CAREERS

I was laid off from my 6-figure consulting job. Instead of looking for another job in the industry, I became a sex educator.

As told to Perri Ormont Blumberg Feb 3, 2025, 2:05 AM PT

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Paul Travis. Courtesy of Paul Travis

- **Paul Travis started his career as a marketing consultant but left the industry after a layoff.**
- **He launched a dating program for singles over 40 during the pandemic called The School for Love.**
- **Now, Travis is a certified sex educator and embraces a digital nomad lifestyle.**

This as-told-to essay is based on a conversation with Paul Travis, the 59-year-old founder of The School for Love based in Bainbridge Island, Washington. It has been edited for length and clarity.

I'm a sex educator and the founder of The School for Love. I have a BA in mathematics and computer science and completed the Harvard Executive Program in Brand Management.

After a two-year stint as the VP of marketing for Net Nanny Software in the early 2000s, I took my Harvard postgrad executive branding work into consulting for a variety of client engagements, from rebranding to new product launch to marketing systems implementation, in industries from food manufacturing to laser lighting to SaaS services.

In December 2013, I was engaged to implement a customer community program for Avalara, a fintech company. Eighteen months later, I transitioned to full-time employment as a senior program manager for the web marketing team.

After losing this job, I decided to leave consulting behind and become a sex educator.

I was laid off in September 2020

Avalara brought its first CMO aboard in late 2019. In January 2020, my manager told me that the two program management roles inside marketing would be eliminated. I set out to find another position within the company, but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and financial uncertainty, most hiring came to a standstill.

As we entered spring, I mentally braced for losing more than $10,000 monthly in income and benefits. I was earning six figures a year when I left Avalara. I'd enjoyed growing with the company through an IPO, but at the same time, I was tired of the increasing energy drain and uninterested in another corporate gig.

I was excited and uncertain when I was laid off in September 2020, but I trusted that I was embarking on the next big chapter of my life.

I knew I was interested in midlife dating

As David Bowie said, "Aging is an extraordinary process whereby you become the person you always should've been." I learned how important variety is to me, so returning to a past chapter like consulting (like returning to a past lover) didn't call to me — I wanted to build a company.

I researched a few ideas that had been in the back of my mind and decided to focus on midlife dating, with which I was extremely comfortable after my divorce following a 19-year marriage.

Given the lockdowns and masking during the pandemic, I understood how difficult this was for singles — many of whom say it was already more challenging than during the last 10 years.

Given my years of study in nonviolent communication, tantra, and interpersonal work, I felt a passion brewing to help people in this very different realm of training, propelled by COVID-19.

I started an online program for singles over 40

In February 2021, I launched my twelve-week online program, "The Great Dating Reset," for $999 under the umbrella Pandemic.Love to help spiritual singles over 40 cultivate "authintimacy" — a portmanteau of authenticity and intimacy.

I found my initial clients from advertising on Facebook. It was heartwarming to help Sue, a 52-year-old woman, navigate a new relationship and save her from being taken advantage of for a few thousand dollars. Equally so for Sally, who had been painfully dumped from a seven-year relationship and found esteem and self-love through the homework exercises.

Since rebranding in January 2022 as SchoolForLove.com, I've run two to three group programs online each year. Later in 2022, I created and hosted a summit for this same audience, "Dare to Date Differently," along with 12 other speakers.

I next became a certified sex educator

In speaking regularly with people about their dating lives and our program, I found just how often singles brought up sexuality as a core area of worry, shame, or frustration. I set out in 2023 to study with Dr. Martha Tara Lee in Singapore and became a certified sex educator, certified by AASECT (the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists).

I haven't yet reached my former salaried income level, but I've lowered my expenses by renting out my house and having a tight budget. I downsized into my Sprinter van and embraced van life. I'm thankful technology allows me to work as a digital nomad. I've traveled more in the past three years than ever.

I'd make the choice all over again

I'm delighted to make a genuine difference in people's love lives rather than in corporate software and marketing.

I'm writing a book on "Authintimacy," so I spend a lot of time on social media and marketing systems, talking to clients and prospects, and managing several freelancers. I'm in the process of launching my second program, Authintimacy Brotherhood.

I work six to seven days a week from anywhere between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., but I take time every day to be in nature, play with my dog, and nurture my spirit away from the computer.

Society teaches us to get on the "life escalator," and everything will eventually work out for retirement. That's not how my life has worked, but I have no fears about retirement.

I've had some devastating detours, awesome advances, and circuitous change-ups. I have no career regrets and appreciate the various chapters and people in my life.