

Second Act Stories (www.secondactstories.org)

Episode #26:

Don't Retire...Rewire: 25 Minutes with Career Expert Jeri Sedlar
(11/4/2018)

Who	Copy
Jeri Sedlar	<p>So we did a major piece of research across the country, and we asked a key question, focus groups, one-on-ones, interviews, why do you or did you work beyond the money? Because we talked about pre-retirees as well as post-retirees. And that was the key, why did you work beyond money? And unsolicited, we got back 85 reasons that you mentioned at the back of the book. "I want to have accomplishments." Okay. Other people said, "I wanna belong." People said, "I wanna be creative." "I want to make a difference." And then people really started opening up and said, "I like to be a leader. I like the recognition. I like to be valued." And those are really important things to know before you leave your work environment, because in a way, it's your DNA. And we named it then, these are your drivers. And that is the, you know, personal motivators, whatever you wanna call them. But that's what's running through our bloodstream. And this is you need to know it.</p>
	INTRO MUSIC
Andy Levine	<p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major career changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. I'm your host, Andy Levine.</p> <p>On this episode, we're going to spend the next twenty minutes or so with career expert Jeri Sedlar. Jeri is the author of "Don't Retire...Rewire" which she wrote with her business partner and husband Rick Miners.</p> <p>They were largely responsible for blowing the lid off our traditional view of American life -- the "education first – work career second – retirement third" phasing. Jeri and Rick first wrote the book back in 2002 and they recently came out with a third edition of "Don't Retire...Rewire."</p> <p>Simply put, I loved this new book and found it incredibly valuable for my own resource for a fellow that will hit 58 years of age in the year ahead.</p> <p>Here's my interview with the dynamic and articulate Jeri Sedlar.</p>

Andy	Jeri Sedlar, thank you very much for joining us today. We really appreciate it.
Jeri	It's my pleasure to be here.
Andy	So I wanna start a little bit with your own background and the work you do. Can you give us the Jeri Sedlar elevator speech?
Jeri	Oh, gosh. I love people, people are my passion. I think most of my career has been focused on marketing to people, communicating to people, and I'm really curious about what makes people tick. So human behavior excites me.
Andy	Okay. We're here to talk about a great book, "Don't Retire, Rewire" first came out in 2002, second edition came out in 2007. And you have...has it already been released? The third edition?
Jeri	Yes, August 7th, it's out. The third edition.
Andy	That's good. That's great. Great. As I was reading through the book, and I really enjoyed it, there's a story in there in terms of how the term rewire came to you and Rick and it involves Tony Bennett. I was wondering if you could share with the audience that story.
Jeri	Elaborate a little? Well, Rick, I will say Rick Miners is my co-author, he's also my husband. And we happen to be over in Times Square, we live in New York City. And it was when Tower Records was still there. So this is definitely going back a little bit, and there was a huge picture on the wall, and it was Tony Bennett with K.D. Lang, and they had come out with their first duets album. And I took a look, and I looked at it and I thought, "Oh, my gosh, Tony Bennett is really, you know, wired for action," is what I said to Rick. And he looked at me and he said, "Now, he's been rewired." And all of a sudden, we looked at each other, and we'd been working on the book, we were, you know, doing research, and all of a sudden, it came to life, and really gave us the entire, I guess, our philosophy for the book. And the great thing is the publisher, Penguin Random House, they loved it. So it stayed, and to us it's a verb, it's a noun, it's a lot of things, it's action.
Andy	And just the change of one letter, and you have a completely different concept. So I mentioned that the first edition 2002, second edition 2007, third edition 2018, what has changed in the last 11 years that makes this edition different than what you did previously?

