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WHEN RECRUITING TALENT OR  
THINKING ABOUT YOUR CAREER: THE  
BEST PREDICTOR OF FUTURE SUCCESS  
MAY NOT BE PAST SUCCESS.

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A rogue wave is a statistically rare 80-plus-foot wall of water that can sink a ship in seconds. It is caused by a collision of two or more waves coming together at different angles. Jonathan Brill, author of **Rogue Waves** (2021) and former Global Futurist and Research Director at Hewlett Packard, makes the case that economic and technology waves are colliding to make rogue waves more common.

## **Your Career vs The Needs of Business**

### **Owners:**

Business owners like consistent growth and financial predictability but surviving rogue waves requires corporate agility. How do you

balance these competing forces? You would like job consistency, financial predictability, and clear paths for climbing the corporate ladder. Surviving rogue waves requires flexibility and continuous re-invention.

Rogue Waves mean two waves colliding at the same time. One wave is called Long Middle Age. The second wave is called Short Job Tenure.

### **Wave #1: Long Middle Age**

Age 65 used to be a time when people would retire and spend their "golden years" playing golf and canasta. Perhaps your parents and grandparents retired this way. Consider the following:

Bob Dylan released a new album at age 79.

Betty White did a voice-over for the new Disney release of “Toy Story” at age 98.

At age 85, actress Sophia Loren starred in an Italian movie called “The Life Ahead.”

Bruce Springsteen, age 71, opened on Broadway with a one-person show.

People in the developed world are living longer, staying healthy longer, and accomplishing things later in life. For example, the fraction of over 85s in the United States classified as disabled dropped by 33% between

1982 and 2005. The share of individuals of this age who are institutionalized fell nearly by 50%. (Brooks, 2021).

In 1900, life expectancy in the United States was 47 years. Today it is 78. The best way to grasp the implication is to visualize middle age now extended to mid-70s.

That is a BIG wave!

## **Wave #2: Short Job Tenure**

Jonathan Brill describes three trends leading to a reduction in career stability/predictability. (1) 30% of mid-level jobs could be eliminated by the mid-2030s thanks to the increasing use of

Artificial Intelligence. (2) The center of economic and political gravity is moving away from the United States and Europe. By 2035, 2.1 billion people in China will be earning \$35,000 per year or more and 87% of the world's economic growth will be in Asia. (3) More innovation, faster product life cycles, and faster M&As. (2021).

The foundation of retirement savings is based on a mid-twentieth century model of slow and consistent contributions funded by corporations, employees, and the federal government.

Short job tenure explodes that assumption.

Wave #1 and Wave #2 each are significant.

But these two waves are colliding. The result is a rogue wave.

Below are three suggestions based on our work with senior-level leaders.

### **It's Not Personal**

As you approach age 60, do you have enough retirement savings to support yourself and your partner until the age of 90? If your answer is negative, do not think of yourself as having failed. You are working in a different economy than your parents. Doing some “retirement job” for cash flow may be the norm. It is not a mark of personal failure.

The word “retirement” will no longer mean the absence of work. It may include work but with more flexibility.

### **Design a Continuing Education Program**

Be suspicious of job candidates who focus on accomplishments more than ten years old. Be suspicious of job candidates whose last education was over ten year ago. In the “old days,” the best predictor of future success is past success. In this new world, the best predictor of future success may be openness to future change.



For professionals approaching age 50, this means putting together a plan for continuing education. Institutions of higher education are responding to this trend with a proliferation of certification programs. Be strategic about how you spend your time and money.

If you plan to remain within your current corporate structure, taking courses on strategy and policy may help position you for higher-level jobs. But that assumes you will be climbing the corporate ladder in the future.

If your future is going to be providing operations-focused consulting as a self-employed consultant, then you want to be up to date in how to employ the newest technology.

We recommend your resume show you as someone who is constantly learning things.

## **Change Your Negative Attitude About 1099 Work**

W2 refers to a federal IRS tax form for full-time employees. 1099 refers to a tax form for project-based talent like interim professionals.

The wrong question to ask a career consultants is, “SHOULD I go into consulting?” The correct question is, “WHEN I go into consulting will I make enough money?” Start learning the tools of the 1099 trade before you need to use those tools.

## **Summary**

Rogue waves can overwhelm companies and individuals. We predict a rogue wave in your future through the collision of two forces: (1) longer middle age and (2) shorter job tenure. We have suggested three approaches to help you thrive and also to help recruit talent appropriate for this new era.

The best predictor of future success is no longer success in the past. The best predictor is openness to change/new ideas.

## **References**

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