



**Leaders: Prepare Mentally & Emotionally for Retirement**  
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Ethan was charismatic, dynamic and savvy. When he walked in the room people noticed. Was it his high status as CEO of one of the top corporations in his industry? Or was it the self-assured essence that he projected?

Unlike many of his professional affiliates and friends, Ethan didn't live for retirement. He truly loved his work in helping his company and teams succeed.

Yet the time was approaching for him to hand the reigns over to someone else in accordance with the succession plan developed seven years ago. It sounded like a great idea seven years ago, but now he wasn't ready to leave the action and excitement.

While Ethan's wife, family and retired friends wanted more quality time with him, he didn't share their passion for merely playing tennis and golf each day. Ethan wanted to continue to make things happen and reap the rewards. This was a large part of his identity.

The primary struggle for Ethan was this: why retire from something he thoroughly savored?

What would he do with his time? What would his new purpose be? Who would he be without his company or title? Was he now reinventing himself? If so, how?

When first contacting me, Ethan explained that he had many options. The challenge was that everyone important to him had a different opinion on which option he should pursue. He craved that one voice that would help him work through his myriad of options slowly and thoroughly.

He was still young and certainly had the talent, energy and financial resources to do anything he wanted. Is there something out there that he'd not even considered?

Ethan was aware of studies that showed high powered people falling prey to depression within the first two years of retirement. He witnessed this in a few of his former colleagues. He wanted none of that.

Rather than just sliding blindly into retirement, Ethan decided to strategize. He intended to invest as much time, energy and finances in planning the next steps in his life as he did when initially planning his career.

We began working together a full two years prior to his projected 'retirement' date. The strategies that we chose for Ethan may be of interest to you or someone you know who has retirement on their horizon.

Consider my Top '7' Strategies for being mentally and emotionally prepared to retire from a profession you've enjoyed, as Ethan did.

Knowing that he already had a solid retirement financial plan well in place, we started with where Ethan was personally. You cannot plan where you're going unless you know where you are.

We then moved onto his analyzing his cherished leadership position and ended with what's next for him. Ethan answered each of the following questions over time, with great thought and a well-used journal.

**1. Life Analysis:** Look at your whole life, not simply career. What are you passionate about? What experiences, people, places do you enjoy? What inspires you today? What do you want to learn? What activities do you crave more time to pursue? What are your overall strengths and core values?

**2. Energy & Health Analysis:** What energizes you, personally and professionally? What, or who, drains your energy? How is your overall health? Do you have the stamina to pursue your interests? When was your last physical? What health aspects need improvement?

**3. Your Current Position:** What about this position initially motivated you? What still inspires you? What choices, accomplishments or innovations through the years bring a smile to your heart? Do you now feel accomplished, drained or stimulated?

**4. Your Team:** How will you strengthen those around you so that your company won't miss a beat if/when you walk out the door that last day? What personnel or other housekeeping is necessary prior to leaving? Or, do you simply make a clean exit?

**5. The Choice to Leave:** Are you ready to end your career? What still holds you in this position? What more do you want to achieve prior to leaving? Perhaps rather than a complete 'retirement' there are other options that will keep you in the game?

**6. Your Legacy:** What legacy have you created? Perhaps you've already created it without knowing? Or are you just beginning to realize it? While others see it, you've likely been too busy creating it to acknowledge all that you'll be leaving behind in your wake.

**7. New identity and adventures:** Your professional title has shown the world who you've been. Now, you'll be a brand new you. Consider who you will be? How will you feel inside and therefor present yourself to the outside world? Retiree, adventurer, writer, golfer, fisherman, community activist, board member, professional volunteer?

These questions and more were not answered overnight. Slowly, over time, our goal was to help Ethan get to know himself on a deeper level to make the wisest choices moving forward.

After our work together, delving into each of these areas, Ethan created a life that he loved. He took year off to let the layers of stress fade away; stayed involved on a limited basis with his company; found an intriguing for-profit board to serve on and took up international sailing. Additionally, he found a local non-profit to support with the goal of making a difference in children's lives.

Ethan was healthy and happy; knew precisely what he wanted and found new avenues of fulfillment while staying professionally active.

My experience with Ethan and many others proves how vital it is to not only have a strong financial retirement plan, but also to be mentally and emotionally prepared to take those exciting next steps in life.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to being mentally and emotionally prepared to leave your professional life for a world unknown. It takes patience, curiosity, honesty and soul searching.

The choice to stay or leave any professional endeavor is a challenge. You either accept the challenge and thrive through creating the life you want. Or, you ignore the challenge and suffer the consequences.

I challenge you to ask yourself these powerful questions daily, irrespective of where you are in your career. It's a gift you give yourself.

If it seems impossible to create this time and accountability for yourself, know that I am here to support you. Accountability is essential to succeed in any endeavor that counts in life.

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