



Career Choices

Short Ebook to assist your
making career choices.

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What Will You Do When You Need to Make a Big Career Decision?

Whatever your career path, you'll probably run into a few occasions when you're faced with a decision that could dramatically change your future. With so much at stake, you want to do all that you can to be prepared. Maybe you're torn between two attractive job offers, or asking yourself if a promotion is really worth uprooting your family to go live in an another state.

Figure out what's important to you and take actions that will bring you closer to your goals. Try these suggestions that will build up your confidence for making big career decisions.

Gather Resources

Start collecting information and feedback now even if you're not facing any major dilemmas in your work life. You'll be glad that you got a head start before your decision making skills are put to a real test.

Keep a journal. Writing down your thoughts and aspirations will help you to understand yourself. You'll see how your priorities change over time and spot recurring patterns.

Take an inventory. Identify your strengths and the areas where you want to grow. Focus on what you like to do and what you're good at.

Ask friends and family. Your loved ones can often provide valuable input. Maybe they'll notice talents that you take for granted.

Consult experts. Reach out to your college career center to see what services they offer for alumni. Ensure your network includes colleagues who can assist you with the next stage in your career path. If you hire a career coach, check references and credentials, and ask for a short-term contract so you can test your compatibility.

Browse online tools. Thanks to modern technology, you're no longer limited to making a list of pros and cons on the back of a napkin. You'll find lots of free decision-making tools and templates online to help structure the process.

Weigh the Factors

Remember that there's often no single correct answer, and you can use any choice as an opportunity to learn and grow. At the same time, understanding tradeoffs will help you to address your practical and emotional needs, and maximize the returns on your efforts.

Think beyond money. Once you have enough funds to cover your basic expenses, nonfinancial factors may be more important to your happiness. Does the opportunity excite you and align with your values?

Sleep on it. Reconsider your conclusions after a good night's sleep or a long walk. You may change your mind or confirm your first reaction.

Accept uncertainty. Remember that any move involves some risk. Focus on the issues you can control and make peace with the rest.

Research alternatives. Examine various options before making up your mind. Then, come up with a short list to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

Think long term. Visualize where you could be in 5 or 10 years if you make a certain decision. Ask yourself if this is really what you want for your career.

Try it out. If possible, find a way to test your decision before you make a final commitment. Maybe you can take a single course at night before you quit your job to go back to school full time.

Make contingency plans. Give yourself something to fall back on. Either you'll succeed the first time or you'll be in a stronger position to try again.

Sound decisions lead to smart career moves. Gathering information and deliberating carefully will help you to achieve work-life balance and find the job satisfaction you're looking for.

7 Success Tips for Changing Careers

Weather forecasters can't reliably predict the weather three days from now. How is a 22-year old supposed to pick the right career for the next 40-plus years? Most of us will contemplate a career change at some point. It might be a conscious decision or the loss of a job might be the genesis of a change.

The thought of a new career path can be both exciting and daunting. The risk and reward can both be high. With an effective approach, the risk can be minimized and the reward maximized.

For greater success, consider these tips when you want to change your career:

Be clear on why you wish to change careers. Clearly, you're dissatisfied with your current career, but why? Too many hours? Not satisfying? Salary too low for your field? Understand why you wish to change careers and ensure that your new path won't result in the same situation.

Avoid fleeing a career and taking the first opportunity. Make a conscious decision about your future and move toward it.

Understand what you want. Research shows that people love general characteristics about their work. The actual job doesn't matter very much. Helping people, the ability to be creative, and autonomy are a few examples. There are multiple careers that can provide the job characteristics that you crave.

Avoid believing that you must identify the perfect job. There are several options out there that would fit the bill nicely.

Think big but be realistic. Depending on your age and background, the time for playing professional baseball, becoming a neurosurgeon, or sitting on the Supreme Court may have passed. Not every possible career is a viable option.

Setting goals that can never be reached leads to frustration and a lack of progress.

Determine the skills and education you need for your new career. Do you need a new degree? Public speaking skills? Computer skills? What do you need in order to transition to the next level? Begin developing the necessary skills as quickly as possible.

Avoid quitting until you have a new job. You may not have the option, but if possible, wait until you have another position before you leave your current job. It's surprising how quickly a savings account can be depleted when you don't have an income.

If you've lost your job unexpectedly, consider taking a job in the short-term until you've successfully made your career change. The best part-time job would be related to your new field.

Realize that you may have to start at the bottom. You may be a plant manager for a Fortune 500 company right now, but your first position as a computer programmer might put you back into a shared cubicle, working on non-essential projects. The bigger the change, the higher probability that you'll have to start back at the beginning.

Make connections in your desired field as soon as possible. Do you know anyone in your prospective field? Can you do an internship or volunteer? Is there a part-time position available to get your feet wet? It's so easy to connect with people today, it shouldn't be too challenging to find someone you can talk to and begin networking.

Think carefully before changing careers. Ideally, this will be the only time you'll need to change careers! Determine what your current career is lacking and find a new career that ticks all your boxes. Understand that you may have to begin your new career at the very beginning. But if you choose wisely, you won't even mind

Considering the Costs of a Career Change

You've been thinking about a career change for a long time. You're bored with your job and you're not progressing at the office. You've considered your career options. Frankly, you've wanted to do a particular type of work since you were 20 but it just wasn't in the cards.

