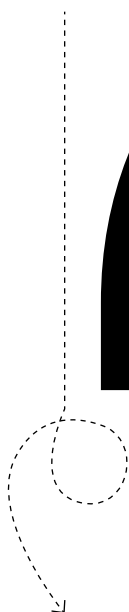




**ACT**



**Who hasn't thought of abandoning their career for something completely different – something exciting, meaningful, daring? These alumni did just that, sacrificing a bit of security to follow their passion, make a difference – or both. And even with the economy in the dumps, they say it's worth it.**

IT WASN'T THAT Dan Goldstein disliked his job. On the contrary. He thought the financial services industry was exciting and found real satisfaction helping his clients manage their money. And yet, after ten years, he felt his enthusiasm waning. "I've always approached my professional life with a sense of ideology," he says. "But as you move up the corporate hierarchy, you become aware that there is less and less idealism. It becomes more and more focused on profit for motive."

So, Goldstein (CGS'84, CAS'86) took a dramatic step: he abandoned his comfortable corporate career to pursue his passion. He

and his business partner, who also jumped the corporate ship, decided "that we were going to take the business acumen we had and apply it to businesses that supported the ideology of environmentalism and social responsibility."

In 2002, they opened a dry cleaners that used a nontoxic, noncarcinogenic solvent, and it grew by a thousand percent. They sold it and invested the proceeds in wind farms and solar technology. Today, Goldstein runs one of their latest ventures: Clear Conscience Café, in Cambridge's Central Square. The café's soups, salads, breads, and sandwich fixings are organic, as is the coffee, which is



DAN GOLDSTEIN ditched a career in financial services to open Clear Conscience Café in Cambridge, which offers organic food and fair-trade coffee.

shade-grown — without pesticides or synthetic herbicides and fertilizers — and fair traded. The building was designed with renewable resources, energy-efficient products, and reclaimed materials. (The exotic mixes with the mundane: tables are made of sunflower seed husks and bamboo, and windows are made of recycled Coca-Cola bottles.)

Goldstein is living a new kind of American dream — the dream of ditching the sensible occupation you trained for and launching a second career that is more meaningful. And he's part of a movement: approximately 9.5 percent of Americans between the ages of forty-four and seventy — some 5 million to 8.5 million — are working in so-called encore careers, according to Civic Ventures, a think tank focusing on baby boomers, work, and aging.

Encore careers are more than just new jobs, says Phyllis N. Segal, Civic Ventures vice president. “Essentially, it’s a new stage of work that combines income, personal meaning, and social impact,” she says. “Social purpose work is most often in the nonprofit or public sector, but it could be in for-profit work where social purpose is more compelling or as compelling as the bottom line.”

How might the ailing economy affect the trend? Segal says that more people will have to continue working past midlife. “Even if one

were to aspire to play golf for twenty or thirty years, there will be fewer people who can afford to do that,” she says. “There are seventy-eight million baby boomers. If half are able to follow their aspiration and direct their time after midlife to working for the common good, that’s forty million people. It’s a huge workforce for change.”

Not all second careers are about contributing to the common good. Some are about passion, or entrepreneurship, or freedom from the restraints of a desk job. “People want to work somewhere or do a job that mirrors their personal interests,” says Allison Nawoj, a career advisor with online job site CareerBuilder.com. “If they are going to pick a career that’s going to be demanding of them, they want to do something they’re passionate about.”

None of the alumni interviewed for this article expressed regrets about switching careers midstream, even given the recent economic downturn. Goldstein, who went from making six figures to a much smaller income, says his quality of life and his lifestyle have hardly changed. “I’m a man of quite modest requirements.” Besides, he says, he measures wealth by a different metric. “I think that when people talk about being rich, they’re using a conventional definition,” he says. “I think there’s another kind of rich.” *Cynthia K. Buccini*



## THE BLOW-UP ARTIST

*He left patent law for balloons — and joy*

IN 2003, TODD NEUFELD was preparing to open a practice as a patent attorney when he came to the blunt realization that while he was interested in law, he was not passionate about it. What he really wanted to do, he discovered, was something he's enjoyed doing since high school: balloon sculpting.

