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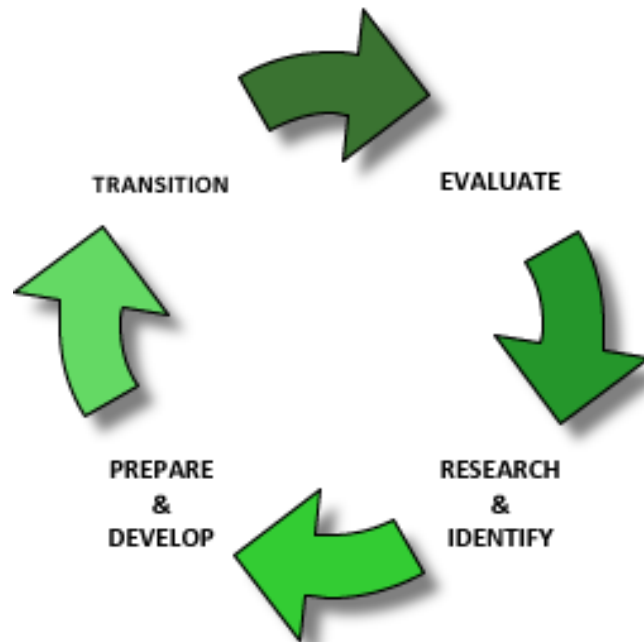


**CAREER CHANGERS GUIDE**

## CAREER CHANGERS GUIDE

In this day and age, your first career will seldom be your last. It's important to understand that it's completely logical if you have been in the same career for many years and you are ready to make a change. Studies show, each person will change careers five to seven times in their lives before they retire. With an increasing number of different career choices to choose from, about 1/3 of the total workforce will now change jobs every 12 months. By the age of 42 you've probably already had about ten jobs. Whether you are attending school for the first time in many years or you are a graduate student; once you realize that you want to make a change, we can help you learn how to bridge the gap and make the transition. However, before you begin your journey, we've provided several assessments and research tools to help jumpstart your research.

To begin, think about where you would want to be in five years and work backwards. Assess the type of work experience, and education you currently have and what you need in order to make a career change. Use the **Career Services' Career Changers Timeline Checklist**, available on the Career Services Website at <http://post.edu/careerservices>, as a guide to help keep you on track and understand that this process is all about exploring choices and refining needs.



In this section, there are some topics to help guide you:

- **Evaluate your present situation and yourself**
- **Research and identify possibilities**
- **Prepare and develop an action plan**
- **Transition – Put your plan into motion**
- **Resources**

Always keep in mind that the best time to look for a new career is while you are currently working or you are still a student. You are more marketable and desirable when you are employed or can show that you have been accomplishing something.

## **EVALUATE YOUR PRESENT SITUATION AND YOURSELF**

Thoughtful examination and careful planning is crucial if you are at a career crossroads and have considered changing career fields. Before you begin, you need to prepare intellectually. By accessing your values, skills, interests, knowledge and goals; along with why you want to make a change and where you see yourself after your transition, you can alter your transition from confusing to exhilarating. Remember, you need to know who you are and where you want to go for it to be rewarding.

The basic questions you need to ask yourself are:

1. Why do you want to make a change?
2. What would you rather be doing?
3. What are you good at?
4. What did you like and dislike about past jobs?

Make a list of what you liked and didn't like about past positions. Consider all factors including salary, possibility for growth, working environment, job duties, etc. From this beginning evaluation, you can begin to create a list of characteristics you want, or don't want, in your next career.

It's also important to understand how your transferable skills can be applied to a new position. We each have a set of "transferrable skills" but one of the hardest things about changing careers is understanding what those skills are, and how they will relate to your new career. By definition, transferable skills and experience are what employers seek. A skill is defined as the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance, a learned power of doing something competently, a developed aptitude or ability.

Over the years, you have developed many skills from coursework, extracurricular activities, internships, jobs and your total life experiences. If you've researched, written, edited and presented papers for classes, you've used skills that are not limited to any one academic discipline or knowledge area but are transferable to many occupations. These are things you have learned to do well that can be used and taken with you from job to job, competencies that can be used in multiple situations. A prospective employer expects you to apply the skills you have learned through your studies, work, and life experiences to the work environment. Therefore, transferable skills can be especially important to college students and career changers.

