

Switching careers: What you need to know

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Ever considered changing your career? Well, that is a familiar feeling. Some people choose to stay in the same career or field their whole lives, while others switch careers once, twice, three times, or more until they find a career that fits. According to data (2015 & 2016) from the Bureau of Labour Statistics, more than six million people decided to change occupations. The COVID 19 pandemic has led many to explore different career opportunities.

What is Career Switching?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines Career Switching as '*a change to a different type of job from the one you have been doing.*' Some define a career change as a transition from one employer to another. This is especially true if you have worked for the same organization for several years. Even within the same type of business, moving to another organization can be considered a career change.

In some instances, a career switch is defined as moving to a different or more advanced position within the same line of work. For example, if you are promoted from your officer role to a managerial position in the same company, you might consider a career change. The most common definition of career switch or career change is moving from one career path to a different, distinct career path. For example, you may have worked as an accountant for a few years, but now you are studying to be a lawyer in law school.

How often do people switch careers?

It is difficult to say how often people switch careers, as there is not enough data or research regarding how often people switch careers. However, a Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey of people born between 1957 and 1964 that traced their work history through to age 52 shows that people tend to change jobs fewer times as they grow older. From ages 18 to 24, they change jobs an average of 5.7 times. Between 25 and 34 years old, they change jobs an average of 2.4 times. The average goes down again to 2.9 jobs between ages 35 and 44 and 1.9 jobs between ages 45 and 52.

Some research has shown that some employees may feel stagnated once they reach mid-career, as it could indicate that their careers are stagnating. This results in one considering a career switch for new a

new job opportunity or career growth.

Why do people switch careers?

There are several reasons why people can consider a career switch. The following are typical reasons why people take such a decision:

1. **Wanting a new challenge-** For some, they reach a point whereby they feel gone as far as they can in their career or may have lost interest in that field of work and want to explore something new. The idea of starting afresh with a new company doing something that requires different skills may excite someone into switching careers. For others, it is the need to challenge oneself by putting their skills to use in a different setting. In a survey of more than 10,000 people, it was found that the main reason for career switch was for career advancement. The survey found that typically people who saw their job as a dead-end left it for one that offered a chance to grow.
2. **Wanting a bigger paycheck-** If your present job offers little chance to meet your financial demands, you are likely to want to switch careers to financially profitable ones. According to research, a career change may be the best option to increase one's salary prospects since the typical pay increase is between 3% and 5%.
3. **Wanting recognition-** One may have been in their current career for years and feel they no longer receive the recognition they deserve. Hence one may feel a new job in a different career might give them more opportunities to excel and gain recognition.
4. **Need for advanced opportunities-** The pandemic has shown many a need for career advancement. For example, so many technological changes have occurred due to the pandemic, making some jobs redundant and people realising the need for career advancement.
5. **Need for less stress-**Some careers can be demanding and very stressful, this can lead one to consider a career switch to a job that is less stressful or less demanding.
6. **Experiencing burnout-**Burnout is not just feeling tired or overworked, burnout also involves

feeling dejected and discontented with work. Experiencing burnout could also lead to feeling unmotivated to go to work or having no enthusiasm to work. One way of dealing with burnout is moving to a different company or a different career.

7. **Wanting flexibility-** Some jobs can be demanding, leading to difficulty for one to balance work and life. This inability or lack of opportunity to balance both work and life can lead one to consider a career switch.

Examples of prominent people who succeeded after switching careers

Thinking of changing your career, well, maybe it is not such a bad idea. The following are prominent people who succeeded after switching careers:

1. **Jeff Bezos-** Before launching Amazon, Jeff Bezos had a lucrative career in computer science on Wall Street and took on top roles at various financial firms.
2. **Michael Bloomberg-** In 2002, at the age of 59, Michael Bloomberg left his job as CEO of financial software, data, and media company Bloomberg L.P. at 59 to undertake the role of mayor of New York City, which he held for 12 years. He has since returned to being the CEO of Bloomberg.
3. **Vera Wang-** Fashion icon Vera Wang entered the fashion industry at the age of 40. Before joining the fashion industry, Vera Wang was a figure skater and journalist. Today she is one of the world's most prominent female designers.
4. **Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson-** has switched careers twice. Before joining sports entertainment, Dwayne was a backup linebacker for the Canadian Football League's Calgary Stampeders. At the age of 24, he then left football and joined the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), this propelled him to stardom and allowed him to switch over television and movies and movies in the early 2000s.
5. **Arnold Schwarzenegger-** Arnold has made two major career changes so far in his life. In his 20s, he started as a world champion bodybuilder and then became an award-winning actor in his 30s. He later became the Governor of California in 2003 at the age of 56.
6. **Harland Sanders-**The founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken (better known as KFC) Harland Sanders, better known as Colonel Sanders, at the age of 62, franchised Kentucky Fried Chicken, which 12 years later sold for \$2 million. Before coming with his renowned original chicken recipe, Sanders worked as a country lawyer, gas station operator, and railroad worker.
7. **Jonah Peretti-** Jonah Peretti started as a computer science teacher before launching viral new media sites BuzzFeed and The Huffington Post.

Things to consider before changing careers

Looking at what is happening around the world, changing careers might sound like a good idea for you right now. But before taking such a big decision, there are some factors that one needs to consider, according to the Wall Street Journal:

1. **First, identify your strengths-** According to Dorie Clark (author of "Entrepreneurial You: Monetise Your Expertise, Create Multiple Income Streams, and Thrive," and a professor at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business), you know yourself better than anyone else, hence when it comes to changing careers, do not solely rely on other people's advice but also consider what you know about yourself. "Other people aren't going to expend the time or the effort to think broadly on your behalf about what you can do," Ms Clark says. Identify your strengths, and use that in making the right career move. One can make use of psychometric assessments in identifying their strengths and abilities.
2. **Reflect on your current job and other roles you have held-** Make a list of the likes you like and dislike about your current career. It is essential to know your preferences and dislikes and consider that when searching for a new job.
3. **Don't limit yourself-** When considering a career change, you need to be willing to explore and challenge yourself. According to Dave Evans (co-author of "Designing Your Work Life: How to Thrive and Change and Find Happiness at Work," and co-founder of the Stanford Life Design Lab at Stanford University), if one is to succeed in career switching, there is a need to approach change with curiosity, rather than looking for a perfect fit.
4. **Do your research-** One must do thorough research before considering any career change. Look at the current environment and the project environment in the future. Look at what will be the top leading career in the future. One can also use pages such as Glassdoor or Indeed to look at employee reviews and salary comparisons.
5. **Grow your network-** Networking is an essential element to consider when looking at a career change. Networking helps expose you to other opportunities, and through networking, you are likely to land yourself a new career.
6. **Consider advancing your education-** Think about the additional skills that may be required for your intended career. Some careers may need a new skill set that you may not possess at the

moment. Acquiring new skills may require you to enroll in a certain program, ie. University program or short course. You can also take classes on LinkedIn Learning or Coursera to advance your skills and knowledge.

7. **Try collaboration or job shadow-** You can consider collaborating with other departments within your organization to get a feel of what it is like to work in a different field or shadowing a professional whose work interests you. This can be someone in your current organization or a professional from another organization.

Conclusion

Switching careers is not always easy, and it can be difficult trying to map out the ideal career path for yourself. Many factors need to be considered before you land the right fit, and it can feel like an endless search. What is required is patience and the willingness to learn throughout the process. With today's online learning methods and technology, it's easier than ever to switch careers.

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