

20 Stories + Quotes From Inspiring Career-Changers Who Have Been There

When we started CareerShifters back in 2006, we had no idea how it would turn out. Little did we realise that, over the years to come, hundreds upon hundreds of individuals would attend our events, go through our courses and experience our coaching to make their own career transitions. These transitions come in all shapes and sizes, between disparate industries, from A to Z where Z appears to be a million miles away from A.

We are humbled to have been involved in the lives of so many of the wonderful souls in our community, and now we wanted to share with you some of *their* own wisdom, having started out and felt lost and afraid and all sorts of emotions. They have been there, they know what it's like, and the advice they have given us has been nothing short of mindblowingly useful.

Here are the stories of 15 such men and women, and how they went about making that scary transition - even when they didn't know where to start:

1. Laura Prado

Laura's background

Laura was working in Customer Services for a tech company, feeling bored and frustrated. She knew she wanted more.

What Laura did:

"I started by approaching an artist I'd been following online, and asking her for a meeting. I didn't expect her to reply... I'll never forget how elated I felt when I saw her lovely message in my inbox! I learned a lot from our meeting. So much, in fact, that I've taken up quilling myself."

"I've also just started a brand new role in project management. In my application and interview, I decided to talk honestly about the kind of work I was really looking for, rather than just saying whatever I thought the company might want to hear. I felt that if I was truly myself and they didn't want to hire me, then the role wouldn't be right for me. But I was offered it straight away!"

-> [Laura's full story](#)

PS. Read more about crafting great emails *and* showing up authentically as yourself in your applications [over here](#).

2. Alexander Fridrikkson

Alexander's background

Alexander was working in marketing for a lifestyle company, before he realised that working with data, and driving results using it, were some of the most interesting parts of his job.

What Alexander did:

"I did quite extensive research about my opportunities and what I really wanted to do. I took plenty of personality and work aptitude tests. I explored a lot of free online courses to see if the material would be interesting to me. I explored both a lot of degree options and work options. Eventually I found the right work opportunity and went all in for it."

-> [Alexander's full story](#)

3. Sarit Gafan

Sarit's background

Sarit was frustrated by the limitations of her teaching role, and an industry in which she had spent 10 years.

What Sarit did:

"I did my best to incorporate a positive approach and confidence-building into my work but it wasn't enough; my soul said it was time to move on. So, I took a leap of faith and took eight months out to self-care, heal, replenish my energy and decide on my new goals."

-> [Sarit's full story](#)

4. Bryn Williams

Bryn's background

After working as an in-house English teacher in several locations, Bryn found his work becoming monotonous.

What Bryn did:

"I was teaching in an I.T. company, so when I started to think about a career change, I arranged a few meetings with the directors of the company to see if my goal was realistic and attainable. After speaking with them, I used my spare time to complete basic online programming courses before signing up to a full-time, six-month web development course at Ubiquim Code Academy."

PS. Bryn's example is a great one of making [a lean career change](#). [Read his full story here](#).

5. Dan Brown

Dan's background

Dan had been a technical writer for many years and was working for a large software company when enough became enough.

What Dan did:

"Through the Careershifters programme I got over the ruminating and procrastinating that had held me back before and I started to initiate conversations. At work I made an effort to talk to different people and one of those was a former colleague who was working as a UX designer. She suggested I apply for a role with her team and I was successful based on my previous work and approach."

-> [Dan's full story](#)

6. Holly Penalver

Holly's background

Holly was as a paediatric nurse, having initially trained as a psychologist. She enjoyed parts of her nursing work, but resented the shift work and not having control over her hours.

What Holly did:

"It wasn't a straightforward transition or an overnight leap; in fact, it's been a long, slow process. I first started indiGO about ten years ago. We had no reputation and hardly any projects. As projects came up I added them to the website – a few people took a gamble on us and we've grown slowly and organically. I nursed full-time whilst also trying to set up the charity, around my shift work."

-> [Holly's full story](#)

7. Leszek Zikon

Leszek's background

Leszek worked in the retail sector, and felt miserable with the long hours he had to work in London, doing the same thing each day.

What Leszek did:

"I was looking for a place where I could learn how to make something that would last. I went on

open days to a couple of engineers' colleges, but nowadays this line of work involves more design on a computer than actual making. Then I stumbled across the blacksmithing course at Hereford (and Ludlow College). I went on the open day and that was it."

-> [Leszek's full story](#)

8. Brandon Brady

Brandon's background

Brandon was a financial literacy trainer and budget counsellor. When expanding his role would require him to go in more of a political direction, he knew that a change was needed as this was not a direction he wanted to go in.

What Brandon did:

"When I turned 30, I realised that many of my friends had traveled abroad and enjoyed experiences in other cultures while vacationing. It helped them understand the world as a whole, rather than basing their opinions purely on what is reported. Meanwhile, I hadn't yet stepped foot on international soil. I also thought about where I was, the stability of the job and where it was going. While I believed in the work, it was a government-funded position (and the funds were annually decreasing). When I first saw the opportunity to teach in China, via a company called EF English First, I didn't think I qualified. However, I choose to speak with a recruiter because it piqued my interest. After the interview, I looked into the company and did my homework. I thought to myself that if there was ever a time to move to another country for a year, now was that time."