Most skills and competencies will fall into these categories:

- Human Relations/Public Relations/Communication
- Management/Supervisory
- Organizing/Prioritizing
- Research
- Planning/Developing/Programming
- Customer Service/Assessing Problems/Resolving Issues
- Budget/Financial Concerns
- Training/Teaching
- Writing
- Computer Software

Determine what you can offer potential employers in your new field, what you may need to accomplish before entering the field, and what actions you can take to best prepare yourself for the job search. In researching your field, you hopefully identified the skills, training, and education needed in order to be a well-qualified candidate.

*Examples of transferable skills include:*

Analyzing	Creating	Leading
Listening	Organizing	Planning
Researching	Training	Writing

Take a look at these links that offer resources for additional transferable skills and/or transferable skills assessments and examples:

- [www.thebalance.com/transferable-skills-list-525490](http://www.thebalance.com/transferable-skills-list-525490)
- [www.livecareer.com/quintessential](http://www.livecareer.com/quintessential)

## **RESEARCH AND IDENTIFY POSSIBILITIES**

The next step in your career change is to research and identify the industries, or fields, you wish to pursue and read through career profiles to learn what types of positions interest you. There are multiple resources in which to research career options including career development sites, professional organizations, industry-specific sites, and company websites. For industry related information, please review the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook, [www.bls.gov/ooh/](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/). It's also helpful to make a list of companies, or professions, you might want to work with and begin to develop a list of networking contacts that can answer questions and provide guidance. Your networking contacts can be valuable in that they may be able to offer information or allow you to job shadow or conduct informational interviews with them or other contacts they could connect you with.

Other questions that are important to ponder are salary requirements, what types of skills or education would be required if you made a change and any other prerequisites that might be involved with another career field. If you do find that you need to attend school, how long will it take? Can you attend part-time or full-time, online or must you attend on-campus? Finally, would your career change require you to relocate and how would you finance your change during the transition? These questions are pertinent in identifying feasible possibilities in regards to how long your change can be expected.

## **PREPARE AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN**

Preparation and developing an action plan is the final step before beginning your formal job search. At this point you should have a basic timeframe in mind and understand what steps you need to take in order to accomplish your goal.

This is where you should also begin building your experience, whether it is completing classes to achieve a new degree, acquire certification or professional experience while participating in an internship or volunteer work. Experience and exposure, regardless of the venue, should be part of your preparation process. Not only will experience provide insight into your career choice, it will provide you a building block on which to conduct your job search. Here are some ideas on how you can get related experience.

- Complete an internship in your field;
- Volunteer your time and services to open the door to opportunities
- Select courses, projects, and research that relate to your field of study
- Attend conferences, seminars, and career fairs

- Join, participate and network in professional organizations - take on leadership roles within those organizations
- Conduct informational interviews, job visits, and industry tours
- Receive training and certifications
- Find a mentor within the industry

At this stage, you should begin to prepare your résumé, cover letters, elevator pitch, sections of your portfolio (if they apply), and names and numbers of references you know who would put in a good word for you professionally. Make sure you always speak with your reference before you use them. You wouldn't want a potential employer to contact one of your references and have them say something negative about you.

## **TRANSITION – PUT YOUR PLAN INTO MOTION**

After you have spent considerable time evaluating, researching and preparing yourself, it's time to make that transition and put your plan into motion. This can be a scary time but it doesn't need to be if you've taken the time to understand your skills and your plan of action for a change.

At this time, you should feel confident applying to new positions. Working towards creating a robust online persona while utilizing social media avenues like Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Facebook can help you showcase your professionalism and knowledge in your field. These avenues will help you develop contacts within the industry, conduct research, and search for opportunities.

Networking with like-minded professionals in your desired industry can also come in handy. Opportunities can be found in most any situation, but you should focus on peers, professors, family/friends, industry representatives, members of professional organizations, and anyone that may be able to provide you solid information about the industry for which you want to work. Finally, LinkedIn can be a valuable resource to help keep you updated on the latest industry trends and it also allows you to connect with people who are already working in companies that you may be interested in learning more about.

In the end, personal growth, and change, comes from constantly re-evaluating yourself and the progress you have made, along with avenues to consider while you embark on a new journey. Making a change isn't easy but with some understanding, patience and persistence, it can happen and lead you to a more fulfilling career and lifestyle. Good luck and never give up!!!

