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## CAREER CHANGERS: HOW TO MARKET YOURSELF

- **What is the difference between "job" change and "career" change?** A job change may entail moving between industries or sectors, but within the same job function (Accounting, Human Resources), or even moving within the same company or industry. A career change is more of a change in basic job functions and philosophies, a different focus for your professional life. You will often serve a different population, be in an entirely different sector and function within that sector, and your career objectives will be very different. In this down economy, career changing is especially challenging, as a flood of job seekers allow employers to remain myopic in their outlook on candidates, and people feel afraid to make a leap into the unknown.
- **Reasons for career change:**
  - In your 20s, you are making and testing career choices.
  - In your 30s, you are evaluating choices and seeing if important needs and interests are fulfilled; feeling self fulfilled may become more important than climbing the corporate ladder. You may also seek more balance in life internally, and dissatisfaction with your supervisor, organization, job itself, external technology, or economic conditions could be disrupting that balance.
- **The challenges of decision making.** Procrastination in career decision making may be due to unclear goals, variety of interests, fear of change, fear of failure, fear of success, perfectionism - what kind of decision maker are you? How have you made decisions in the past and did they work out well?
  - Planned- gather information, make balanced judgment, minimize risks
  - Agonizing- too much time spent gathering information
  - Impulsive- acts too quickly, doesn't spend enough time gathering
  - Intuitive – does what “feels right”
  - Avoidance – avoids decision, puts it off (consider using a decision making model)
- **How to make a decision**
  - Identify the decision- what's the problem? How important is the decision? How soon must you decide?
  - Gather information and evaluation data- Is it complete? Is it unbiased?
  - List possible actions -brainstorm possible actions, discard the unacceptable
  - List pros and cons of each action- what are probable outcomes?
  - Develop strategy (goals) - should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Readjustable, Time-sensitive
  - Break your goals into small, manageable steps and reward yourself when you reach each goal e.g. revise resume
  - Also, develop a support system - friends, family, professionals - all are important but serve different needs e.g. encouragement, brainstorm, share leisure time
  - If you are having a difficult time clarifying your interests and values and career focus, you may want to meet with a career counselor to examine these issues and take formal assessment inventories such as the Myers Briggs. Or, take a simple paper and pencil\_ test at home (or in the workshop, depending on needs of participants)
  - Analysis of Life Experience Exercise: Brainstorm significant life experiences that you accomplished and enjoyed and then list your top 10 experiences, identify- skills, interests, values involved - describe what you did, how you did it and the outcomes, be specific. Then, prioritize the skills you enjoy the most and want to use in your next job. Look for themes in your skills e.g. communication, analytical etc.
- **Researching career options**
  - Need to research careers to match your interests and values, through: reading, websites, trade publications, job listings, books e.g. wet feet press industry guides; informational interviewing, internships, Dictionary of Occupational Titles, Occupational Outlook Handbook

- **Where to seek a job change**
  - Internal- move vertically, laterally, reshape job
    - Benefits: you're known, keep benefits, comfort level
  - External- seek job elsewhere
    - Benefits: fresh start, new impression to make
- **Preparing your resume**
  - Traditional resume vs. "skills based" resume - What is the difference?
  - Include relevant coursework
  - Bring out skills that will catch the eye of the new industry recruiter
  - Know the rules for your new sector; i.e. one vs. two or more page resume, CV, what areas to emphasize
  - Make sure to include any volunteer work or other activities that tie in with your new career choice
- **Cover letters**
  - Extremely important for explaining your career change
  - Explain how your past experience/present education will benefit employer
  - Explain you realize the realities of switching, and let them know your salary and position is flexible
  - Employers, especially in a down economy, tend to be risk averse, so try to reassure them you have all of the necessary skills for the position you are applying for
- **Networking.** Networking is key when making a career change because of employers' reluctance to hire career changers. Some opportunities for networking include:
  - Internships
  - Professional/Trade Associations
  - Internet Chat Groups (Wet Feet, Vault) ◦
  - School Clubs
- **The transitional steps.** If your new career goal is radically different from your past experience, you may have to take transitional steps instead of one big leap.
  - Research career fields related to your target industry, and then see which is the most receptive to your background. May have to put in time in a "middle ground" job before making the big switch
  - Consider doing an internship in your new chosen field, taking a similar job in new industry to later make a change, taking a cut in salary in the new job
- **The interview**
  - Always emphasize the positive; turn everything, even negatives into a learning experience
  - Be ready with a concise, sincere explanation for your career change
  - Never appear indecisive; show that you've had consistency in other areas of your life
  - Be extremely polished and practiced with every aspect of the interview process; you want everything else to be perfect to balance the employer's doubts about taking a chance
- **Career resources**
  - *Career Change* by David P. Helfand
  - *Do What You Are* by Paul O. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger
  - *Change Your Job, Change Your Life* by Ronald Krannich
  - *Transitions* by William Bridges
  - *Occupational Outlook Handbook* by US Dept. of Labor
  - *Career Satisfaction and Success* by Bernard Haldane
  - *What Color Is Your Parachute?* By Richard Bolles
  - General Job Search Web Sites: Online Salary Surveys, Resume Writing for the Senior Job Search Candidate, 5 Job Search Steps fact sheet, Meta-Job Listings