-> [Brandon's full story](#)

9. Vera Frajtova

Vera's background

Vera worked for one of the world's biggest oil corporations, before moving to another corporate giant in the food and beverage industry.

What Vera did:

"Browsing the internet to investigate career changes which were neither job-hopping, nor unpaid internships (I was too old to be an intern and do entry-level work), nor running my own business (so far I'd had no aspirations to become an entrepreneur), I came across the concept of skills-based volunteering."

As I researched the topic and found related and well-reviewed programmes, I quickly realised that this was something I wanted to do.”

-> [Vera's full story](#)

10. Nick O'Sullivan

Nick's background

Nick spent 13 years with the Royal Marines, spending much of his career in and around military communications. When he achieved the rank of Major, he decided to seek new challenges and rewards.

What Nick did:

“I networked with former colleagues and those they put me in touch with. I thought I'd move into cyber and technology as my military career had provided me with significant experience in that area. However, my networking indicated I might not achieve what I wanted down that route. Instead, deciding I should look more broadly, I happened across St. James's Place Academy (wealth management) thanks to a former colleague and friend.”

-> [Nick's full story](#)

11. Sasha Maisel

Sasha's background

Sasha worked in management consulting, focusing primarily on retail customer experience.

What Sasha did:

“I was stuck on a project where I wasn't learning anything, and didn't feel like I was contributing to something I cared about.

I joined the On Purpose Associate programme, which aims to help experienced professionals transition into business for social good. It was a perfect fit for me, because I knew I wanted to do something more purposeful, but I wasn't sure in which sector.

It gave me a year to explore the social sector more broadly; coaching and mentoring to help me discover what I felt passionate about; and, most importantly, my first placement at Winnow, where I work now.”

-> [Sasha's full story](#)

12. Claire Sanders

Claire's background

Claire worked in marketing for 20 years in various roles, both agency-side and client-side.

What Claire did:

“I felt stuck, frustrated, and trapped. I suffered anxiety and burnout twice – once during the recession whilst at the advertising agency, and then towards the end of my last role in a bank.

I'd been thinking about going freelance for years but had been too scared to make the jump. The voluntary redundancy offered the perfect opportunity as I received a payout which gave me a financial cushion.

I took six months off before setting up as a freelancer. I used that time to reassess, spend time overseas (I spent a month in Bali on a co-working retreat) and explore my options. I'm good at marketing and I love it, but going freelance means I can work on my own terms. So, this shift has been more about a new way of working than changing the nature of the work I do.”

-> [Claire's full story](#)

See also: [An A-Z guide to going freelance](#)

13. Lavinia Davolio

Lavinia's background

Lavinia worked on the trading floor in investment banking for 9 years.

What Lavinia did:

“With the financial crisis I decided to leave the industry and to follow my passion for food (and for everything sweet!) by launching my own luxury sweet business.

When I'm in the kitchen I feel that I'm in my 'zone'.

I get huge satisfaction in seeing the individual ingredients come to life in a recipe. I love applying my creativity, I love the concentration required and the pressure, and I also love eating and entertaining – to me, it made absolute sense to pursue a career as chef / patissier.”

-> [Lavinia's full story](#)

14. Ken Skinner

Ken's background

Ken worked as a structural engineer in the oil and gas industry. His toxic work environment was taking a toll on his mental well-being.

What Ken did:

“I became depressed and suffered with that for several years before I finally sought help from the NHS. Recovery from depression opened my eyes to the possibility of change.

I read a few self-help books which didn't really click with me, then signed up for one of the Careershifters workshops. In one evening I gained enough insight into change that I felt I could finally make progress. I started by scrutinising both my existing and past life, going as far back as my childhood hobbies, looking at what made me happy and what I would choose to do even if I weren't paid for it.

As I wasn't working, I had time on my hands, so I was able to push forwards in several directions at once. I quickly narrowed the field of options to writing, photography (a childhood obsession) and cooking.”

-> [Ken's full story](#)

PS. [Sign up for one of our Workshops, just like Ken did!](#)

15. Stephanie Trensinger

Stephanie's background

Stephanie was working as Key Account Management Support in the sales team of a healthcare corporation.

What Stephanie did:

"I felt stuck in an environment that didn't really trigger my passion or energy. I never really felt I was in the right place; I couldn't identify with the product or the industry. It got so bad that I was coming home every day without being able to feel or be creative: my head was just blank. I did some soul searching and went back to the most simple things.

Basically, I took my time to find out what it was I actually enjoyed, what made me happy, what inspired me, and the activities that made me just forget time. By that point, I'd already made a couple of friends in the brewing industry. I just loved the community and how everybody in that world treats each other. And, even more so, how creative the brewers were, and the amazing recipes they came up with.

It inspired me a lot. One day I just said to myself: "So...why don't you learn how to do it yourself?"

-> [Stephanie's full story](#)

You can read lots more inspiring stories from our Careershifters community [over here](#).

Are you looking for some more advice? [Head over here](#).

by,

Jasraj Hothi

Friday 15th March 2019