

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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STEPS TO THE SUCCESSFUL CAREER CHANGE

A career change can often involve employing tactics which differ from that of the traditional job search. The follow are some key steps to follow when embarking upon a career change:

Step 1: Assess your likes and your dislikes. Identifying the dislikes can often be easier than identifying your likes. It is imperative, however, that you examine your likes during the early stages of the career change process. What do you enjoy when you are at work, or at home? What do you like to do in your spare time? Can you transfer these likes into a marketable skill?

Step 2: Research, research, research: After identifying where your interests lie, your next step is to research relevant careers. How much research you do will depend quite a bit on how great of a change you are making. You can find some great career information and a skills-matching service at [O*NET Online](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor and basic job information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). Here are some other great [Career Exploration Resources](#).

Step 3: Identify transferable skills: Use some of the skills that you have currently built-up and apply them to your new career. There are several skills, including communication, management, leadership, etc, that are applicable to virtually all sectors.

Step 4: Training and education: It may be necessary to update certain skills, or broaden your knowledge, in order to make yourself marketable to the particular industry in which you are interested. It may be a good idea to take a few courses to make certain that you are interested in the subject matter.

Step 5: Networking: This may be the most important part of the process. There are plenty of resources available for you to begin networking (SIPA alumni, fellow students, professors, employer presentations, professional associations). Conducting informational interviews are also a great way to develop a strong networking base.

Step 6: Gaining experience. Take advantage of the internship opportunities available to you here at SIPA. Obtaining a part-time job and volunteering are also ways to develop experience.

Step 7: Find a mentor. You may want to consider finding a mentor. The career change process can often be frustrating and challenging. A mentor can help get you through

these rough periods, and also provide you with a built-in network of which to take advantage.

Step 8: Job-hunting basics. Remember the basics to performing a decent job search, including resume and cover letter writing, interviewing skills, and salary negotiation, to name just a few.

Step 9: Be flexible. Be flexible about everything—from employment status to relocation and salary. You should set positive goals, but also expect to encounter possible setbacks. Don't let this discourage you!

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