C A R E E R  C H A N G E  G U I D E

Are you thinking of changing careers? Open Colleges has spoken to prominent career change experts to get the most current advice to help you make an informed decision.
What you’ll find in Open Colleges’ Career Change Guide

Advice, statistics, studies and information on:

01  Should you change careers?

02  How to start the career change process

03  How to change careers at 30, 40 and 50+

04  Interviews with 5 inspirational career changers
Should you change careers?
Part 1: Introduction

Although staying in the same job for more than five years may once have been the norm, the job market has changed considerably over the past 20 years.

Today, employers are less loyal to their employees, who in turn are easily tempted by the wide range of career choices available to them.

In fact, a growing body of research shows that more career changes are happening than ever before. A recent survey of labour mobility showed that 56% of Australia’s workers had been in their job for less than five years and 20% for less than one year, with women more likely than men to change jobs and also more likely to do it voluntarily.

Another study by the research organisation McCrindle showed that the average Australian stays with their employer for just three years and four months. The biggest shift they observed, though, is that people are no longer just changing jobs, but also changing professions and industries, and retraining as they go.

Considering that over 40 years of our lives are spent in employment, it’s hardly surprising that so many people consider a career change at some point in their life.

A career change can take place for any number of reasons, from wanting a new challenge or a better salary to achieving your dream job or something else completely.

The point is that even if you feel unfulfilled in your current job, you still have the chance to find a career that is right for you, because it’s never too late to make a change.

Changing careers can be a daunting experience, so this guide provides a range of information to help you through the process, including questions you need to ask yourself, the right steps to take, and lots of help and career change advice.

People are no longer just changing jobs, but also changing professions and industries.
Part 2: Reasons to change your career

Everyone has different qualities they look for in their work, but there are some key elements that make people more likely to look towards a change in their specific career.

A recent survey by the US jobsite CareerBuilder uncovered some of the factors that make workers more likely to switch jobs or careers.

Do any of them apply to you?

1. Dissatisfaction with current position

A survey of 29 countries (including Australia) by global management consulting company Accenture, revealed that the top four causes of job dissatisfaction are low pay, a lack of opportunity to grow, no career advancement opportunities and feeling trapped.

In the CareerBuilder survey, 58% of people who were dissatisfied with their job said they were planning to make a change.

If you do find yourself considering a career change, decide whether it is simply a change in job you are looking for or a total career change. Make sure you don’t jump into any big decisions without thinking them through carefully. After all, you don’t want to throw something good away just because you’ve had a particularly bad week.

2. Job is unfulfilling

There are many different reasons why someone might feel unfulfilled at work, but research shows that factors like social support, feeling challenged, and opportunities for development and growth are very important, and a lack of these things may well leave someone feeling unfulfilled.

The CareerBuilder survey found that 45% of people who were dissatisfied with their advancement opportunities wanted a change. Of the workers who were satisfied with their career, 29% said they like the people they work with, 32% said they had a good boss who watches out for them, and 29% said they felt valued and that their accomplishments were recognised.
3. Skills are not being used to their full potential

Feeling like specific skills are being underutilised can be a big motivation to move into a new career. For example, if someone currently works as a company secretary but has always had a knack for problem solving and has great communication and negotiating skills, they may feel they could provide greater benefit if they were to upskill and pursue a career in human resources.

The CareerBuilder survey found that 39% of workers who felt underemployed, or in other words felt like their skills weren't being used to the full, wanted to make a career change.

4. Job is highly stressful

Everyone deals with some stress at work, although certain jobs are undoubtedly more stressful than others. No longer feeling well-equipped to deal with the stress involved in a particular career is another big reason people decide to follow a new career path.

Nearly 40% of respondents in the CareerBuilder survey who said they were highly stressed at work were planning to change jobs.

5. Poor work/life balance

Work/life balance refers to the proper prioritising of both work and personal life. Even if someone is reaching all their goals at work and earning a good salary, they may still feel dissatisfied if they don't have enough time to pursue personal interests and spend quality time with family and friends.

The CareerBuilder survey found that of the workers who reported a poor work/life balance, 39% had plans to change jobs in the near future.

6. Salary expectations are not being met

Perhaps you started your career expecting your salary to gradually increase, but it hasn't risen as much as you thought it would, or maybe you feel that your salary doesn't reflect the amount of work you put in. Whatever the reason, feeling underpaid is often a big motivator for someone to consider a different career.