<p>Jeri</p>	<p>We went back out and did research because we wanted to see, is there a new retirement landscape? And there is. I think that the economic downturn of 2007, 2008, and some of it's continuing definitely affected people. Some postponed retirements, other people were hit from the portfolio, their financial portfolio. Longevity is really being evidence now by people that this is real. And so, I think all these things together as well as globalization, the impact of competition globally, people are working more of in a global environment. Technology, technology has really, you know, changed things there, the whole geopolitical, and I think there's a different view that we tap to on how people perceive time. And so, all of those things taken together were interesting, but the payout or pay off, the new view was that people were working longer. That was a surprise, because when we first did the book, it was coming off the dot com era, people were looking to, you know, cash out their options and definitely retire. And that was really at that time to a life of leisure. Then in 2007, people were still thinking that way a little bit, but now flat out, we see people who need to work, have to work, want to work, and then people recognizing longevity are fearful about, oh my gosh, am I going to get bored? What am I going to do with all this time?</p>
<p>Andy</p>	<p>I think it's in your book you talk about it, if you make it to 65, you're likely to live another 25 years, something like that.</p>
<p>Jeri</p>	<p>That's correct. And that's from a medical standpoint, if you make it to 65, really, without any type of major illnesses, diseases, or whatever. Yes, exactly.</p>
<p>Andy</p>	<p>One of the things I really enjoyed about the book is you build it around real people, and they sort of grow in throughout the book in each chapter, as you sort of take them through the different steps and that sort of thing. So I wanted to continue that theme a little with today's podcast. So I want you to imagine I'm a software engineer. My name is Phil. I'm happily married, and I'm 63 years old. And I'm really unhappy in my work and ready to explore a second act. Besides buying your book and reading your book, which is excellent, what's the first and most important thing that you think Phil should do to explore that second act?</p>
<p>Jeri</p>	<p>It's really the beginning. First, you have to know why you want to retire, because some people will just say, "Well, I've hit a number, an age," and, you know, that's not a good enough reason. Other people will say, "Well, I hit something from a portfolio or financial dollar amount." And it's like, that's not a good enough reason. Those are all important things to have. But it's like, what's not working for you? Because the whole concept is you want to retire from something and feeling good about it and to rewire to something. So it's you have to do little due diligence on yourself. Why do I want to do this? And then, I guess, ask yourself the big question, how well do I know myself? Self-knowledge is really key. And I hate to say it, but we've been doing life 24/7, we don't always take the time to stop. Man, you better kind of really put a stop on yourself and say, "Who am I, Phil, and what do I need to make me happy?"</p>

<p>Andy</p>	<p>To me the most interesting part of the book talked about identifying your drivers. And in the back of the book, you have a list of 85 different possibilities. Creativity, fulfillment, lifelong learning, making a difference, friendship, these are just a few of the examples. So walk us through this sort of how you identify your drivers. What does that mean? And how should you go about this?</p>
<p>Jeri</p>	<p>To me, hands down, if people are listening, this is the most important part right here, because it really ties back to what makes you tick. Very quickly. One of our clients was going to retire and said, "I'm so tired of my bosses demanding meetings, the commute," everything that any of us would be imagining here. But one day, he woke up and he went to the office and he looked around and he'd been looking at it from like a negative standpoint, "I can't wait to get out of here." And then all of a sudden, he stopped and he said, "Wow, this is where I get my attaboys," or for us women, our attagirls, and he realized there's more going on in this workplace than most of us give ourselves any recognition of.</p> <p>So when we took a look at this, we thought, "This is what people need to know before they can really tackle the future." So we did a major piece of research across the country, and we asked a key question, focus groups, one-on-ones, interviews, why do you or did you work beyond the money? Because we talked about pre-retirees as well as post-retirees. And that was the key, why did you work beyond money? And unsolicited, we got back 85 reasons that you mentioned at the back of the book. Well, some of those duplicate each other slightly, but people started, "I want to have accomplishments." Okay. Other people said, "I wanna belong." People said, "I wanna be creative." "I want to make a difference." And then people really started opening up and said, "I like to be a leader. I like the recognition. I like to be valued." And those are really important things to know before you leave your work environment, because in a way, it's your DNA. And we named it then, these are your drivers. And that is the, you know, personal motivators, whatever you wanna call them. But that's what's running through our bloodstream. And this is you need to know it.</p>
<p>Andy</p>	<p>In the book, you describe a process for figuring out what those are and sort of three passes through the full list, and then you wanna narrow it down to five, I think, and then sort of order them one to five. And that sort of, I think, tells you...allows you to start thinking about what your next possibilities might be.</p>
<p>Jeri</p>	<p>Well, it really is. I mean, there is the list of 85, but we called out the top 30, the ones that we had heard most frequently. And then, inside the book, then we have created questions that address each of these. So you get an idea. Well, what does it mean to belong? You know, some people wanna belong to a major corporation. They love that environment. Other people want to belong to like-minded people, but it doesn't have to be a big space, so it's really getting into you. But what we do tell people in it all is setup. You take these passes because the initial thing is, I won't kid you, out of the top 30, people have gone to the list and said, "I need all 29 of these. I could only delete one." That's why we have you go through this process. And we also say, "Please, do it over time. Don't sit down in one fell swoop." And the goal is yes, to get these five drivers.</p>

