

Steering our young in the right direction

Mark Pavilons]



As our young prodigees end another school year, and get one step closer to adulthood and careers, it's a time for reflection.

It's not any easier today than it was in my day for teens and young adults to make such important life decisions. There's no secret code book and no leather-bound ancient text that spells out the top jobs.

Our kids ? our future ? need our guidance. We need to summon up decades of experience and common sense and dish out pearls of wisdom. Okay, at least we need to tell them the harsh realities of the world.

There's no question that with each generation, society and the world get a little more complicated. There are always challenges, hurdles, trials and tribulations. They just take different forms and require new and improved methods to tackle them.

Being at the tail end of the post-war baby boom, my generation was left on its own to discover the world and earn a living. It was a time when life was rather simple and opportunities were still plentiful, if you were committed, lucky and caught some breaks.

Times have changed.

When my wife and I purchased our first home in 1999, prices were relatively reasonable. When we purchased our second home in 2008, it was a different story. If it weren't for a small profit from our first home and a large donation from mom, our current home would have been out of reach. Our home today, judging by area sales, has increased by \$200,000 in six years (more than the price of our first home).

My parents bought four acres outside of Bolton in 1964 and built their bungalow in 1972 for roughly \$35,000. While their investment increased tenfold by the late 1980s, they missed the huge spike. That same property today, owned by our former veterinarian, would likely hover around the \$900,000 mark. So, in order to regain the family homestead, it would take a lottery win. That's not pessimistic, that's simply the way it is.

I worry that the future, in terms of real estate, will be a huge challenge for my children. Maybe that's the way it always has been. Maybe not.

I've interviewed a few people in recent months who came to Canada almost penniless and managed to amass a fortune by working hard, seizing opportunities and taking risks.

Yes, rags to riches tales were common from the 1950s through the 1980s. In those times, interest rates were low, the cost of living was low, real estate was low and the economy was on the verge of exploding and going in all directions. The time was right for land speculation.

I doubt my kids, with a \$100 in their pockets, could do the same today.

As parents, we do what we must and all that we can to ensure a positive future for our offspring. But here again, there's a limit to our generosity, not in terms of love and compassion, but the cold, bottom-line numbers.

My daughter will soon get her driver's license and would like a car.

When I was 16, I drove my parents' cars. When I turned 19, my parents bought me my first car for \$900. Gas was cheap, insurance

was cheap and repairs were affordable.

Today that's a totally different scenario, as parents of driving teens fully understand.

My daughter has been lucky enough and driven enough, to get part-time jobs. She wants to work! However, wanting to work isn't enough these days. To achieve a job nowadays, applicants need to have a strong resume that clearly states all of their past achievements and experiences. Most employers don't even want to meet the applicant, they will just base their decision off their resume. That's why family members were telling my daughter that she needed to be following [Austin Belcak's templates](#) to ensure she has an attractive resume. Eventually, she was able to get a job. All of the experience she's able to get now can only help down the road.

At 16, she really doesn't know what she wants. She loves to volunteer and mission work, but I pointed out such passion won't necessarily pay the bills. If she can combine the two, that's great. Perhaps a gig with Doctors Without Borders.

Jeeze, at 16, my main focus was trying to get served alcohol in a bar for the first time.

I drew upon my talents for language, writing and my inherent sense of humor and people skills, to pursue journalism. While I believe I've turned out to be a talented writer, it's not the most lucrative profession.

Just what are these days?

Well, according to a recent online study, the following are the top fun jobs that pay well:

1. Video Game Player
2. Voice-Over Artist
3. Chocolatier
4. Ferrari Driving Instructor
5. Mystery Shopper
6. Toy Creator
7. Personal Shopper
8. Astronaut
9. Professional Athlete
10. Brewmaster

Am I too old to sign up for any of these?

I remember the movie "Big" starring a young Tom Hanks and thought, that a "toy tester" would be the ultimate job. Judging from the above list, it seems I'm right.

And just what post-secondary course does one take to become a "mystery shopper" or "voice-over artist"?

What about trades? Despite Ontario's lack of a comprehensive trade school and apprenticeship program, tradesmen and women will always be in demand, always.

From electricians and plumbers to carpenters and elevator mechanics, skilled trades offer very good remuneration and longevity, things lacking in many professions these days.

I must admit that I'm a thinker and "idea person," not one who's proficient with hammer and nails. I can assemble Ikea furniture and tighten some loose bolts and screws, but that's about the extent of my talents. I did help my dad with some minor auto repairs in the days when the engine compartment did not resemble an octopus fighting with a robot.

I can still compete with the best in my profession and I sometimes still aim for the sky. Why not? As someone told me recently, you have to put food on the table. And boy do my kids eat!

Love will keep us together. But strong direction, advice a game plan, and solid Plan B are also vital these days.

Few of us can eat chocolate while driving a Ferrari and playing video games. Good luck!