In the CareerBuilder survey, 36% of workers who felt they had been overlooked for a promotion said they wanted to change jobs, and 28% of those who hadn't received a pay increase said the same.
If you do find yourself considering a career change, decide whether it is simply a change in job you are looking for or a total career change. Make sure you don’t jump into any big decisions without thinking them through carefully. After all, you don’t want to throw something good away just because you’ve had a particularly bad week.

Consider getting some advice from your friends and family before making any major, life-changing decisions. Often others can see things from an outside perspective and are more likely to be objective.

**Get advice:**

1. From colleagues
2. From your mentor
3. From your network
4. From friends


**Part 3:**

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of a career change?**

Although changing careers undoubtedly has some big advantages, it's also important to be aware of the potential disadvantages. Make sure you're clear on both sides before jumping in.

**Advantages**

1. You’ll likely be more engaged in your new career as it’s something you have a high level of interest in and/or allows you to use your specific set of skills.

2. Changing careers helps you gain expertise in a new area and can make you suitable for a wider range of job opportunities in the future. It also shows employers that you’re adaptable and not afraid of change.

3. Working in a new industry will give you the opportunity to get to know a whole different crowd of people and expand your career network.
Disadvantages

1. Because there are so many career opportunities available, you may be tempted to change job roles too frequently. This can have a negative effect in the long-term; as employers may worry that you won't stay in any new role for very long.

2. Prospective employers may have concerns about your suitability for the role if you have swapped career paths more than once, as it can indicate that you're not sure what direction your career is taking.

3. When you make a career change, you'll be starting from scratch and will need to be prepared for the fact that moving up the career ladder within your new industry will likely take longer than it would have if you had stayed in your first career.

Part 4: What to consider before changing careers

The three most important questions to ask yourself before making a career change.

If you have read this guide so far and still want to change career paths, asking yourself the following three questions can help you to better understand what you're looking for in your new career.

1. What is important to you and what do you want from your new career?

Before making any career changes, work out what is most important to you. Everyone is looking for something different, from earning more money, finding something more challenging, gaining a better work/life balance or possibly having more opportunities to move up the corporate ladder. Whatever your reasons, make sure your new career will be able to fulfil them.

Consider the big picture too; even if money is important to you, you also need to think of the quality of life and job satisfaction you will get from a new role. For instance, although changing careers could lead to a bigger pay packet, other factors like additional working hours or travel time might be stressful and leave you with less time for the things you enjoy.

2. Are you happy to start at the bottom and work your way back up?

When leaving your current career, you will need to take into account that this may mean starting again, potentially at the bottom. Be prepared for this, but also remember that if you're dedicated
and driven, you should be able to work your way back up to the top once you have proven your skills and developed your experience.

3. Are your expectations realistic?

When changing careers, make sure your plans are achievable. For example, if you’re striving to reach your dream job, it may be unrealistic to expect to get to this position straight away. Don’t be disheartened, it’s often easier to take lots of little steps towards your goal, rather than one large leap. So plan out some smaller steps that you will need to take in order to reach your goals in the long-term.

Part 5: Six steps for finding your new career

Changing jobs can be a challenge in itself, but changing to a whole new career is a big step and can be daunting in the beginning. These six steps will help you put your plans for a career change into motion.

1. Research

Speak to people in the industry to find out more about the pros and cons and make sure your intended career is definitely right for you. Also try to research some of the companies you’re interested in to find out more about their culture, work conditions as well as potential opportunities.

2. Plan

Work out what your end goal is and then set out a series of smaller, more easily attainable goals that will help you get there. Be sure to set realistic timeframes for each goal so that you have something to work towards each day.

3. Network

Networking with people who work in the industry you’d like to get into is a good way to find out more about the pros and cons of your new career, and can also help you uncover possible job opportunities. LinkedIn is a great tool for connecting with people in your new industry and even within the specific companies you’d like to work for.
4. Skills and qualifications

Work out if you will need any additional qualifications to start your new career. There are a number of flexible options available, from part-time classes to online learning. Do your research first and find out which courses best suit your needs. Online learning can even be done while you’re still in your current job or career and can help make the transition easier.

5. Experience

Additional experience in your new field will help you to get a foot in the door. See if you can find any work experience or volunteer opportunities near you. Although these are usually unpaid, starting your job search with experience under your belt will put you a step ahead of most other applicants.