Andy	Okay, your book also talks about another interesting section I found, and I think it's the title of one of your sections is dream, you know, discovering dreams...well, dreams, interest, and discoveries. How should you go about this aspect of rewiring this aspect of what you talk about in the book?
Jeri	Okay, this is in this chapter, because how often, you know, do we hear people say, "If I had the time... If I could..." You will now as you begin to think about the future. So we have created exercises so you can sit down and begin to imagine this. However, there are people who they had their dreams zapped. They gave up on their dreams, and now they look at the future and they go, "I don't know what I want to do next." So we actually show you a way to go back in five-year increments backward. And what we've discovered is that sometimes, people, when they were really young, maybe in that 10-year old, they had this dream of something they wanted to do. Now, they're not going to execute it in the same way, maybe at 60, 65 or, you know, whatever age, but that surfaces again, and that's what people need to do. I kind of call it doing some self-excavation, you know, acting like an archaeologist a little bit, but it's your life that you're really kind of digging around.
Andy	I know one of the individuals that you profile sort of had done a lot of acting in high school, and one of his possible directions was to re-explore being a voice artist or acting and that sort of thing, and that was kinda interesting.
Jeri	See, the great thing about that is...and when you take the time to go through a book and then put it aside and begin to think, you've just naturally opened yourself up. The great thing about him, it was not only going back to something that was a passion, but it was also a new way to rewire and even make money in the future. And that's a big part of this also, that people say, "Well, I don't wanna totally give up work, I don't want to absolutely get out of the game. I just want to get out of the rat race," as somebody said. "I want to get out of that same game, I'd like to do different work." And that's where the creativity and really the drivers come into this.
Andy	I'm moving deep into the book now, but after sort of, you know, doing this self-discovery, you sort of talk about...you introduce something called a possibility profile. Can you help us understand that and what that means?
Jeri	Okay, so let me just back up. It is predicated, the tagline is five steps to fulfilling work. And what we mean by that is then it's the fulfilling work that really fuels your passion, which you've alluded to, suits your personality, and that gets the drivers and then also fills your pocket, because that's, you know, a potential there or could be volunteer, but we did really take a look at five steps here. And if you're going through this, we want you to come to like a page like, "Okay, what have I discovered about myself?"

	<p>So let's say, you know, one of your drivers is making a difference. And then you begin to link it with, "Well, what are my interests?" And then you can indicate that. But then, this is really where kind of we say the rubber meets the road, you don't wanna be working flex time. Do I really want to do this for pay? Do I want it to be volunteer? This is what we'd said earlier, Andy, that people don't take enough time to really check out themselves and to say, "If I maybe have another 30 years in front of me," which I know on one hand, it sounds shocking, but people could feasibly, depending upon longevity and when they retire, they could be in retirement almost as long as they were working.</p>
Andy	<p>Sorry, let me take in a different direction. For those that are married or have a significant other, what is your advice on sort of negotiating or working that plan with your spouse and kind of that direction?</p>
Jeri	<p>Oh, let me tell you. That's the reason we did the second edition. I had been out on the road a lot doing a lot of work for different financial institutions that had brought me in to talk to their clients about the future, and I found myself coming back and I'm saying to Rick, "Oh my gosh, these couples are telling me way too much information." I mean, this was truly TMI here, and I thought, "What's going on?" And I realized that when you were busy doing life, sometimes the relationship...it doesn't mean it's bad, but you're not communicating in the same way. So we purposely added a whole chapter in the second edition that would really address this. First thing is please don't think you know what your spouse, your partner, your significant other is thinking I think, because you can see how hard it is for yourself to think about retirement.</p> <p>So going through these scenarios in the book, you get the sense that people are afraid to talk about their visions. They realize they haven't discussed this for a long time. So we do give cheat sheets, we give tips, we do give starters. My, you know, belief is go sit down and, you know, buy some time with somebody if you really think, "We are just not on the same page."</p>
Andy	<p>In the book and I forget which page it's on, and I've given you a copy to help jog your memory, but there are 10 ingredients for successful rewiring. And I found this a really interesting list. We don't have time to go through all 10 of them, but I was wondering if you could pick out maybe 3 or 4 that you think are most interesting or surprising to people when you bring them up to folks.</p>
Jeri	<p>Well, we've already covered it then. Number one to me is really self-knowledge, know yourself. And my feeling is there's nobody more exciting than knowing yourself, so it's like take the time to do it.</p>
Andy	<p>But that's a challenge for a lot of people, isn't it?</p>

