

By Samantha Stainburn



(re)inventing THEMSELVES

Martha Stewart was a stockbroker
(before she was a media mogul).

Al Franken was a comedian on *Saturday Night Live*
(before he became a U.S. Senator).

Barack Obama was a community organizer
(before he became U.S. President).

Four Alumni Find Their Calling in New Careers

Americans are known for taking advantage of the opportunity to reinvent themselves when faced with a challenge or in need of a new one. A 2010 study from the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that young baby boomers—Americans born between 1957 and 1964—had changed jobs 11 times, on average, by the time they were 44. In recent years, as high as 9.6 percent of laid-off corporate executives have chosen to start their own businesses rather than continue with their previous careers, according to outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. And a

second act is becoming more common as people live longer, and find 65 is too young to retire. For some, reinvention is a necessity, as old jobs have disappeared in the economic crisis, or investments have taken a hit.

The following Adelphi alumni hit it out of the park when they reinvented their careers. But no transformation is easy, and each of them had to dig deep, contemplate what they really wanted, and even draw on lessons they learned while in Garden City.



Anita D'Amico Ph.D. '84

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Reinvention as a Way of Life

Anita D'Amico Ph.D. '84

It can be daunting to start again and have to learn the business, culture, and rules of a new field. But that's never prevented cyber-security expert Anita D'Amico Ph.D. '84 from jumping into a new career. "Ignorance has never stopped me from success," she says, laughing.

As director of Secure Decisions, the cyber-security division of visual software development firm Applied Visions in Northport, Long Island, Ms. D'Amico's current business is information warfare. Companies and governments are constantly under attack online, as cyber criminals attempt to steal credit card information, plans for new products, and state secrets or try to compromise national security. To help potential victims fight back, Ms. D'Amico and her team develop systems that enable clients to visualize their attackers and the security status of critical infrastructure. In a typical week, she'll meet with clients to whiteboard new software ideas; write a research proposal for funding from an agency like the Air Force National Laboratory or the Department of Homeland Security for a new type of software; reach out to universities, defense contractors, and small businesses to staff teams for new projects; and present her firm's latest research at a conference.

Ms. D'Amico loves her job. "I like envisioning something that doesn't exist and then, sometimes years later, seeing it happen," she says. "And the work is important." But where she is now is worlds away from where she started—as a research psychologist with an undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania, a master's from Old Dominion University, and a Ph.D. in human behavior research from Adelphi. While working on her Ph.D., she needed an income, so she took a job as a research assistant with a private research firm that worked with the U.S. Merchant Marine in nearby Kings Point, New York. Within four years, she became director of the Academy's Computer-Aided Operations Research Facility, running a ship simulator that studied bridge layout, navigational aids, harbor design, watch-standing fatigue, and work scheduling, among other topics. A study she conducted on the assimilation of women into the U.S. merchant fleet caught the eye of a recruiter for Grumman Corp., and the aerospace contractor hired her to assist on an upcoming project on women's hygiene in space. When that project didn't materialize, they assigned her to work on the displays and controls for the Space Shuttle's robotic arm, followed by the automation of joint STARS surveillance aircraft.

Ms. D'Amico impressed Grumman executives with her ability to learn quickly and conduct research projects even when she wasn't an expert in the subject, so they asked her to start a Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (C3I) research program. Then they asked her to oversee research into digital maps and charts. In 1994, after Grumman was acquired by Northrop Corp., Ms. D'Amico wrote a memo to Northrop executives noting that the company conducted little significant research into information warfare. The result: Northrop Grumman, the fourth largest defense contractor in the country, made her head of its first information warfare division, which launched new projects to develop technology to counter the growing threat.

"I used to be frustrated that I was constantly in the mode of not knowing what I was doing," says Ms. D'Amico. "When I started meeting with astronauts, for example, I didn't even know all the acronyms they used, like RMS (remote manipulator system) and EVA (extra-vehicular activity). Then I realized, this is what I'm good at. No matter where I went, the people in charge would say, 'We need to study this new area. Who's going to do it? Oh, Anita can do it.'" In other words, Ms. D'Amico's work wasn't really maritime issues or space travel or battle management; it was reinvention itself.

Ms. D'Amico believes her ability to walk in cold and grasp concepts quickly stems from her psychology training. "Psychologists are accustomed to dealing with variables," she says. "Human beings are somewhat unpredictable, so no matter what you study, there will be people who don't follow the rules exactly. Also, you never have the whole picture, and you never will. And you have to be comfortable with that in order to be successful." The experimental method helps psychologists deal with these situations, she explains: "I'll say, 'I don't understand everything, but let me understand the first layer.' Then let me zoom down a little bit more." She also credits her Ph.D. work at Adelphi for strengthening her ability to speak and write clearly, an essential skill for explaining brand-new concepts to colleagues and clients.

Ms. D'Amico joined Applied Visions in 1999, but she's still learning. "I was just at a conference last week, and I heard some 3-D visualization terms I didn't know," she says. "But I'm used to it. It's the nature of working in a dynamic and emerging field. And you can always learn."