



## What's in a Name?

Reframing retirement in a new, positive way.

By Bob Benish

*What's in a name?  
That which we call a rose  
by any other name  
would smell as sweet.*

— William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

**W**ith my sincerest apologies to William Shakespeare, we must use the Bard whenever we think of the use and the impact of the written word. As a person who has spent years in marketing and communications, I know that often times we are the worst offenders of perpetuating colloquial chaos and vernacular homicide. We consciously seek to describe something in a palatable way that seems friendly, easy-to-comprehend, and instantly identifiable. As marketers, we want to create a product name that is familiar, describes the benefit, and sounds right. In seeking to achieve these objectives, we often have inadvertently done a disservice to clarity and comprehension. However, in the interest of justifying our actions, our goals may indeed be honest and sincere, as we believe we are providing a product with a better-than-average chance of acceptance rather than instant disaster.

For example, let's say that you just won a free meal to a four-star seafood restaurant in Chicago. Which one of these two award-winning entrees would you most likely order?

1. Baked Patagonian Toothfish
2. Blackened Slimehead

Suddenly, you may embrace your teenager's wish to become a vegetarian. The reality is that all of us fish eaters eat both of these fish frequently; they simply have been renamed to make them



sound more palatable to American diners. Patagonian Toothfish is most commonly known as Chilean Sea Bass and Slimehead can be found on menus as either Roughy or Orange Roughy.

So what does this have to do with retirement? Without being able to articulate it, millions of people who hear the word "retirement" think: old, decrepit, near-death, useless, diminished, or dementia. Perhaps not as gross as Slimehead, but it doesn't sound so great, does it? And, you wonder why your employees do not want to read or talk about their retirement plan.

*"Hope I die before I get old"*  
— The Who

Even before The Who sang "My Generation" and popularized the sentiment, American culture feasted on the young and was uncomfortable with the old. Unlike European and Eastern society where the older generation is revered, Americans never really understood what to do with people as they aged. Perhaps it is the DNA of an America built by young people who left behind an older generation and their traditions as they sailed to the New World. Perhaps it is the

essence of America that thrives on the new and often bulldozes the past without pause for historical consequence. The result is that we live in cities that (other than a few enlightened cities with strong Historic Commissions like Chicago, Boston, Charleston, etc.) bear little resemblance to what they looked like 100 years ago.

### Let's Reframe Retirement


Throughout 2012 and beyond, PSCA will seek to create a new discourse on Reframing Retirement. At our 65th Annual National Conference in New Orleans, we will assemble industry thought leaders to discuss what we need to do today to preserve the retirement system of the future. The first step

may be the hardest, because we may have to look for a new word for retirement itself.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines retirement as: 1. *The act of retiring.* 2. *The state of being retired.* 3. *Withdrawal from one's occupation, business or office.* 4. *Withdrawal into privacy or seclusion.* 5. *A place of privacy or seclusion, a retreat. See synonyms at solitude.*

So how appealing is this to a 21-year-old, a 40-year-old, or, for that matter, a 70-year-old? Do we want to emulate other members of the animal kingdom and quietly go off into the woods when it's our time to die? Personally, that's not my plan. Nor, do I believe it is the plan for millions of healthy, vibrant,

and robust Americans who successfully survived life and who are looking forward to discovering new and exciting possibilities.

So help me in my personal quest to find a new word for retirement. Go to our Facebook page, blog, or find us on Twitter, and tell me what you think. Let's create a new vision of the future and engage all generations into embracing saving for the long term. Let's find a new word, phrase, or "marketing hook" to neutralize the negative connotations associated with retirement and build a foundation of positive expectation. 

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