

# Changing Careers is Not for Wimps

RIGHT VIEWPOINT™

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## CHANGING CAREERS IS NOT FOR WIMPS

"Stick to your knitting" "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know"  
"If it's not broke don't fix it" "Stay the course" "Patience is a virtue"

Phrases like these are for wimps, not for career changers. Successful career changers are bold, experimental, curious, daring, fearless, and, above all, prepared. If you are thinking about making a career change, you really have to want it bad. Career changing can be uncomfortable, disconcerting and downright difficult, but if it represents a dream that you just cannot shake, a goal that is just out of reach, or an idea that makes you smile just to think about it, you owe it to yourself to give it your best shot. But first, ask yourself these five questions.

### 1. What is driving you to make this change?

Beware if your answer is something like 'I'm burned out' or 'I just want to do something different'. You are much more likely to succeed if you are moving towards something specific that intrigues you, rather than moving away from something that no longer holds your interest to an undefined place. Review your completed assessments, re-take the Values & Drivers exercise, compose your personal mission statement; sit with your eyes closed and think about what really interests you, what makes you feel invigorated and intellectually stimulated. Re-visit your deferred dreams and the times in your career when you were most gratified and fulfilled. Does your new goal make you feel like that?

*"Be the change that you wish to see in the world."  
— Mahatma Gandhi*

### 2. Are you financially secure enough to live for a year without exhausting your capital if your new endeavor is not generating income by then?

If you change functional or industry focus, you may have to start at a lower level job than you previously held. If you become a consultant or start a business, you may not be breaking even for some time. If you completely change fields, you may need an intermediate step to go back to school, get a certification, expending dollars to be viable in a new role. If possible, build your skills while still earning an income or on severance. You may have to alter your lifestyle: have a plan that puts your mind at ease. You should also have a realistic contingency plan in place, since you may have to temporarily return to your core expertise while building reserves to make the change.

*"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking."  
— Albert Einstein*

### 3. Do you really and truly have the temperament to take a career risk?

If you have always been a highly structured individual who enjoys the routine of knowing what each day brings, or if you become flustered and uncomfortable when unanticipated events occur, you may want to more deeply examine if making a dramatic career change is the right path for you. If you know that you are risk-averse, think twice about your goals and your tolerance for this change. On the other hand, if change invigorates you, if you are comfortable with surprises, if you enjoy new experiences, if you like learning new things and enjoy working in dynamic environments, you are a reasonably good candidate for a truly enriching career change.

*"Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."  
— George Bernard Shaw*

Your change will also affect those around you, particularly those who are financially intertwined. Your new work situation and focus on ramping up may mean others will be affected in ways they had not previously experienced. Engage them in your

plans and communicate often, and they can be a source of great emotional and intellectual support.

#### 4. Have you done your homework on your new endeavor?

Learn all you possibly can about the new industry, sector, role, service or product you are considering. Mine the Internet, company web sites, industry associations, Career Search and One Source to learn about the competitive set, the target customers, threats and opportunities, and network with industry experts. If you are considering going out on your own, ask for assistance from entrepreneurial advisory organizations. Seek out a mentor/sounding board who is willing to advise and support you with suggestions and listen to your ideas. Be prepared to change your own view of yourself and to alter some of your behaviors to fit your new career. One of the most difficult changes is to move from being 'THE CLIENT' to being a vendor. Find out what that is like by asking others who succeeded and some who failed in their change effort.

*Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."*  
—Leo Tolstoy

#### 5. Are you prepared to work really hard to make your new career a success?

Whether you intend to work inside an organization or on your own, you will have to expend a great deal of effort to make a successful career change. Potential hiring managers will ask why you want to make a change, and you will need compelling reasons why they should take a chance on hiring you rather than another seasoned candidate who already knows the industry or the role. Successful career changers typically begin building bridges through networking, joining associations, becoming accredited in some pertinent way, or simply learning as much as possible to acquire depth and breadth of knowledge in the target field. Taking a contract or temporary assignment, or serving as an apprentice or a volunteer in your area of interest, are splendid ways to learn and demonstrate your commitment and value.

*"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."*  
— Andy Warhol

As a born and bred Yankee, brought up reading the words of a host of sturdy souls from New England, in closing and hopefully as inspiration, I offer all career changers these words to live by from a man who dared to take a fearless step in a different direction rather than staying the course.

#### **Road Not Taken – Robert Frost**

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I marked the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*