6. Change your career!

If you have followed all of the above steps, you should be ready to make the final leap towards your new career. Remember that it will take some time to adjust to your new role and you may initially start on a lower income, but once you’ve established yourself, it can provide you with lots of new and exciting opportunities.

Online learning can even be done while you’re still in your current job or career and can help make the transition easier.
How to start the career change process
How to start the career change process
With Martin Darke

Part 1: Introduction

Starting a new career can be daunting at any age, especially if you’re hoping to move into a profession that’s quite different from anything you’ve done in the past.

And while it’s true that more people are considering career changes than ever before, the reality is that not everyone will be successful. So what’s the biggest reason people fail to make a successful transition into a new career?

More often than not it’s because the job seeker wasn't properly prepared.

Looking for a new job after years of working in the same industry isn't easy, and many employers no longer feel that they should be responsible for developing an employee's skill set and instead expect new hires to be able to hit the ground running.

This means career changers generally have to invest their own time and money in education and training programs that will get them ‘work ready’.

Additionally, when switching careers, more emphasis must be placed on transferable skills than on work experience, which means taking a different approach with everything from the way you structure your resume to how you explain yourself during interviews.

In the next few sections, Australia-based career coach, trainer and expert resume writer Martin Darke shares some advice on everything from the importance of doing your research to resume tips and job interview guidance tailored to your needs as a career changer.

Ready to get to work? For a comprehensive guide to writing your resume, head here.

Martin Darke

> [linkedin.com/in/martindarke](http://linkedin.com/in/martindarke)
Part 2: Doing your research

Before you choose your new career path, the first and most important step to take is carrying out the necessary research, and Darke notes that there are two aspects to this research. First, are there any jobs? Second, are you suited to this new career?

His own career has taken a number of twists and turns over the years, from finance to recruitment to IT and finally to career coach, and he’s held plenty of odd jobs in-between.

“In 2000, I decided to switch to the IT sector based on the information put out by the industry that there were at least 30,000 jobs waiting to be filled,” he explains. “So, my wife and I sold our house and bought a cheaper one to fund a year off whilst I studied for a diploma.”

Despite qualifying with an award for excellence, Darke soon discovered that he was considered ‘too old’ and in reality, those 30,000 new jobs didn’t really exist.

So, the simple question, says Darke, is this: is there a job and a future? As much as you may think you want to work in a particular career, you still need to ask yourself whether you are actually suited to the role.

“Very few people go about profiling themselves and comparing their profile to what is actually required,” he says.

“There was another occasion when I left a very good, stable job, one which I was enjoying, and accepted an offer which I simply couldn’t refuse. I had been enticed by a friend to a completely new sector, viewed the role as interesting and challenging, and was offered 60 % more than my existing package.

Within six months I was deeply unhappy. I wasn’t interested in what this engineering company did. My true interest lay in helping people, not in building infrastructure in remote places. I had lost my direction and been blinded by the package on offer.

As Grace Johnston says, ‘if you’re in a job purely for the money, then you are leading a living death’. That was me, so I resigned without a job to go to.”

Darke emphasises that whilst a new career might seem very appealing, you still need to take a good look at yourself and try to determine whether you’re actually a good fit and whether you’re going to be happy.
Part 3: Searching for a new job

Even once you’ve done your research and know exactly why a new career is right for you, there’s no guarantee that it will be smooth sailing from that point on.

“Cultural issues will always come into play, such as moving from the private to the public sector. Adapting, for instance, from a role that is team-based, to one in which you are working alone, is always a challenge,” Darke explains.

“In the end it’s all about risk assessment, but not all risks can be envisaged, and if things do go wrong, then acceptance is a key element in being able to move forward. At least you tried and won’t die wondering.”

He adds that one good way to get some insight into what a new career might be like before making any drastic changes is to try volunteering or doing work experience in your targeted career.

Here are a few basic steps to follow at the beginning of your job search.

• **Write and call** – Decide which companies you would like to work at and start off by sending letters to the relevant hiring managers. You can follow these up by calling. Don't forget that some jobs aren't advertised, so this technique will help you to cut through other competitors who are only looking on job search platforms.

• **Work for free** – If a company you have contacted is not hiring, consider offering to work for them for free as a contractor. This is an opportunity to show how passionate you are for the role and the company. When a new job does arise, it could help you to get to the top of their list.

• Volunteer experience also makes you more attractive to other companies, and a LinkedIn survey found that 41 % of employers considered volunteer experience as valuable as paid work experience, and 20 % of hiring managers had made hiring decisions based on volunteer work.

