

The new era of executive retirement: Finding purpose post-corporate

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Over 27 years at Bank of America where he held several key senior roles including corporate treasurer during the 2008 financial crisis, Mark Linsz had seen many executives wrestle with the transition to retirement. When he himself retired from Bank of America in 2014, Linsz was approached by Leslie Braksick, Ph.D., an entrepreneur and behavioral scientist, with an idea: start a company to help retiring executives navigate life after intense corporate careers.

Braksick brought decades of experience as co-founder and CEO of CLG, a consulting firm focused on C-suite coaching and leadership development for Fortune 500 companies. Together, the two recognized a gap in the marketplace. “We had both seen too many executives hold on too long because they didn’t have a plan,” Linsz said. “They became blockers for the next generation of leaders, and the consequences for both the executive and their company were significant.”

Linsz and Braksick's firsthand experiences led to the creation of MyNextSeason, a firm dedicated to helping executives navigate the often-overlooked complexities of post-career life. For many senior leaders, decades of professional achievement make their identity inseparable from their roles and organizations. The challenge isn't just leaving behind a paycheck or title — it's redefining who they are when the daily demands of corporate life vanish. Years of long hours, intense travel and prioritizing the company leave their relationships, self-worth and sense of purpose deeply tied to their careers.

When that identity fades, the sense of loss can be profound. “Whether they choose to retire or are tapped on the shoulder by their company, many executives face an unexpected void,” Linsz explains.

One pivotal experience that shaped MyNextSeason's mission occurred in 2008 when an executive, Steve, who Braksick had long known and worked with announced his retirement. Steve confided to Braksick during his retirement party that he had no idea what to do next. She suggested he join the board at his alma mater's engineering school where he had studied, but the commitment only filled a few days of his time. Steve soon felt adrift, even asking for his old office back. Just a year later, despite being healthy and active, Steve tragically passed away from a sudden heart attack.

His wife later shared he had been “like a lost child” in retirement, highlighting the emotional toll that loss of purpose can take on high-performing executives. Some research suggests that a sense of purpose is closely tied to longevity, and for many executives, their careers provide that purpose. Without it, many struggle.

This year, in celebration of the company's 10th anniversary, Linsz and Braksick co-authored “Revealing Your Next Season,” which reflects on the experiences of executives who have successfully transitioned from intense corporate careers to fulfilling next seasons. “Our clients are remarkable people,” Linsz said. “The transition is never easy, but they are constantly reinventing themselves and find ways to keep making an impact.”

One such client is Ben Markham, former Vice President of Engineering at ExxonMobil Research and Engineering. After retiring, Markham and his wife moved to Ghana for 18 months to volunteer. While there, they noticed that homes and schools lacked electricity and playground equipment. Partnering with students and faculty from Brigham Young University, Markham helped develop playground equipment that generates electricity through children's play. Since 2008, Empower Playgrounds has provided power and improved education for over 22,000 students in rural Ghana.

Linsz notes that post-career life for executives often involves what he calls a “portfolio of activities.” Rather than jumping into the first “next thing,” MyNextSeason encourages them to be thoughtful and embrace the “pause.” For many of them, this involves first focusing on things that

are important to them but have fallen by the wayside in their busy lives such as relationships and their health.

It's also important for them to realize what they want to say no to. "Many of them are being presented with numerous opportunities," Linsz said. "But the key is to be intentional. They need to consider what they enjoyed in their careers and what they're ready to leave behind. We had one client interested in boards, but he hated meetings more than anything. For him, it was realizing that boards were probably not the right fit for him. It's oftentimes helpful to have a partner to walk the journey with you to help you think about the bigger picture and where you want to spend your time and energy."

MyNextSeason's model is unique in that the advisors who support their retiring executive clients are all former executives themselves. "They have been there, done that," said Linsz. "They understand that this transition is complex and many times, it's helping them navigate the thorny issues of the transition — the succession process and ensuring a smooth handoff to their successor, preserving important relationships and leaving well. From there, they can begin to shift their focus to putting together a plan for where and how they want to spend their time."

Retirement once symbolized the end of a career, celebrated with gold watches, farewell parties and a leisurely shift to the golf course. But for the executives MyNextSeason supports, it's not the end — it's the start of a dynamic new chapter, the first of many "next seasons" filled with purpose and possibility.

To learn more, visit www.mynextseason.com.

Founded in 2014 by Leslie Braksick, Ph.D., and Mark Linsz, MyNextSeason specializes in helping executives transition from corporate careers to purpose-driven "next seasons." The firm's unique approach includes advisors who have successfully navigated their own transitions, a highly personalized process tailored to each leader's goals and proprietary tools to guide them through the next phase of life. MyNextSeason partners with HR leaders to provide customized transition support, ensuring that executives finish their careers well and move smoothly into their next chapter.