

Woman'sDay

live well every day



time for a change

How to do what you've always wanted

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SLOW DOWN AT midlife? You must be kidding! Many of us are using our 40s and 50s to reinvent ourselves. We're more self-confident, and that makes it easier to make a big move. Are you ready to change direction? These women were - in a big way!



Then: Health-care administrator
Now: Franchisee Visiting Angels
Constance Hill-Johnson, 47, Cleveland

Five years ago, after losing her job to corporate downsizing, Constance decided to buy a franchise called Visiting Angels, which provides nonmedical home care to seniors. Constance was often traveling from her home in St. Louis to Cleveland to help her mom care for her ailing father, who later passed away.

She became convinced that there was a demand for this type of service. She used some savings to pay the franchise fee, moved in with her mother and set up shop.

Constance's best moves

Find the right start-up strategy Buying a franchise rather than starting a business from scratch worked well for her. "With a franchise, you have proven methods for everything from marketing to accounting. It's all good."

Hit the ground running After attending a week-long corporate training program, she ordered letterhead and business cards, and wrote an informational letter to send out to prospective referral sources. Then she hired staff.

Expand your reach She sent out a mass mailing to local hospitals, assisted-living centers and other organizations, and placed ads in community newspapers and circulars. She also joined the local Chamber of Commerce and gave free talks on long-term care planning.

More than four years later, Constance's Visiting Angels franchise is thriving. She has moved her business to an office complex and hired a staff to help with coordinating caregivers and other functions.

"I'm working harder than I ever did, but I love being a business owner. This is my baby," says Constance.