

Career Change Do's and Don'ts

Here are the keys to successfully changing careers. Follow these career-change rules and you should achieve success in contemplating changing careers -- and in your career change.

- Do have a well-developed plan for making your career change. And don't rush into a career change until you have thought it out and developed a strategy.
- Don't worry if you feel a bit insecure or unsure about making a career change; these feelings are normal.
- Do expect to put in a great deal of time and effort in making the switch from one career to another, but don't allow yourself to get discouraged at the pace or your progress...changing careers takes time.
- Don't rush into a new career field because you are dissatisfied or disillusioned with your current job, boss, company, or career field.
- Do take the time to examine the activities that you like and dislike, with more focus on your likes. And do focus on new careers that center around your likes and passions.
- Do leverage some of your current skills and experiences to your new career by taking advantage of your transferable skills.
- Don't limit yourself to similar careers or jobs when making a career change; look for careers that take advantage of both your skills and your interests.
- Do consider the possibility that you will need to get additional training or education to gain the skills you need to be competitive in your new career field, but don't jump headfirst into an educational program...start slowly.
- Do take advantage of all your networking potential, including using your current network of contacts, conducting informational interviews with key employers in your new career field, and joining professional organizations in your new career field.
- Don't forget to take advantage of the career and alumni offices from your previous educational experiences as well as your current school (if you are going back for additional education or training).
- Do gain experience in your new career field, ideally while you are still working in your current job. Volunteer or find a part-time job in your new career field -- thus building experience, confidence, and contacts in your new field.
- Don't go it alone; do find a mentor. Changing careers is challenging, and you really need to have someone who can help motivate you and keep you focused on your goal when you get discouraged.

- Do brush up on all aspects of job-hunting, especially if you haven't had a need to use those skills recently. And do take advantage of all career change resources.
- Above all else, do be flexible. You're basically starting your career anew, which means you may have to make concessions about job titles, salary, relocation, etc.

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