Neufeld's creations are nothing like the simple balloon hats or flowers created by your average street performer. "Part of what makes it challenging is to take something regular, say, a dog, that everybody expects, and make it in a way that they don't expect," says Neufeld (LAW'00). "So, the dog might have white eyeballs and a black nose and a tongue hanging down, or have a bone in its mouth, or be peeing on a fire hydrant. You've taken it in a whole new direction."

Neufeld's Twisted Balloon Company, which he operates out of his Brooklyn, New York, home, has taken that concept and run with it. He's created life-sized sculptures of people — caricatures, really — as well as cartoon characters, kid-sized cars, giant bouquets, mini helicopters. You name it, he can make it. He has even participated, with other balloon artists, in the construction of a 100,000-balloon haunted house, in Rochester, New York.

He performs in balloon shows and at schools, parties, festivals, and other events. He's appeared on the *Today Show*, *Nightline*, and in April 2008, the *Late Show with David Letterman*, where he created a balloon caricature of the show's stage manager, Biff Henderson.

Neufeld, now thirty-four, had been working as a legal consultant after graduating from the School of Law. "I guess I'd be making a lot more money ten years out of law school practicing patent law," says Neufeld, who continues to draw on his legal skills, as an author (*Sign Here! Contracts for Balloon Entertainers*) and a speaker. "But I don't think I'd have the time to

➤ **TODD NEUFELD** says his balloon creations are good for the soul. They're pretty good company, too.



enjoy it. I also think it does something good for your soul to be in a business like mine. When you think about the times in your life when you call a lawyer, those are often troublesome

times. In general, I don't get called when a loved one dies or things are falling apart. I get calls for celebrations, and I think that affects your entire perspective on life." *CKB*





→ **DANA BRANDWEIN OATES** creates ceramic pieces that feel handmade and serene, much like her life these days.

## DESIGNING A NEW LIFE

*By slowing the tempo, she found a muse*

THE WEEK OF her forty-fifth birthday, Dana Brandwein Oates wasn't contemplating the onset of a midlife crisis. Instead, rather triumphantly, she was finishing one — selling her New York apartment and preparing for her debut on the New York art scene.

That week two years ago was the culmination of a career change that began in 2004, when Oates (COM'84) left her senior marketing job at Elektra Records to “dabble” in art and design, something she had always wanted to do. While trying to break into product design, she took pottery classes. Her mother suggested she have a sample sale, and to Oates's surprise, her ceramic pieces sold out. Encouraged, she named her line DBO Home, created

a Web site, and began shopping pieces to magazine editors. Now, DBO Home products are sold in stores nationwide, and ceramics is her full-time job.

A few years out of college, where Oates majored in advertising, a temp job at PolyGram became a permanent position in marketing, working with artists like AC/DC and Bjork. She later jumped to East West Records, which merged with Elektra. Oates spent twenty years there, but another tumultuous merger felt like a sign that it was time to change course. Without that prompting, she says, “I'd have been too afraid to do it. Why else would I leave my cushy job, my salary?”

But she also remembers a vague dissatisfaction with her marketing job. “It started getting frustrating. I really wanted to do something with a beginning and an end, something that you could say you produced yourself.”

In 2005, she and her husband, sculptor Daniel Oates, converted their weekend home in Connecticut into

their permanent residence. Oates now spends her days in her studio, where two assistants help her fill orders for her handmade dishware, vases, and lamps. The pieces have a sleek, modern shape, but are made with organic materials that reflect her rural surroundings — warm walnut wood, honeycomb prints, leaves and wildflowers rolled into clay. Her dog, Reuben, keeps her company while she sketches designs — a dramatic change from her old fast-paced, networking-heavy life.

“I'm responsible to myself,” she says. “There isn't anybody whose mood or spare stress becomes mine. I'm not going to get yelled at or asked to jump through fiery hoops. Now, I answer to me and I answer to my clients.”