## **RESOURCES**

### **PERSONALITY & CAREER ASSESSMENTS**

**These sites are helpful in that they provide free personality and career assessments. They are also valuable in terms of answering a lot of unanswered questions about where to begin once you decide that you want to make a career change. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step and these sites may just spark an idea you never knew you had.**

- **Inside Jobs = [www.insidejobs.com](http://www.insidejobs.com)**  
made it their mission to scour the Internet and bring together millions of reliable data points, expert opinions, and firsthand testimonials. The result? The ultimate one-stop-shop for career exploration. Use <http://www.insidejobs.com/careers> to personalize your search of 15,000 career profiles, track down the information you need, and discover opportunities for your future.

- **Keirsey Temperament Sorter = <http://www.keirsey.com/>**  
This assessment is as close as the Myers-Briggs Assessment as you are going to get, and without the price tag. When answering these questions, don't think too much about it. Go with your gut response and watch how it analyzes your personality. You might just be amazed at how accurate it is.
- **Mapping Your Future = <http://mappingyourfuture.org/PlanYourCareer/>**  
Mapping Your Future is a national collaborative, public-service, nonprofit organization providing career, college, financial aid, and financial literacy information and services for students, families, and schools.
- **My Next Move = [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org)**  
My Next Move is an interactive toll for job seekers and students to learn more about their career options. My Next Move has tasks, skills, salary information, and more for over 900 different careers. Users can find jobs through keyword search: by browsing industries that employ different types of workers; or through the O\*Net Interest Profile, a tool that offers personalized career suggestions based on a person's interests and level of work experience.
- **My Plan = [www.myplan.com](http://www.myplan.com)**  
helps students and professionals plan more fulfilling lives by making well-informed decisions about their education and careers. Whether you're planning ahead for your first career, or thinking about making a career change, MyPlan.com can help you explore options and bring clarity and insight into figuring out what's right for you.
- **What's Next = [www.whatsnext.com/](http://www.whatsnext.com/)**  
provides information, inspiration and resources for men and women who want to change careers, find more fulfilling work or improve their work-life balance. All are welcome, but there will be an emphasis on those who are in mid-career or approaching retirement.

## CAREER CHANGERS - RESEARCH RESOURCES

**Not sure where to look or where to begin? These sites can lead you to answers as to why and what it is you really want with your career. Before you jump, take a look and learn the best practices that can save you precious time and money.**

- **Area Vibes = <http://www.areavibes.com/>**  
Area Vibes helps you find the best places to live in America. We do this by assigning a Livability Score out of 100 to any address, zip code, neighborhood or city that you can think of. The Livability Score is created from a unique algorithm based on various important metrics for each city, including: amenities, cost of living, crime rates, education, employment, housing and weather. The higher the score, the better the city (in our opinion).
- **Becomeopedia = <http://becomeopedia.com/how-to/>**  
Becomeopedia offers a wide range of advice about careers, from accounting to video game engineering. It is a site dedicated to providing the most up to date and accurate information about becoming anything you dream.
- **Career Thoughts = [CareerThoughts.com](http://CareerThoughts.com)**  
provides seasoned professionals and students with tools to help identify careers that match the skills, interests, and abilities one may have. This is a site for people who have a strong passion or interest, but aren't sure exactly how to turn that passion into a career... into a career you will love.

- **Changing Course = [changingcourse.com/](http://changingcourse.com/)**  
provides the tools, information, ideas, and support you need to create a more satisfying and balanced life doing work you really love... on your own terms.
- **My Skills My Future = [www.myskillsmyfuture.org](http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org)**  
My Skills My Future helps laid-off workers and other career changers find new occupations to explore. Users can identify occupations that require skills and knowledge similar to their current or previous job, learn more about these suggested matches, locate local training programs, and/or apply for jobs.
- **O\*Net = [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)**  
The O\*NET program is the nation's primary source of occupational information. Central to the project is the O\*NET database, containing information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors. The database provides the basis for Career Exploration Tools, a set of valuable assessment instruments for workers and students looking to find or change careers.
- **Occupational Outlook Handbook – Bureau of Labor Statistics = <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>**  
The profiles featured in this handbook cover hundreds of occupations and describe What They Do, Work Environment, How to Become One, Pay, and more. Each profile also includes BLS employment projections for the 2010–20 decade.
- **Pay Scale = <http://www.payscale.com/cost-of-living-calculator>**  
Whether you're planning for an upcoming move or just curious about the cost of living in other cities, the PayScale Cost of Living Calculator is the place to begin your research. Enter your salary and job title as well as your current location and the city where you're considering a move. Not only will we show you the cost of living difference, but we'll let you know how much you need to make in the new location to maintain your current standard of living.