• **Keep trying** – Even if you have contacted companies and they don’t have a position at the moment, keep checking back as something may arise in the future. Be careful how many times you message though, as too much contact can have a negative effect.
Part 4: Resume

Your resume is another tool to connect with a recruiter, but a big challenge you may face is persuading recruiters that your career change is relevant.

Darke's book *The 30-Second Impact Resume* provides information on how to restructure your resume, and when it comes to changing careers, he points out that the most important thing is to get the message across as to why you want to make a change.

“If you can't make a convincing case for changing your career, then it will be difficult to even make the interview, as employers or recruiters will often look for people with experience,” he says.

“Of course it helps your case if you can bring some skills with you from your previous role. However, if you’re changing from being a mechanic to becoming, say, a payroll assistant, then there’s not much you can bring with you.”

So how can you make the 'why' clear on your resume? Darke says the best place to do this is in the summary at the top of your resume. Have a look at these examples.

Here are a few other points to keep in mind to ensure your resume stands out:

- **Theme** - Find a theme between your old and existing career to help explain your new direction. For example, if you’re going for a sales position, include in your resume any sales elements that you have had at your previous role.

- **Clear** – Less is more, so keep your resume simple. Use a clear template and make sure the text is easy to read.

- **Short and concise** – Only include what is relevant to the job you are going for. If you include too much, this may take focus away from your key achievements.

- **Summary** – Include a short objective statement which summarises your cover letter.

- **Sell yourself** – Focus on your skills as these are easily transferrable to all industries and positions. Include information about your previous experience, mention your accomplishments and show how these relate to your new career.

- **Keywords** – Read through the job description again and try and include keywords from it in your resume.

- **Check** – Check that there are no spelling mistakes. You could always ask someone else to read it for you. You should also not use any abbreviations or industry specific words that your recruiter may not understand.

Ready to create your resume? Head to this [resume writing guide](https://www.opencolleges.com/resume-writing-guide) for more tips and information.
Part 5: Cover letter

A cover letter is the first thing recruiters look at so make sure it stands out from everyone else’s. When you are changing careers, it is important that you explain the reasons for your change and focus on what you will be able to bring to the company.

“It’s important to analyse your past and future roles to see if there are any common skills or attributes which you can highlight,” Darke notes. “If there are, you can highlight them on your resume and also make reference to them in your covering letter.”

Here are some key things to consider when writing your cover letter:

• **Put the company first** – Although you want to sell yourself, put the needs of the company first and show how your services can help their bottom line.

• **Keep it short** – Bear in mind that a recruiter may have a number of cover letters to read, so make sure it is fairly short and concise. Keep it to around three paragraphs. If it is longer, they may lose interest or not read it.

• **Add personality** – Stay professional, but try and stand out by adding your own personality to your letter.

Part 6: Networking

Making connections in your chosen industry is extremely important in today’s job market where hiring decisions are often made based on who you know and whether or not you’ve been referred.

Networking with people you don’t know can be nerve-wracking, but it’s a good way to get your talents and goals in front of the people you want to work for. Companies may also have a vacancy which they aren’t promoting, or which may have only just opened up.

Go to relevant industry events and talk to attendees and speakers. Although you may not get a successful introduction from everyone you meet, keep trying. Others may recommend you to different people, or bear you in mind for the future.

It’s important to be prepared at events, so make sure you carry out some research before attending. LinkedIn is a useful tool for this, as you can search for people and find out about their employment history. You may also find information that you can use as an interesting conversation starter.
Part 7: Interview

“If you do get to the interview stage,” says Darke, “you’ve simply got to be convincing on the day. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse, particularly your answer to the question, ‘why do you want to change careers?’”

Here are a few other pointers for giving interviewers the right impression:

- **Research** – Make sure you know everything you need to about the company and the position you have applied for. This will help to show you are interested and that you will be able to easily answer any questions they may have about your understanding of the company.

- **Preparation** – Make sure you are prepared for any questions. Common interview questions include ‘why should we hire you?’ and ‘why do you want to work for the company?’ Plan a list of questions and work out in advance how you will reply in the interview.

- **Basics** – Plan your travel ahead of time to make sure you arrive five to ten minutes before your interview starts. Make sure you turn your mobile phone off before you arrive. When your interviewer arrives, shake their hand, smile and make eye contact throughout your interview.