Perhaps this is the right time for a career change. Are you financially prepared to switch?

Ponder these points before you go after the job of your dreams:

What don't you like about your current job? It's important to clarify why you're unsatisfied with your job.

For example, maybe the office moved and your commute is doubled. Or you got a new boss who doesn't seem competent. Perhaps the company outlawed overtime or changed your job description to add work for you. Be frank about why you don't like your job right now.

This step must be done first as it will reveal the true reason(s) you want to quit. Plus, you might realize the issues frustrating you are actually fixable.

Will you need training or education for your new career and how much will it cost? What do you need to know to be successful in the work? How will you obtain the knowledge or skills? It might take some time and money, so it's wise to make an achievable plan.

Do you have money saved to help you through the transition? If you'll require some training or time to hone skills, you'll be working on those things and not bringing home the bacon. Therefore, you'll need some cash stashed for living costs.

If you've established a healthy pattern of saving over the years, you can fall back on it. Still, you'll want to figure out how long you'll be out of commission in terms of earning to estimate how long you'll be living on savings.

Do your research upfront. Before you leave your current position, do your homework. Find out what people earn who do the work you desire. Will you experience a pay reduction?

Access online sources to determine average salaries of people in your dreamed-about career. Can you live comfortably on the salary? What are the chances your earnings will grow over the years?

Try to find someone who does the work now and arrange to sit down with them to ask some questions about their career. In sum, take special care to gather info you need first about your dream career, before quitting your current job and diving in to the unknown.

What will switching careers mean in terms of your health insurance? As you know, health care is so expensive that it's practically impossible for any average U.S. citizen to pay it. Therefore, consider what will change about your health insurance should you switch jobs.

Is your health care insurance now connected with your job? How much do you pay for it? What will it cost when you switch careers? Your health insurance is a big-ticket item that you mustn't take lightly, particularly if you're also covering your spouse and children.

Definitely have a plan on how you'll handle health insurance should you decide to walk away from your current job.

Is it possible to start saving big now? In the event you're pondering a job change, you can expect to experience some personal and financial upheaval if you decide to switch careers. It makes sense to start saving extra money now to pad your emergency fund.

You might not be able to anticipate every single financial demand that will occur because of switching careers, so any extra funds you save will provide protection for you and your family.

If you consider all these points when thinking about making a career change, you'll be as financially prepared as you can once you decide to take the leap into an exciting, new job.

11 Ways to Crack the Hidden Job Market

You can shorten your job hunt by knowing how to use methods other applicants usually miss. After all, if you're relying on want ads alone, you could spend a long time searching. Advertised positions represent as little as 20% of total vacancies, and your resume often winds up in a pile with hundreds of other hopefuls.

On the other hand, the hidden job market has a larger number of opportunities, and less competition. Learn how to position yourself to take advantage of openings that haven't been advertised.

Benefits of Cracking the Hidden Job Market

Achieve a closer fit. When you're targeting companies you want to work for, you're more likely to find a workplace where you'll feel at home. That sense of belonging will add to your job satisfaction.

Weigh in early. How would you like to write your job description? Contacting potential employers early in the process may allow you to shape your position to suit your strengths.

Receive more offers. The average corporate job opening that's advertised attracts up to 250 resumes. Your odds of being welcomed onboard increase when there are fewer candidates under consideration.

Cracking the Hidden Job Market with Networking

Go online. LinkedIn and other technology make it easy to research and contact companies that interest you. Be sure to keep your profile updated because hiring managers may be looking for you too.

Reach out to recruiters. Many positions are filled through employment agencies. Call up a recruiter to schedule a consultation and stay in touch so you can hear about future developments.

Volunteer your services. Use your skills to support a worthy cause. You can make new contacts and impress them with your expertise at organizing events or tracking finances.

Join a job club. Your fellow job hunters often have valuable leads. Start a club or find one through community listings or your local library.

Attend events. Conferences and networking sessions can help you touch base with lots of contacts in a short time. See what's on the calendar at your professional association or read industry publications.

Contact alumni. Mine your college alumni group for information and referrals. Some companies have similar resources for former employees or you can approach them on your own.

Seek referrals. Ask your contacts who else they would suggest for you to talk with. That way you can create a pipeline of information interviews and coffee dates.

Focus on giving. Remember that networking is more about giving than taking. Offer to help others before you ask for something for yourself.

Cracking the Hidden Job Market by Becoming an Insider

Complete an internship. If you excel at your summer position, you may have a shot at joining the staff. Pick a company with a track record for hiring interns and ask your supervisor for feedback to help you learn and grow.

Consider temporary positions. Even if you're looking for a permanent position, it may be worthwhile to accept temporary jobs, especially if you're currently unemployed. That way you may be able to view internal listings on the company website, as well as network with employees who could have a say in hiring you.

Do contract work. Contract assignments are another way to showcase your abilities at any stage in your career. Exceed expectations and let the company know what kind of opportunities you're looking for.

Companies often bypass advertising to save money and target candidates who are more likely to match their needs. By tapping into the hidden employment market, you can impress hiring managers and find your dream job.

**Wishing You Every Success With Your
Chosen Career**

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