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## Career change: how to get the career you want

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**As many of us become the 'serial monogamists' of the job market, notching up multiple careers, the concept of a job for life is long gone.**

Research recently carried out by the Skills Commission has revealed that people in the UK spend an average of four years and 10 months in jobs that fail to make the most of their skills. And 41% of those questioned admitted to having been in the wrong job at some point in their careers.

Today, more and more people are opting for new careers, rather than continuing to languish in roles to which they are poorly suited. But while TV schedulers love stories about plucky Brits who give it all up to become organic wine makers in the south of France, the fact remains that there are far more failures than successes.

### **Do you really need to change career?**

Before you do anything drastic, sit down and ask yourself why you need a change. Is it really a desire for a completely new path, or simply unhappiness with some aspect of your current role or organisation? Consider that it might even be a people problem – changing career is a big step to take if the root of the problem is a straightforward inability to work with your boss. Think through your options. Would a move to a different department, or even to a similar role in another organisation, stem the ennui?

### **Consider the implications**

You may be footloose and fancy-free, but chances are you have financial and personal commitments. Can your family afford for you to take a huge pay cut? Could you cope without your trips to the manicurist and made-to-measure suits?

And consider whether you are at a stage in life where you are willing to put in long hours or dedicate your weekends to study. Remember that you may have to start at the bottom – again. Not everyone is able to move from being a senior executive back to being the new kid on the block, so decide whether you're up to the transition before you make a final decision.

### **Focus on you**

Career coach Karen Williams, of Self Discovery Coaching, says: "If you are at a stage in your life when you are seeking a new career, start by focusing on you." She recommends analysing your strengths and weaknesses, and skills, experience and qualification – and listing what you like and don't like about your current job.

Regardless of whether or not you have a fixed idea of how you want your new career to pan out, now's the time to seek professional advice. A career psychologist will tell you what line of work you should be in, based on aptitude and skills. They may even suggest a role that hadn't occurred to you.

If you can afford to take time off from your present job, do some work experience. It's a good way of making contacts, and will provide a useful insight into whether or not the career you've earmarked really is the one for you.

### **Back to school**

Rather than suddenly leaping into the great unknown, enrol in evening classes, and get a qualification appropriate to the area in which you want to work. If you've been in the workforce for some time, you may find that the course doesn't teach you much that you don't already know, but it will give you confidence, and potential employers will see it as a sign of commitment. Your tutors will be able to provide practical advice – where the best jobs are advertised, how to make the most of your experience in other industries, and even who to approach for employment.

### **Be brave**

The news that you are changing careers will be met with a range of responses. Some people will be enthusiastic and full of encouragement, others will be negative or even openly jealous – you'll here a lot of 'You're so lucky. I wish I could do that'. But you've made an informed decision and you know it's the right one - so just do it.

## **If you only do five things**

1. Analyse why you want to move
2. Get professional advice
3. Do your research
4. Include your family in your plans
5. Get qualifications in your new area

## **For more information**

### **Books**

- *The Guardian: how to change your career*, Debbie Andalo, Guardian Newspapers, £7.99, ISBN 0852650663
- *Get the job: easy steps to the job you want*, Malcolm Hornby, Prentice Hall, £12.99, ISBN 0273702122

### **Article**

- [Get what you want in 2008](#)

**Expert's view:** Karen Williams, career coach, Self Discovery Coaching

### **What are the biggest challenges?**

One of the biggest challenges is finding a career that will meet your ambitions. If you continually change direction, this will be reflected on your CV, which may make it more difficult to get the job you desire.

It is important to recognise whether a career change is the best option. You may be dissatisfied in your current job and want immediate change, but the challenge is deciding if this is the right step. And remember to consider the impact on other parts of your life, including your work-life balance, family and finances.

### **What should you avoid doing?**

- Avoid leaving for the wrong reasons or making a snap decision to leave a job. Carefully plan your next step before you resign, as the grass may not be greener on the other side.
- Avoid choosing a new employer whose objectives do not share your values research will help you to choose the right company.
- Avoid staying where you are. If you are unhappy, it is time to take action.

### **Top tips**

- Carry out a review of your strengths and weaknesses.
- Take into account all aspects of your life when making a change.
- Plan your future career and ensure each step moves you closer to your goal.