- **Be presentable** – Many people make up their minds within the first few seconds of an interview from first impressions, so make sure you make eye contact, smile and remember the name/s of your interviewer.

- **Materials** - Bring any relevant materials that may help you during the interview, such as your resume and a portfolio of work (if you have one). Remember to bring along a pen and notepad which will show that you are organised and prepared.

- **Stay focused** – Don't drag your answers out as the recruiter may lose focus. Keep your answers short and precise as this can help you catch your interviewer’s attention and allow you to stay in their mind as a potential employee.

- **Ask questions** – Take the opportunity after your interview finishes to ask a few additional questions. This is the perfect opportunity to show your interest. Prepare some questions in advance, so you can use this time as effectively as possible.

- **Follow up** – After your interview, email your interviewer to thank them for their time and consideration. This will show that you are still interested, as well as considerate. It can also be used as a good opportunity to include references or anything else you that was discussed during the interview that you feel would help push you towards being their chosen candidate.

Want more tips on the interview process? Head to this [interactive infographic](#) for more tips.
Part 8: References

When you're applying for your dream job, having excellent references from previous employers can play an important role. These show recruiters that you are the ideal candidate for them to choose, as they display a history of your work. Make sure you contact your referees in advance, to let them know that they may be contacted. This will allow them to prepare what to say so they are not caught unaware or unprepared.

Enjoy your career change!

If you follow this guide, you'll be better equipped to make a successful career change. Don't forget that it's never too late to make a career change. A good example from history is Vincent Van Gogh who was firstly a school master, a student priest, a missionary and then an art dealer. It wasn't until his thirties that he became recognised for his artistic talents. So if you're not happy in what you're currently doing, remember that you can successfully change careers too, at any age!

If you have any questions about career changes or have already taken the leap and would like to share your story, please email yvette.mckenzie@opencolleges.edu.au.

Also, if you would like any additional help on online learning courses, please get in touch. Call Open Colleges on 1300 409 227.

Ready to create your resume? Head to this interactive infographic for more tips and resources.
How to change careers at 30, 40 and 50+
How to change careers at 30, 40 and 50+
With Kaaren Peterson

Introduction

Career change often involves taking risks and being a little bit daring, so we asked award-winning producer and strategist Kaaren Peterson to share a few insights on how our needs, responsibilities and attitudes at different stages in our lives shape the career choices we make.

Peterson has devoted her life’s work to storytelling—stories of people, businesses, brands, places and most importantly, ideas. She has directed documentaries in Bangladesh, produced a rock concert in a rainforest and raised money for humanitarian aid projects all over the world.

Her work involves helping people figure out their “why” or in other words, to find their purpose. From there, she works to develop a story that draws the crowd to whatever their business is.

“We do a lot of work with people who are sort of stagnating or flat lining in their business,” explains Peterson. “They know there’s something missing. They know that they should be doing something, but they’re not exactly sure what. And a lot of the time, we go right back to the why. What’s your purpose? Why are you doing this thing that you do? If you’re very clear about your why, people will buy why you do what you do.”

Her main message is that if you want to provoke change and make big things happen, passion isn’t enough.

So if you want to change your career even when conventional wisdom tells you that you are “too old” or don’t have enough experience or the right qualifications, we’re here to tell you that anything is possible and it’s never too late to find your “why”.

Kaaren Peterson

> linkedin.com/in/kaarenpeterson
> thesocialproducers.com/
> facebook.com/TheSocialProducers
Career change at 30

Responsibilities at 30

By the time they turn 30, most people have already spent five to ten years at a specific career and have a better idea of what they want professionally than they did in their twenties. So it’s not surprising that people often begin to consider a career change after 30.

Peterson notes that at this stage in life many people are thinking about having babies and buying houses, so things start to get a bit more serious and people tend to take themselves and their careers more seriously.

“I think in one’s 30s, one takes oneself terribly seriously,” she says. “There’s a lot of ‘I know it all’ happening at that point, and that’s fine because I think in the workplace, it’s when you can get your boldest work done.”

“I know a lot of people who have done very bold and brave and brilliant things in their 30s. So there’s that balanced with ‘Oh – I have to have a child now or never’.”

So what’s her advice for juggling work and personal life at this age?

“My word of wisdom would be to make sure you’re earning enough money that you can get decent child care, and if not, a nanny or live in,” she says.

