



# CAREER COACH

BY LORNA GAREY

## DEAR CAREER COACH:

I'm ready to start my climb up the IT career ladder, but my boss' boss isn't retiring any time soon, so my boss is stuck and so am I. Is there a movement toward later retirement, and if so, will the Bush administration's approval for companies to convert pensions into cash-balance plans exacerbate this trend?

STAGNANT IN SEATTLE

## DEAR STAGNANT:

Cash-balance plans are not new, but conversions to such plans were put on hold while the government investigated if the plans discriminate against older workers. The Bush administration lifted that moratorium in December in the wake of a controversial Treasury Department report concluding that these plans do not discriminate.

But this is only one pixel in the big picture. Retirement is indeed being delayed. The first baby boomer will turn 57 this year, and the eligibility age for full Social Security benefits is 65 years, 8 months and rising—for those born after 1960, the age is 70. And stock market woes have radically altered many older workers' retirement plans, especially in light of increased Social Security angst.

But this doesn't mean your career has to grind to a halt. The Department of Labor says six out of the 10 top growth occupations are in IT. If you can't move straight up, consider moving sideways temporarily. Enlist your



boss' help. If you can develop a mentoring relationship she's more likely to be honest about your prospects (or lack thereof) with your current employer.

"Consider your manager one of your mentors, even if she doesn't think of herself in that role," advises Linda Phillips-Jones, Ph.D., principal consultant, The Mentoring Group. "Indicate your interest in future assignments and promotions. Give her evidence you're serious about moving ahead." (For more tips, visit The Mentoring Group's site at [www.mentoringgroup.com](http://www.mentoringgroup.com))

I work for a large Midwest insurance company that plans to implement wireless networking. Can you suggest a certification in the field of wireless technology

that has industry approval and acceptance?

WILD FOR WI-FI

## DEAR WI-FI:

Yes, it's called the Certified Wireless Network Professional, or CWNP, program and is offered by the Wireless LAN Association ([www.wlana.org](http://www.wlana.org)), a nonprofit educational trade association for the WLAN industry. The CWNP program has four levels: CWNA (Administrator), CWSE (Security Expert), CWNI (Integrator) and CWNE (Engineer). Dave Molta, our wireless technology expert, says the Center for Emerging Network Technologies at Syracuse University has been evaluating the CWNP training materials and is quite impressed by their breadth and depth. **nwc**

Send your questions to [careercoach@nwc.com](mailto:careercoach@nwc.com)

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL GUIDERA

## GAME PLAN

Don't forget your alma mater when job hunting. Alumni organizations can be great sources for networking, counseling and job training services and may even host private job boards. Most institutions have alumni sections on their Web sites. For example, MIT's alumni page ([web.mit.edu/alum/](http://web.mit.edu/alum/)) has everything from job lists to headlines of interest to graduates. Find your school's URL at [collegeapps.about.com/blus.htm](http://collegeapps.about.com/blus.htm).