Jeri	Oh, I think so. I really do, because it's...but to me, it's just the most critical, because you don't want to be leading or living your life on somebody else's agenda. There is, you know, only X amount of time, and I guess, you know, we say, "Do you want to take your dreams to the grave?" That's a kind of a shocking way to say it, but that's what we're trying to get at. How can you bring out what you want to do? And that ties in with yourself and the couples and that, but it also ties into what we think is just critical, have curiosity. Oh my gosh, and when people...
Andy	That's number eight on your list.
Jeri	I know, and this is really kind of, you know, funny. Now, you're making me realize, too, sometimes to, you know, changing things, but as I'm looking at this because a positive attitude is the number one that we had had on the list, but over time I realized it really is about curiosity. Just that you want to try something. And people will say, "What if I don't like it?" And our comment is, "Then don't do it again. It's okay." Somebody will say, "I, you know, try something," and also ties in with the willingness to be a beginner, and you do have to show you're a little bit vulnerable, like a man said to me, "Gosh, I wish I would have learned to golf years ago." I said, "But it's not too late." He was just like 62, and I said, "Get a bunch of guys together, or women who want to learn, hire the pro so that you're all starting together, but you can find ways to address this fear, and maybe that's a part of it, too."
Andy	You mentioned the willingness to be a beginner, to me, that was one of the most interesting things, because, you know, someone's been an executive or a lawyer or something like that to suddenly say, you know, "I wanna learn how to sail and I don't know anything about sailing," that, you know, might be a tough thing for them to not be the skipper.
Jeri	Okay, this is, and you know what? This goes back a little bit to the drivers too, because the sad part is, when you do retire, there is a change in an identity. There are many people out there who are their business card, and you do meet them, sometimes you can maybe forget their name but you'll remember that they said whether, you know, he was a doctor, or whether I'm...you know, I own a successful business, no matter how, we do identify ourselves by that, because here when you meet people so often, you know, in the United States, people will say, "So what do you do?" So that has been a part of us. And when you have been successful, or when you have this identity, it's really hard then to become that beginner and be vulnerable. And that to me is real. That's why sometimes I think people flunk because they have dreams, but they don't dare to execute on them.
Andy	What sort of feedback from people have you gotten about the book over the years? And, you know, people that have read it, what have they told you?
Jeri	Well, you saved my marriage.
Andy	That's good.

Jeri	And I'm like, "Wow, that's pretty big claim." I think one of the key things is people just say, "You really forced me to think about myself, you know, my life." They very much like the step process or we're not the teachers, we're there to guide you. And that's what we really call ourselves, too, kind of like the Sherpa, somebody's going, you know, mountain climbing in a way, we want to be there just to help you go through this, because it is a journey, but we also love the fact that people will say, "Man, you can rewire as many times as you want." Because quite simply, rewiring just means taking the energy that you normally gave to your traditional work and putting it into new activities, whether those are paid, or volunteer, or leisure, fun, family, and then things can end again. And then you go back and say, "What drives me? Hey, I'm going to find new activities." So in a way, rewiring is a rolling process for life. And as long as you have curiosity and imagination and a willingness to explore, the only thing that's stopping you is yourself.
Andy	So I wanna end with a personal question, and I'm not giving you any notice of this for everyone to hear here. So you've been in advertising and marketing, you've been an editor, Working Woman magazine, right?
Jeri	Working Woman, mm-hmm.
Andy	And you've been an author, you are a motivational speaker, and I've seen some of your YouTube videos. You are an awesome speaker by the way. So if you could do something completely different, and what I would call your second act, but maybe it's more like your fourth, fifth or six act, is there anything that you would want to do in your next stage of life?
Jeri	This is a good one. You know, I always wanted to be, when I had started, thinking that I would become a psychiatrist. And then I realized, wow, that isn't it. But truthfully, what I think I am doing now is giving me the chance to be with people in human behavior. When you are a platform person, I love the acting part of it. So I get to execute on that as well. And I guess I really do love to be...this is really gonna sound weird, like a voyeur in a way, a social voyeur, to see what people do and to just be, I guess, on the sidelines. But it's funny because after the gap between the second edition and the third edition now, I think I've kind of like rewired my mindset and everything. And there's this whole new cadre of pre-retirees and retirees who are thinking to do another things. And I get to be out there again on the journey. So I've kind of rewired myself in this time period.
Andy	I think that's a great note to leave it on. Thank you very much for coming in, Jeri. I really appreciate our time together. Thank you.
Jeri	Great. Thank you.

	OUTGOING MUSIC
Andy	<p data-bbox="391 260 1421 323">So that is a wrap on Episode 26 of "Second Act Stories." Our special thanks to Jeri Sedlar for taking the time to meet with me.</p> <p data-bbox="391 359 1421 485">If you are interested in getting your own copy of "Don't Retire...Rewire," I'd encourage you to go to the "Best Books About Second Acts" on the resources page of our website. You'll find an easy link to Amazon.com and can order the book.</p> <p data-bbox="391 520 1019 552">We'll go back to our regular format next week.</p> <p data-bbox="391 588 1421 682">If you like what you are hearing on the podcast, I'd invite you to sign-up as a Second Act Advocate. Just click on the "Become a Second Act Advocate" button in the upper righthand corner of the home page.</p> <p data-bbox="391 718 1421 812">I'll let you know when a new episode is posted. And you'll be able to share with your own social media following on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn with a single click. It's super easy and efficient.</p> <p data-bbox="391 848 1328 911">We hope you'll keep listening. There are more second act stories just around the corner.</p>