access such deep experience, expertise, and management skills. Encore Fellows have succeeded across the full spectrum of functional disciplines in nonprofits: planning, marketing,

inflection point, such as a merger. The Fellows become role models, form multi-generational "buddy" teams, and are often asked to coach and mentor staff.

A good example of how an Encore Fellow brings tangible and intangible benefits is Renee Rhiner, whose Encore Fellowship is managing a major new building project for Friends of the Children in Portland, Oregon. Mark Young, chief operating officer, told me, "Renee is playing a key role in a series of projects. Some of her tools are now being used by others. Her impact is felt just by how she does her job." For her part, Renee says, "I have a lot of time left, and there's a whole other world out there that I want to explore. I kind of think of my Encore Fellowship as graduating from high school or leaving home for the first time."

MA: Final question: What's the long-term goal?

LL: The long-term goal of the Encore Fellowships program is the introduction of new ways of thinking about the arc of a career—and a new appreciation for the windfall of talent represented by seasoned professionals winding down in corporate life. On the corporate side, Intel is a great example of how Human Resources adds value to the company by including Encore Fellowships in its standard retirement program.

For nonprofit employers, there's a huge opportunity to engage a sizable and unprecedented talent source that is eager to apply their skills, experience, and time. We encourage nonprofit human resource professionals to seek Encore talent when recruiting and hiring, embrace a diverse, multigenerational workforce, and offer flexible work schedules. We all benefit from a workplace culture which values and celebrates experience and encourages lifelong learning and contribution. **P&S**

Marci Alboher is vice president at Encore.org and the author of the *Encore Career Handbook*.

Leslye Louie is an Encore Fellow alumni and a former vice president and general manager at HP.

Beyond building capacity at a nonprofit, Fellows are often asked to spearhead growth initiatives or manage a major organizational inflection point, such as a merger.

The Hewlett-Packard Corporate Foundation is one of the founding sponsors of Encore Fellows and has consistently supported the program so that more than 60 HP alumni have become Encore Fellows since 2009. Here I'll quote HP Corporate Affairs Vice President and Chief Progress Officer, Gabi Zedlmayer, who told me, "HP is proud to be offering this exciting program as one option for employees in transition to a new chapter of their career. Encore Fellowships build on the long HP tradition of encouraging community engagement through the immense talents and commitment of our employees."

The last reason is market engagement. Most leading corporations have found ways to le-

verage their social responsibility efforts with their core business missions. Encore Fellowships allow companies to target specific sectors that will be most relevant to their customers, such as education, healthcare, the environment, arts and culture, animal protection, or even the boomer market itself, as part of their cause-marketing initiatives.

human resources, finance, information technology, quality and performance management, operations, development, and facilities management. The top request is for Fellows to become project managers, where they apply cross-disciplinary and change-management skills honed over decades of workplace experience.

Fellows often bring the deep technical skills and experience needed to address gaps in infrastructure and functional expertise. As an example, here's what Sonja Palmer, executive director of Music 4 Minors in Mountain View, California, speaking about Encore Fellow Ken Wolff, a former IT engineer from Intel with a passion for music, said: "Having Ken, a skilled person who brings something we could never have done on our own, is wonderful. Anytime Ken comes in and opens his laptop to show us something he's been working on, it's exciting."

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Corporate human resources professionals are uniquely poised to help seasoned employees transition into purpose-driven second acts that build on workers' established strengths in areas such as marketing, IT, or project management.

The Golden Window

By Marc Freedman

We've all heard about the coming demographic shift. There's not a human resources professional in the country who can't tick off the statistics: 10,000 people are now turning 65 each day, a megatrend that will continue at least through 2030.

Many see this rising social tide as a problem: the gray tsunami, the "greedy geezers" coming down the pike, a "me" generation that will gobble up social security and leave little for the next generation—or the next.

But what if we turned these dire warnings upside down? What if we reimagined the graying population as a powerful asset—an army of smart, savvy problem-solvers eager to apply their acquired skills and experience to some of the world's most pressing social problems—and not an albatross around society's neck?

That resilient and optimistic vision is the foundation for Encore.org, the organization I founded more than 15 years ago. Specifically, we are working to establish and expand encore careers—second acts fueled by the twin goals of personal and social renewal. Millions of Americans are already actively engaged in encore work, while millions more express a strong desire to follow their lead.

Those who today seek meaning and purpose in new forms of work came of age in an era marked by significant social movements, so it's no surprise that the encore idea resonates with a generation known for its desire to improve the world. But as people look for ways to apply their accumulated talents to solving social problems, they encounter real roadblocks. They are thirsty for connection to

other encore seekers, for education, coaching, financial advice, and other resources to help them navigate from their past chapter to a new one imbued with purpose.

In other words, they need better pathways from what's last to what's next. That is why we launched the Encore Fellowship, a year-long, part-time, stipend-supported bridge for late-career professionals interested in transitioning into nonprofit roles. We imagine a future when there are multiple pathways, experiences, and educational programs along these lines, helping to connect talent and need at this critically important transition point.

These days, when people hit the traditional retirement age, they see a productive horizon that could easily last a decade or two. As my colleague Leslye Louie, national director of the Encore Fellowships Network says, "They tell me, 'I'm not done.'" Still, for many, a kind

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of paralysis sets in. After many years juggling extensive responsibilities at work and at home, they struggle to pinpoint what it is they want to do next, or how to find opportunities to contribute. They may also be afraid of letting go of what they already know, shedding a familiar professional iden-

tity for something less fully formed. They may even need help with financial planning for a different kind of second act. Coming up on this crossroads can be daunting.

Corporate human resources professionals are uniquely poised to help seasoned employees transition into purpose-driven second acts that build on workers' established strengths in areas such as marketing, IT, or project management.

