
RetirePreneur: Brian Doherty

By Jenna Gottlieb Mon, Mar 2, 2015

Brian Doherty, former New York Life executive and now president of Filtech and author of the recent book, "Getting Paid to Wait," consults advisors and consumers on Social Security issues.

What I do: Currently, I am a Social Security author, speaker and consultant and my company is Filtech. I am presenting to different companies across the country, to the general public and financial advisor groups. Over 66% of today's beneficiaries are critically or totally dependent on Social Security to maintain their retirement lifestyle. With people living longer and longer, it's important to make the right claiming decision. My workshops aim to make it easy for Americans to delay claiming Social Security to age 70, and maximize their benefits, by showing them how they can get paid to wait.

<p>RetirePreneur: Brian Doherty Firm: Filtech, LLC Location: Schenectady, New York Niche: Social Security consultant, speaker and author Website: www.GettingPaidToWait.com</p>

Where I come from: I began my career as a financial advisor with Dean Witter and worked for 25 years in the financial services industry. I served as president and CEO of Key Bank's investment subsidiary, Key Investments, and vice president and national sales manager for New York Life's Retirement Income Security Division. While working for New York Life, I became increasingly focused on the importance of Social Security income in retirement. I retired to do speaking and Social Security workshops full time and to write mybook.

On owning a business: I left New York Life in September 2010. There's a freedom in being on your own. While New York Life still sponsors some of my presentations, it's kind of neat that they don't try to push me in any one direction. And while it's exciting being on your own, being able to finance it all can be challenging. It's been four years and I've spent more money than I thought I would. It's a more expensive venture than I anticipated.

My clients: There are two to four million people who make the decision of when to take Social Security every year. My clients are anyone who will be making a Social Security claiming decision in the future. I also work with advisors and financial institutions.

My new book: My book, *Getting Paid to Wait*, has just come out this January, and I will be launching my Paid to Wait Calculator on my website soon too. The first half of the book

addresses a series of nine “Why Wait Factors.” One factor, for example, is the cost of living adjustment (COLA) feature on Social Security. While everyone receives the same annual COLA on their benefits, when you apply that percentage to a larger amount it results in a bigger increase. So by delaying to age 70, you not only maximize your Social Security benefit, you also lock in the biggest dollar increases possible for the rest of your life. This is something people rarely consider and it’s the only pay raise most retirees receive in retirement. Over the course of a 15, 20, or 25 year retirement, this can make a huge difference.

My business model: My former employer, New York Life, has sponsored the majority of the presentations I have given over the last three years. Now that my book is available, I will be working with some other financial institutions as a speaker. I fully expect to sell a lot of books within the financial services industry, but my ultimate goal is to market my book to the general public. Over time, I expect to sell ten million books. My Social Security calculator will also be available on my website and there will be a nominal charge to use my calculator.

My biggest obstacles and how I overcome them: The Social Security space is very crowded. There are a lot of calculators and books currently available on the topic. I believe most of them have a similar message by focusing on the advantages of delaying benefits if you think you will live a long time, into your late 80s or 90s. They tell the consumer that there are many Social Security strategies available to them, some even state that a married couple may have tens of thousands of different claiming combinations to choose from and the best strategy depends upon how long they think they are going to live. During workshops and in my book, I give a few reasons why they should delay claiming their benefits as long as possible, ideally until age 70. Then I make it easier for them to do that, by showing them the one strategy that will pay them the most amount of Social Security income while they delay. So instead of telling them that there are literally thousands of different claiming combinations, I tell them the one strategy that will pay them the most amount of money while they wait.

My retirement philosophy: I have had a unique opportunity to get a real life glimpse of what retirement will be like. Over the last four years I really haven’t done much but focus on writing my book. Outside of some occasional public speaking, many times during those few years it felt like I was retired. Over this period of time, I realized two things about retirement. First, the day still goes by very fast. And, second, you still spend a lot of money.

I am a big believer in guaranteed lifetime income and plan on having multiple sources of it

in retirement. I am fortunate because I receive a monthly pension check from New York Life. I also plan on taking my own advice and waiting until age 70 to claim my Social Security benefits, thereby maximizing that source of guaranteed lifetime income. I also plan on purchasing an immediate annuity. My plan is to cover most of my expenses in retirement with guaranteed sources of lifetime income. There have been a number of studies done on what makes retirees happy. It turns out that retirees with the largest amount of guaranteed lifetime income are much happier in their retirement. If you want to be happier in retirement then get some more guaranteed lifetime income.

On shoring up Social Security: I think higher taxes would be the easiest way to go. Increasing the payroll tax from 6.2% to 7.7% for employers and employees would shore up Social Security for the next 75-100 years. We could also raise the earnings cap, which is currently at \$118,000. Only 6% of all wage earners in this country exceed the earnings cap and it would make a big difference to increase it to \$300,000 or \$400,000. Making the full retirement age older would be a type of benefit cut. Right now it's 67 for those born 1960 or later. I don't know if they need to do that, but if they do, it might provide a big savings. There might have to be trade-offs in fixing the system. It's important to remember that Social Security is the greatest anti-poverty program in the country and it needs to be preserved.

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