How to Change Careers: A Step-by-Step Guide

Changing your career is a big step, but it's something that many people do at one point or another.

Whether you finished college and want to pivot to a different subject or have a few decades of work and want to do something new, you must know how to make a career change step-by-step.

Why might you need to change careers?

You might consider pursuing a new career path for many different reasons. Remember, many people change their careers at one point or another, especially in the recent past.

According to some statistics, 53% of Americans quit their jobs to change their careers in 2022 alone.

Why? You might consider changing your career because:

- You aren't professionally challenged anymore. Many people like to feel that they had a significant impact on their industries were companies. They can become bored and seek opportunities elsewhere if they don't have enough of a challenge.
- You're seeking a better company culture fit. One common reason people decide to transition into new roles at different companies is a poor culture fit. For instance, if your current position has a work-life balance that causes you to neglect your personal relationships in favor of your professional life, you may leave the

company or even the industry.

- You need to make more money. Sometimes, you join a particular career path expecting it to be lucrative, only to find that the pay is not competitive. A career change could help you acquire more money in the long run if you go into the right field.
- You realize your dream lies elsewhere. Many individuals start college without knowing exactly what they want to do. When they finish their degrees, they realize they want to do something completely different. Don’t feel that if this is you, as there is still time to change your career and pursue your dreams.
- You have to relocate or have other family reasons. In some circumstances, you might be forced to change your career because you have to move and your current job or profession isn’t in need at your future destination.

Career changers like you often pivot to (or from) part-time or full-time jobs in industries like healthcare, finance and IT. These career options will help you pursue a higher salary or have better job satisfaction.

Related: How to Deal with Career Regret – Even if You’re a “Success Story”

How to change careers step by step

Indeed, you can change your career and ensure you make the right shift to a new job by planning ahead of time and following these steps.

1. Think about your goals and interests

For starters, you need to understand your overall goals and interests well. If you are changing your career because you want to pursue a new dream or to develop professionally, you should know precisely your objectives.

Do you want to change your industry completely? If so, you may need to return to school and get another degree. Do you want to accomplish something on a personal level? Do you want to acquire more money?

These questions can help you narrow down precisely what shape your career change will take and what jobs you should pursue.

More importantly, thinking about your goals and interests will help you develop an action plan. With a good action plan, you'll change your career carefully and progressively, preventing your finances or family from being destabilized or jeopardized.

If you don't know your career goals, consider speaking to a career coach. A career counselor can help you determine the ideal career move based on your current career or day job and your transferable skills.

These mentors help job seekers in job searches all the time and you can find them online on LinkedIn or in your professional network.

2. Review your current skills

Next, you should review your current skill set, including your qualifications, personal skills, certifications and degrees.

For instance, if you previously worked in finance, you can reasonably say that you have skills in mathematics, statistics and financial analysis skills. You can back up those skills with credentials or degrees, of course.

By reviewing your skills, you'll know the following:

- Which jobs will be easier to switch to? For example, if you already have a career in finance, changing your career to be more business-focused could be easier than you think, as the skill crossover is likely relatively

high.
- What kind of education or training you'll need to pursue to switch your career to something different? For instance, if you want to become a physicist but are currently an English teacher, you know you don't have many crossover skills and will have to complete extensive schooling to switch your career.

There's no right or wrong answer here. But tallying up your skills will allow you to make the best decision.

3. Look into training and educational opportunities

Then you should look into different training and educational opportunities based on your goals and the career you wish to move into. For instance, if you want to become a statistician, you'll likely need a statistics, finance or mathematics degree.

Some career switches are easier than others. Those requiring high degrees, such as bachelor's and graduate or doctoral degrees, will take longer to switch than others.

But don't let this dissuade you. If you want to accomplish something and switch your career to a new field, put your mind to it.

4. Make an action plan

An action plan is a step-by-step outline of what you need to do to complete your career switch. Say that you want to switch from marketing to finance.

In that case, you'll need to:

- Go back to school and get a degree in finance or at least take some prerequisite classes
- Complete a certificate program in finance

- Apply to finance jobs and internship opportunities

Writing down an action plan will allow you to maintain motivation as you switch your career. A career change can take several years to complete from start to finish, and having an action plan will let you check off each step as you make progress.

Related: Changing Careers: Starting a New Career in 30s

5. Acquire skills and qualifications

Now it's time to put your nose to the grindstone and complete the core work of a career change. Acquire the necessary skills and qualifications to swap industries or skill sets.

This can include attending college, training programs or boot camps and finishing certificate programs.

6. "Rebrand" yourself

It's also a good idea to rebrand yourself at this stage. This means highlighting that you are switching careers and industries on your social media platforms. Change your resume and social media profiles to reflect your new skill focus and industry expertise.

By rebranding yourself early, you'll have an easier time networking with professionals in your new field and qualifying for future job openings.

7. Try freelance gigs, internships and volunteer work

In the earliest stages of your career change, the odds are you won't qualify for many open jobs just yet. To acquire experience and get some networking connections, consider applying for freelance gigs, internships and volunteer work at businesses in your future industry.

This will provide you with valuable on-the-ground work experience you can leverage and open you up to new opportunities.

Furthermore, freelance gigs and internships allow you to try out your new job or career before committing to it fully. That can be invaluable if you aren’t 100% sure whether you want to move into one position or another.

8. Apply to new jobs

Once you’ve collected enough experience and the requisite skills and qualifications to thrive, apply for new jobs.

Like in your previous industry, you might need to start at entry-level jobs before moving up to higher-level or managerial positions in your next career. But with the right mindset and dedication, you’ll ascend in your new industry relatively quickly.

Related: Career Transitions You Can Make in Your 40s and 50s

How you can change your career

Now you know exactly how to make a career change smartly and successfully. Follow the tips and strategies above, and your new job hunt will go smoother than you think.

Check out Entrepreneur’s other articles for more information on this topic.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/how-to-change-careers-a-step-by-step-guide/452709