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Social Butterfly

ENTREPRENEUR CAROL PORTER LAUNCHES 'BOOMER' NETWORK

When you've already had a very successful business and a storybook marriage, reinvention is probably not on the short list of things to do. In fact, for many over-50 women, fears they lack the courage and stamina to take on a new career is often a bleak reality. But, it seems for Carol Porter, a veteran of venturing into the unknown, the infinite opportunity of new challenges and the twin prospects of new adventures and new friendships surpass any self doubt. Porter is part of a new generation of entrepreneur – the “boomerpreneur” – made up of 50-somethings who have redefined the golden age of their lives to be defined less by social luncheons, golf outings and visits to grandkids, and more accurately defined by venture capital, social media metrics and new market strategies.

For Porter, social media was the lynch pin to her new reinvention strategy. She is co-owner with her husband, David, of [www.TheRoamingBoomers.com](#), an Internet travel magazine site and online television show. The road to The Roaming Boomers began nearly 20 years ago, far from retirement dreams and not without it's proverbial “lemons” along the way.

In 1991, Porter's first batch of lemons came when David announced that he was fed up with corporate politics and asked if she might be join him in launching a new mortgage company. They scraped together “every last dime they owned” and ventured off into the unknown. Equally challenging was their aggressive plan to retire by the time David reached 50. That decision was the first of many decisions the partners made together. After 15 years, they sold the business before the economic downturn as well as their commercial building and their Michigan home, closing on the exact day of David's 50th birthday.

The couple believes their successful early retirement was based on setting a ceiling on their lifestyle and saving everything above that amount. Porter is confidently convinced that one of the other contributing factors to their early retirement was their willingness to give back. Each year, a determined percentage of their gross revenue was given to their church and other charitable causes. Their plan was to live on their assets until age 100.

That was until the Great Recession hit and in October of 2008 and they found their financial plan “in shambles.”


“We certainly we didn't lose everything, but the loss was significant enough that



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"We certainly we didn't lose everything, but the loss was significant enough that we once again found ourselves forced to stare reinvention in the face," Porter says. "We cried, we danced with depression, but at the end of the day we knew that our current assets couldn't assure our future and that we needed to stand up, dust ourselves off, and begin to craft another variety of lemonade from this batch of lemons."

Plan 'B'

As the Porters began to assess their skills, strengths and strong passions, they decided to take their love of travel, adventure and culinary enjoyment, as well as their joy of learning new things and making new friends, and craft it all together in a new business called TheRoamingBoomers.com.

"One of the things that we noticed in the aftermath of this great recession is that significant reinvention was also occurring in the world of media," Porter says. "Centuries old media outlets were closing around the country and a new ground swell seemed to be building in what was becoming to be known by a new term called social media."

The Porters saw this as an opportunity, with social media tools, to build their own on-line television station, magazine, newspaper and even a radio station. "We dreamed that we could take these tools and perhaps combine them into a newly fashioned media outlet that would bring value and fill a void to a massive wave of future retiring and traveling baby boomers," Porter says.

In February 2010, with Carol as the primary host and David doing the behind-the-scenes work, TheRoamingBoomers.com began principal filming.

In just 10 short months, TheRoamingBoomers.com has produced well over 300 articles, over 50 videos, has gained the respect of dominant travel players such as Fairmont, Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, Waldorf-Astoria and scores of world famous luxury hide-aways, and currently enjoys thousands of visitors each month to their online growing brand.

"We spent the first 10 months building content to see if we might be accepted by the travel industry," Porter says. "To our great joy, we have been welcomed with open arms; the industry seems to find value in what we do, and we were even asked to speak at the world's largest social media conference a few months ago."

Unprecedented Opportunities for Online Media

Now, their focus has turned toward their subscriber base with the intention to become the baby boomers' preeminent online destination for information, awareness, special perks, insider tips and entertainment. Rather than simply talk about a beautiful resort in Hawaii, for example, The Boomers actually visit the resort and then report back to their subscribers with vibrant video and editorial content – all with Porter's self-described "pithy text."

She believes social media outlets such as Facebook (with its current 500 million users), Twitter, and the creation of content management systems such as WordPress have made it possible for everyone to build an own online media portals. The distinction is in the quality, the approach to valuing the end user and a site's ability to clearly articulate how it "changes lives."

Porter wants women to know that the world of social media has opened the door for incredible opportunities for women. Many women have already created successful online properties. They found something they were very passionate about and have created successful businesses around mommy blogs, travel blogs, fashion blogs, foodie blogs, writing blogs, military blogs, home-schooling blogs, art blogs, faith blogs and even cupcake blogs.

The Internet has opened up what industry experts call “the long tail” of the information curve and has created opportunity for anyone with passion, expertise, and the willingness to march into the unknown.”

Porter offers these tips to get started:

Find something you feel you have expertise in. It could be something as simple as a great skill in knitting.

Be sure that you possess a great deal of passion about your subject. It is passion that will carry you through the dark and uncertain beginning times.

Determine how you want to communicate your expertise to a future audience. Will you use text, photography, audio, video or all four?

Build an online media site. You can do this yourself if you are technologically inclined, or hire someone to create a basic site for only a few hundred dollars.

Jump in the water. Produce content and build relationships with peers, industry providers and, most important of all, future subscribers.

Once you begin to build your subscriber base, start to learn about monetization strategies ... and always keep moving forward!

One of the greatest assets of the successful entrepreneur is persistence. Some react to challenge by withering away. Others undergo metamorphosis, shedding their cocoons and becoming butterflies – social, and above all, beautiful.

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