“My mother had a terrible bit of advice for me at that point, which was, ‘Darling, just spend your way out of trouble.’ It wasn’t very good, but I earned a lot of money in my 30s, because I was working in the 80s in the advertising heyday. It was very different; I had nannies and help. So get as much help as you can and make life as easy as you can at this point.”

Career needs and confidence at 30

Your career needs at 30 will be somewhat different than in your 20s, and Peterson points out that it’s a good time to tackle bigger goals and set your sights higher than you have in the past.

“I would counsel most people going into their 30s to do the big stuff now, because as time goes on, you get really immersed in the child rearing thing or the paying the mortgage thing and you don’t have as much energy to pull off the big projects,” she says.

“If you have an audacious project in mind in your 20s, do it in your 30s whilst you still have the energy to do it, and don’t waste time thinking, ‘Oh I’ll figure it out eventually’. Get on with it, because 30 is a really big time for the rubber hitting the road.”
She also emphasises that at 30, we tend to have a certain confidence or arrogance, which can be both a positive and a negative, so it’s important to find the right balance.

“The arrogance is negative in that I find 30 year-olds don’t listen very much to older people. They really think they know it all,” she explains. “On the other hand, if you have to use critical thinking in your work, you’ll sometimes have to be bold and arrogant because you’re thinking in a new way.”

So when it comes to your career, Peterson says, be as arrogant as you like, but just be aware that you’re being very arrogant and learn to laugh at yourself.

30s

It’s a good time to tackle bigger goals and set your sights higher than you have in the past.
Career change at 40

Responsibilities at 40

Changing careers after 40 is more common than you might think, and according to a survey commissioned by USA Today and the career guidance organisation Life Reimagined, almost a third of pre-retirees (40 - 59) plan to make a career change in the next five years.

At this age, the motivations for making a career change tend to be less about the money and more about a desire to do something meaningful.

Peterson notes that most people have a number of more serious responsibilities to deal with at this age, such as children in their teenage years or financial obligations.

“You may by now either be having teenagers or you’re running a business and you’re trying to keep up with your peers who may have gone ahead in leaps and bounds in their 30s and you may not have. And then suddenly you think, ‘Oh. I’ve only got ten years or so before I really should have put a whole load away for my 50s’, so it’s a slightly serious time.”

But, she also points out that on the up side; you have a lot of experience and wisdom to draw from, which can make the career change easier.

“You do know a lot of stuff,” she says. “You’re of great value to your business, or if you’re a worker as opposed to an owner of a business, you’re of great value to the company because you have a lot of experience by now and you can be given more responsibility.”

Career needs and confidence at 40

Although learning and gaining new skills and qualifications is important no matter what you’re doing, it’s especially valuable for those making a career switch, and Peterson notes that professional and personal development is important at this stage in your career.

“At this point, you really should have your masters or be looking at what else you can add to your professional qualifications. When was the last time you did some professional or personal development work?”

When it comes to confidence and attitudes, she points out there are two main things that change at 40. Firstly, you’ve gained a lot of wisdom from your parenting, managing and multi-tasking, which helps you feel more confident in your own abilities.
At the same time, though, you are also more willing to listen to and learn from others who are more experienced than you. This is can be a very positive thing when changing careers as it means you’ll be more open to learning new skills and gathering wisdom from those who have gone before you.

“Remember the resistance you had from your parents in your 20s and even early 30s? By the time you’re in your 40s, you’ve reconciled your childhood stuff. You’ve done that work and you’re looking at all the people around you,” Peterson says.

“You’re looking at the bosses and the CEOs, and they might be in their late 40s, early 50s or a bit older, and you’re thinking, ‘Oh, I get that there’s another degree of learning and wisdom and experience that I couldn’t see when I was in my 30s and thought I knew it all’.”

40s

At this age, the motivations for making a career change tend to be less about the money and more about a desire to do something meaningful.
Career change at 50

Responsibilities at 50

Although you likely still have 20 to 25 years of work ahead of you at 50, it’s only natural to start thinking about slowing down a bit, and sometimes people feel that it’s time to get off the treadmill and do something that allows for more freedom.

Many people assume they’ll have fewer responsibilities at 50, and it will finally be the time to relax a bit, but Peterson points out that this isn't always the case.

“We think our children are growing up and they’re going away and we’re going to have party time and relax, but – oops! We now have our parents to look after,” she says.

