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# Switching Careers? Here's How To Be A Success



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Blame it on the economy or a generation of job hoppers, either way people of all ages are [switching careers](#) at a fast rate. Undoubtedly it's easier to move to a different role when you are in the early stages of your career, but even senior level people can do it and do it successfully.



"It makes sense to switch careers when it's strategically beneficial," says Joel Garfinkle, author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. "Economic challenges often means a proactive employee can strategically switch careers, in order to avoid lay-offs or downsizing. There are times when a career change is necessary to further advance, if you've reached a dead end in your current career."

Another driver of job switching: personal satisfaction. According to a study conducted by staffing company Spherion, 87% of workers cited [work-life balance](#) as a reason to stay with a company. "For a large measure it has to do with your current job satisfaction and a desire to do more meaningful work," says Sandy Mazur, Division President, Franchise & License of [Spherion](#). "People want work that is stimulating and rewarding." Consider Spherion, which is a franchisor. Mazur says the company has a past CEO of a hospital network, a VP of a clothing manufacture and even a professional football player working for them.

Whatever the motivation, career experts agree that before you can embark on an entirely new career path you have to do some serious self-critiquing to come up with a realistic list of your strengths and weaknesses. You don't want to pursue a career say in sales if you possess poor people skills. Just like you wouldn't want a job trading stocks if you shutdown in stressful situations. On top of that you also have to weigh the risks with the rewards. For instance, can you afford to make less or pay for schooling to get the proper education? "Although economic instability can be the catalyst for career switching, it also makes switching all that more risky," says Garfinkle. "Being the low man on the organizational totem pole, in a new career, may mean you're the first to be targeted for downsizing."

According to Kimberly A. Smith, managing partner, Eastern region, at executive search firm [Witt/Kieffer](#) the people who switch careers successfully are the ones who take the time to figure out what they do and don't do well. By possessing that insight, she says it will shed light on what type of careers you would likely excel in and which ones wouldn't be best suited for you. If possible, Smith says to get feedback from co-workers or even bosses who will be willing to provide unbiased examples of your strengths and weaknesses.

Once you are well versed on that aspect, you should research the field you want to work in. Not only do you want to find out what kind of skills and education you'll need to be successful in this job but Garfinkle says to investigate the level of competition in the positions you are considering pursuing and the [salary](#) levels based on your experience or skills. "Don't make the switch until you have all of the information to make an educated decision," says Garfinkle.

While researching on the Internet or [Glassdoor](#) will give you a good glimpse into what your job will be like, experts say it's a smart idea to network and find a mentor in that field so you'll know fully what you are getting into. "It's important to seek someone out in the chosen field," says Mazur at Spherion. "What makes them successful, what are the pros and cons" are things you want to learn. Mazur says ultimately if you can make it happen, shadow a person in the role you want for a few days. There's nothing better than firsthand experience to make up your mind.

For many people the idea of switching careers is very appealing but the thought of going back to school to get the necessary education makes the whole notion nothing more than a dream. While you can't become a nurse or a certified public accountant overnight, career experts say you can tweak your resume to highlight all of your transferrable skills no matter the field. Take Smith as example. Prior to becoming an executive recruiter at Witt/Kieffer, Smith ran a hospital that ended up being sold. During her subsequent job search she was asked if she would consider doing search. Smith balked at the idea initially but after giving it some thought she realized her skills lend themselves to that field even though Witt/Kieffer isn't a hospital. "You have to be open to new experiences and willing to take risks," says Smith. "The reward can be significant."



Donna Fuscaldo is a freelance journalist hailing out of Long Island, New York. Donna writes for numerous online publications including [FoxBusiness.com](#), [Bankrate.com](#), [AARP.com](#), [Insurance.com](#) and [Houselogic.com](#). As a personal finance reporter for years, Donna provides invaluable advice on everything from saving money to landing that dream job. She also writes a weekly column for [FoxBusiness.com](#) focused on technology for small businesses. Previously, Donna was an equities reporter for Dow Jones Newswires and a special contributor to the Wall

Street Journal. Through the [Glassdoor Blog](#), Donna will provide tips on how to find a job and more importantly keep it.