Companies would be wise to devise ways to help employees navigate these transitions, whether through pathways like the Encore Fellowship or with the help of seminars and opportunities to volunteer or do pro-bono consulting for nonprofits, even providing post-retirement career counseling or transition planning groups. To this end, for example, in mid-2014 McGraw-Hill's Federal Credit Union hosted an encore panel discussion for key human resources staff and a select group of pre-retirees. That session convinced them to pilot an encore financial planning seminar for those interested in pursuing encore careers. "The encore idea resonates with pre-retirees, but there is a lot of fear around how to finance the transition. So we

are trying to help them build a financial bridge," says Michael Sabatino, a certified financial planner, who is spearheading these efforts.

On the other side of the fence, nonprofits that have hired encore talent recognize the unique

value seasoned professionals bring to their work. “Encore Fellows are the most effective and affordable source of experienced management talent that a nonprofit organization can access,” says Becky Crowe of Bellwether Education Partners, a nonprofit that helps education organizations become more effective. Crowe has hosted several Encore Fellows in human resources, performance management, and new venture development.

These organizations can benefit from a “golden window,” when people with enormous professional experience have the drive to continue to contribute, but potentially diminished financial pressures. A lot of people at the encore stage of life are eager to work part-time, bartering their proven expertise for greater flexibility.

Social sector organizations have a range of options to choose from when recruiting for early- and mid-career talent. Programs like Teach for America, ProInspire, and Education Pioneers are funneling younger idealists to organizations needing their energy. Yet there is a continuing paucity of programs to bring the vast skills represented by experienced workers into nonprofits and other social purpose organizations. Given the new demographics, this space is ripe for new ideas and new mechanisms.

A generation ago, innovations helping women move into the workplace, diversity policies, flex-time strategies, remote working arrangements, and on-ramps for returning parents were creative disruptors of the norm. Today, these efforts are gaining traction, overall. Encore careers are another powerful disruptor that can yield enormous positive growth for individuals and for the communities they serve.

At a time when so many individuals are retiring later and seeking new opportunities to contribute beyond their midlife chapters, and so many corporations are seeking to play powerful roles in improving their communities and solving the most significant challenges facing society, helping employees find their encore constitutes a win-win opportunity of potentially staggering proportions—and not just for baby boomers, but equally for all those younger generations expected both to live and to work even longer. **P&S**

Marc Freedman is CEO and founder of Encore.org. He is author of *The Big Shift: Navigating the New Stage Beyond Midlife*.

Encore Fellowship Program: A Personal Perspective

By Jere Brooks King

The Road Less Traveled

When I reached my mid-50s, I began to yearn for a change. Long hours on the job had meant too many hours away from my family and community. Doing something that mattered became more important than just doing the same thing. It was time to reimagine a new phase of my career.

As I prepared to leave Cisco Systems, the company sponsored me in the Silicon Valley Encore Fellowship Program. An Encore Fellowship is a stipended, substantive position for employees who want to shift from their midlife business careers to encore careers in the nonprofit sector. Cisco knew that I wanted to transition to the nonprofit sector—and they wanted to pilot the program.

After considering a number of local nonprofit agencies, I was matched with Abilities United in January 2012. It was an ideal selection given my passion for the mission, its location two miles from home, and my previous experience as a board member and volunteer. I began my Encore Fellowship in February and completed 1,000 hours of service by November.

Something Old, Something New

With my extensive background in marketing, my Encore Fellowship assignment focused on marketing projects in brand strategy, messaging, and communications. It also included a few joint programs with my sponsor, Cisco Systems, to further their partnership with this nonprofit. As the fellowship progressed, my engagement expanded beyond marketing to include operations and finance, fundraising, campaign development, and competitive research.

With all my years in the high-tech sector, I had the executive skill set to effectively lead the design and completion of many projects. Still, I had to learn the ropes within the nonprofit world, with its wide range of stakeholders and strong mission orientation. The culture, pace, strategy, and financial foundation are similar to, yet different from, the for-profit world. It was at times both frustrating and exhilarating to be charting new waters, and the time passed quickly.

A Win for Everyone

As a retiring executive looking for personal renewal and a chance to give back, the program provided a smooth structured transition into the nonprofit world. During my fellowship, I shifted from full- to part-time work in an a more relaxed, less intense work environment. Participation in monthly cohort sessions allowed me to build relationships with other Encore Fellows and learn even more about the nonprofit sector.

At the same time, my nonprofit host benefited from the business and marketing skills that I brought to them—expertise they typically could not afford. I delivered results, new rigor, and a fresh perspective in marketing, operations, finance, and management. Plus, the agency was able to expand its relationship with Cisco by having someone who could serve as the “liaison” to the company. Whether working with the Cisco Special Children’s Advocacy Group, engaging volunteers, recruiting additional board members, or securing product donations, my connection to Cisco was a huge advantage.

As a sponsor, Cisco received a great deal of community goodwill and publicity—both in the agency and in the community. Agency employees, clients, donors, and board members all recognized the investment made by Cisco. It was one more way for Cisco to demonstrate its strong commitment to the community.

The Road Ahead

The Encore Fellowship Program was the right choice for me as a bridge to a new chapter of work. It is ideal for those who are retiring and aspire to an encore career in the nonprofit sector. If you or your employees are considering involvement as workers, board members, or volunteers in the nonprofit sector, this is a program to consider seriously. If you want to demonstrate your company’s willingness to give back, this is a great way to contribute much-needed talent. It offered me a path for renewal and reinvention, and made me believe that my best work is still ahead. **P&S**

Jere King Brooks was a vice president of marketing at Cisco for more than 15 years, retiring in November 2011.