

**CoachNet – EXECUTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL COACHING**  
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**Boomers, Refuse to Decline!**  
By Judy Feld

There are 78 million people in the Boomer generation (born 1946-1964). Career choices remain of paramount importance to Boomers, and 2011 is the year the oldest Boomers are turning 65! Does this mean they are going to retire (or want to)? Not anymore. Can they count on keeping their jobs or get new ones? Not anymore. However, Boomers have resilience, resourcefulness--and options. Boomers may lose their jobs, but not their experience and wisdom. I'm advocating a point of view that transcends the "Boomer Bubble"--my term for the insular boomer-only world view that ceased to serve us well many years ago.



On December 31, 2010 an article appeared in the New York Times entitled, "Boomers Hit New Self-Absorption Milestone: Age 65". According to the [Pew Research Center](#), for the next 19 years, about 10,000 people will cross that threshold every day. Dan Barry wrote, *"This means that the 79 million baby boomers...will be redefining what it means to be older, and placing greater demands on the social safety net. They are living longer, working longer and, researchers say, nursing some disappointment about how their lives have turned out."*

Boomers may be the first generation to significantly challenge the assumption of inevitable mental decline in later years. The notion of traditional retirement was challenged in another article in the New York Times on March 19, 2010, "Ready for Life's Encore Performances." Sarah Kershaw pointed out, *"The idea that many workers reaching their mid and late 60s think they are too young to retire and, particularly in the wake of the recession, may have no choice but to keep working, is not particularly new. But with growing evidence of a demographic wrench being thrown into the classic arc of the life course-- essentially a bonus decade or three added to the average life span over the last century--researchers are now exploring an entirely new developmental stage for people roughly between the ages of 55 and 75."*

**Strategy: Refuse to decline:**

We can pay significant attention to the health of the brain--in addition to supporting a

healthy body. The **Center for BrainHealth** at the University of Texas at Dallas presents an annual lecture series on brain health. In the 2010 meetings Dr. Sandi Chapman, founder and chief director of the Center, expanded on the research indicating that the brain is the most modifiable organ of the human body, allowing people to “improve mental function by exercising their brains.” Researchers at the Center developed **T.I.P.S.** that advance brain fitness:

**T**—Take a BrainHealth Physical. This is a mental stress test that measures strategic attention, reasoning skills, and innovative thinking, all abilities that should remain robust as people age.

**I** — Ignite Insights, Invention and Innovation. Choose to create mental idle time for discovery, deeper thought and problem solving. Resist temptations to multitask.

**P** — Practice Your Passion. Go after cognitive challenges you love, with gusto.

**S** — Strengthen the Frontal Lobe. The brain’s frontal lobe is paramount to productive mental robustness and allows successful navigation through the decision-making and problem-solving requirements of life.



~~Coach's Comment~~

You can find more on creativity in the *article Simple Arithmetic for Stretching Creativity*© (B-11 ) at <http://www.coachnet.com/business/resources-articles.html>

We can look further for insight into how we can maintain robust brain health well into old age. What we do now has an effect on who we will be--cognitively--at 100. Daniel Pink (author of **DRIVE: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us**) says about performance and cognition:

*"The real pathway to enduring performance particularly for creative and conceptual tasks, are these three things: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Autonomy is self direction, mastery is our desire to get better and better at something that matters, purpose is our desire to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves. And those three building blocks are the building blocks that really lead to sustained, enduring motivation, particularly for the more complex conceptual, creative things that more and more of us are doing on the job."*



Dan has been our guest speaker in the *UTD Expert Forum* three times, and in February of 2010 he spoke of the Boomer challenge—and of possibilities, “*When the cold front of demographics meets the warmer front of unrealized dreams, the result will be the thunderstorm of purpose, the likes of which the world has never seen.*”

It is not an easy time for Boomers and their careers, but the components of successful strategies that will bring rewarding work well into old age (whatever that means) are certainly within reach. I am often asked about the work I do--by clients, students, colleagues, and business leaders--and I often find myself responding, "This is the best job I ever had."