

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

CAREER CHANGERS: STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER CHANGE

A career change can often involve employing tactics which differ from those of the traditional job search. It also requires a great deal of persistence and determination. The following 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? Books like Richard Bolles' *What Color Is Your Parachute?* And the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment (offered by OCS) contain exercises that can help guide you through the self-reflective process.

Step 2:

Conduct research, research, research. After identifying where your interests lie, your next step is to research relevant careers. How much research you do will depend on how significant of a change you are making. You can find some great career information and a skills-matching service from the US Department of Labor at <http://online.onetcenter.org>. Additional resources include industry-specific fact sheets on the OCS website in *Online Career Opportunities*, e.g., the *Career Opportunities In...* series, *Salary Surveys*, *Resume Writing for the Career Changer*, and *GoinGlobal* and *Vault* guides.

Step 3:

Identify transferable skills. These are skills that you have developed and can apply to your new career. There are several skills, including communication, management, and leadership, that are applicable to virtually all sectors.

Step 4:

Pursue 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 could be beneficial to take a few courses to make certain that you are interested in the subject matter.

Step 5:

Network! This may be the most important part of the process. There are plenty of resources (such as the SIPA Student and Alumni LinkedIn group and the SIPA Alumni Directory) available for you to begin networking with alumni, fellow students, professors, recruiters, and professional associations. Conducting informational interviews is one great way to develop a strong networking base. The purpose of networking is to gain relevant information and develop long-term relationships. In addition to the SIPA network, be sure to leverage the alumni networks of your previous academic institutions.

Step 6:

Gain experience. Take advantage of the internship opportunities available to you at SIPA. Obtaining a part-time job and volunteering are also ways to develop experience. This will make you more attractive to potential employers, strengthen your skills, and confirm your career choices.

Step 7:

Find a mentor. You may want to consider finding a mentor, especially since the career change process can often be challenging. A mentor can help get you through these rough periods, and also provide you with a built-in network to take advantage of.

Step 8:

Apply job-hunting basics. Remember the basics of performing a good job search, including resume and cover letter writing, interviewing skills, and salary negotiation, to name a few. Meet with a career adviser to discuss how to tailor these job search basics for a career change.

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!

There are many resources available for individuals looking to transition to a new line of work. Below are some useful tools that may be of use for experienced professionals seeking to make a career change.

Suggested Resources

Expert Resumes for Career Changers by Wendy S. Enelow and Louise M. Kursmark

Change Your Job, Change Your Life by Ron Krannich

What Color Is Your Parachute? by Richard Nelson Bolles

Your Next Move by Michael D. Watkins

The Renaissance Soul by Margaret Lobenstine

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