The decision to sell their New York apartment was pivotal — an affirmation of her newfound direction. “Giving up my New York City-ness was a big deal,” Oates says. “It was me saying, ‘I really want to try having this business.’”  
*Katie Koch (CAS'09, COM'09)*

## GOOD COOKIES ARE A GOOD DAY'S WORK

*She's making dough, but not like before*

LIKE MANY ENTREPRENEURS, Mya Jacobson started small. Really small.

In 2004, she left her job as a trader on the American Stock Exchange to launch Feed Your Soul, an online purveyor of all-natural, oven-fresh cookies ([www.FeedYourSoulCookies.com](http://www.FeedYourSoulCookies.com)). Working from her studio apartment, she was up at four every morning, making dough, buying ingredients at the supermarket or eggs at BJ's, and baking cookies one tray at a time. "I was like a mad scientist in the kitchen," says Jacobson (CAS'96). Friends and family members who were out of work at the time were pressed

into service, packaging the cookies in attractive gift boxes and tins for a variety of occasions.

After Jacobson got some positive press from the trend-spotting online publication DailyCandy, "I started receiving phone calls for the shipping department, the marketing department, the wedding department," she says. Meanwhile, "we were washing dishes in the bathtub."

No more. Today, Jacobson has a national Internet business, a gourmet supermarket line, and a retail café in Jersey City, New Jersey. Cookies come in twenty varieties, up from four when she started. Each gift is packaged with an inspirational epigram appropriate to the occasion.

It's light years from her days on the trading floor (and nights at Brooklyn

Law School). "It was definitely a crazy work environment — a lot of screaming, a lot of arguing," Jacobson says. "I stood on a box in a crowd of eighteen men. It was stressful. But it was invigorating."

But Jacobson wanted to do something more creative, something that felt truer to who she is. "I think my life is more meaningful now," she says. "I feel like what I'm doing can affect somebody's day, even if it's just in a simple way. I'm more fulfilled. And to be honest, the stress of trading and law school was much greater than trying to grow this empire, because this seems to come more naturally to me."

And while she misses the security of a paycheck, she has no desire to return to the trading floor. "It smells a lot better where I am now." *CKB*

→ **MYA JACOBSON** left the trading floor of Wall Street for the kitchen, where she's building a cookie empire.







→ **JOHN BRINK** heard the call to ministry as he approached sixty. He answered it.

and an M.B.A. at Suffolk University, he'd spent twenty-five years in the development and marketing of medical devices, particularly for pediatric neurosurgery, and had felt proud of his contribution. But when Medtronic, his employer, moved his department from Massachusetts to California in 2004, he and his wife decided not to go along. He became a consultant, and that, he says, "gave me time to think."

Religion had always been important to him. On Sundays, for twenty years, he and his wife had attended both Catholic mass and services at the United Church of Christ. When he left the Catholic Church because of the sexual abuse scandals, he began working with young people at the UCC congregation.

In 2005, without telling anyone, Brink met with admissions officers at the Harvard Divinity School, the Episcopal Divinity School, and BU's School of Theology. Talking with STH's Earl Beane (CAS'63, STH'67,'68), since retired as director of admissions, "I knew BU was the place," Brink says. "He was the most pastoral and caring person in the questions he asked. When I told my wife, she said, 'Go for it.'"

His three years as a Master of Divinity student "were the happiest of my life," Brink says. "People related to me as who I am, without regard to age. That's how God relates to me, as who I am."

In his first career, Brink had often been a silent observer in operating rooms, marveling at what was being done, wondering about what else could be possible. He's finding that his new career inspires similar wonder. "It's just being there in the room and feeling God's presence take over. This is the natural flow of my self and energy." ■  
*Natalie Jacobson McCracken*

## THE SOUL IS WILLING

*After a happy career, he starts a more meaningful one*

"DO YOU THINK you're up to it?" one interviewer asked John Brink when he was being considered for the pastoral staff at the Dennis Union Church on Cape Cod, politely alluding to Brink's age. "I said, 'You keep up with me,'" recalls Brink (STH'08).

His answer was apparently the

right one, and early last November, the sixty-two-year-old began a late-in-life second career in the ministry as associate pastor at Dennis Union.

Brink, who lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts, had loved his first career. With a bachelor's degree in business at Indiana University