“They go into their later years, and are dealing with things like dementia and old aged care. They become completely dependent on us and we become the parent to them, and that can be a bit of a bummer, because there we were thinking, this was our time to relax.”

She adds that at the same time, there may also be children in early university and added responsibilities at work, so there's a lot to deal with and it's often not the ‘downtime’ that people expected it to be. So these are things to be aware of, but of course there are positives too.

“In your 50s, there’s the responsibility for you to be a leader and a mentor to younger people,” says Peterson. “And you can slip into that role quite easily because you have a lot of runs on the board at this point, and particularly for women, when they get through the menopause years, it’s a totally delightful time. Your creativity comes to the fore. It’s your wisdom years.”

Career needs and confidence at 50

Despite the government’s plans to raise the retirement age to 70, 50 is inevitably still going to be the age when many people begin to think about what they’ve accomplished as well as what they still want to accomplish, both personally and professionally.

The USA Today survey shows that of the midlife adults who planned to make a career change, 82 % wanted to give back more, 80 % wanted to pursue personal passions, and 75 % wanted to make their life more meaningful. Other motivations included wanting to travel more and pursue new hobbies.
Peterson notes that at this stage, your career needs will be different than they were at 30 or 40, because not only do you realise that you don't have that much time left to do everything you want, your pace of working also changes.

"At this point, if you’re not on purpose with your life, you’re going to have a major personal or work crisis," she says. “You have to be on purpose by now, because it suddenly becomes crystal clear that there's not much time left in your working life.”

“I can’t work at the same pace that I could when I was in my 30s or 40s, so my work needs are different because I have to work smarter. In a way, my thinking has changed; I've become more strategic and more creative. I haven't got time to muck about, so I can tend to be quite blunt and straightforward in my requirements and the support that I'm asking for from the world. So this is a good and a bad thing," she explains.

50s

It’s a totally delightful time.
Your creativity comes to the fore.
It’s your wisdom years.
Find your purpose

Finally, when changing careers at any age, Peterson says the key is to find your purpose. What’s the common thread that takes your interest from one career to the next? What are you here to do?

“If you can find the common thread—what we as producers call the golden thread of your story—you can change your career as many times as you like,” she says. “But try and stay congruent with what your main purpose in life is, and if you can’t figure it out, go and do some personal work. There are plenty of people out there who can teach you how to find that. We’re all here for whatever that purpose is.”

She notes that in her own work, the common thread for all the different things she’s done is storytelling—helping people find the transformation points in their life and helping them to transform wherever they’re at through storytelling.

“I’ve worked in advertising. I’ve made a social justice doco. I’ve done experiential events. I’ve made stuff happen. I’ve done product launches and now this business, and a thousand things in between. I’ve worked in hospitality and run shops and all of that, but in every single career I’ve done, there’s a common thread.”

Peterson adds that once you’ve identified this common thread in everything you do; you’ll never have to feel like moving into a new career because you’ve failed at the first one, since it’s all part of the same story.

“It’s all building on this idea that we’re here for a purpose,” she says. “We’re going to do it in many different ways. It’s like changing costumes, but actually, there’s always going to be a common thread. It can take time to get there, but that’s the golden rule, really.”
04

- Interviews with 5 inspirational career changers
A career change, if it has been well-researched beforehand and is determined to be a good fit, can have numerous personal and professional benefits, from improved work/life balance to better salary and benefits or support and resources.

To get some real-life insight into the benefits, but also the challenges involved in making a career switch, we spoke to five people who left the security of their familiar and even quite successful careers in order to follow a completely new and different career path.

While their motivations for making a change varied from feeling unfulfilled to wanting a higher salary, there are also a few striking similarities in each story. For one thing, they all say that changing careers has provided them with a better work/life balance and enables them to devote more time to personal interests.

Additionally, although the decision to move into a new career was initially challenging and even a little bit scary, they now say they have a genuine interest in what they do and rather than dreading the thought of going to work each day, they actually look forward to it.

1. Community Services: Eddie Reece

Eddie Reece is a psychotherapist, business consultant and writer who runs his own counselling practice with the aim of helping people live better lives and improve their relationships by communicating more effectively. He also assists with tackling deep-seated problems like addiction, aggression, a lack of self-esteem, depression or stress.

Although his passion for helping others makes his current career a perfect fit, he didn’t find the ‘right’ one until he was 35. He started out as an Air Force Officer and then worked at everything from sales to bartending. We talked to him about what it was like to finally settle into a career he loves.

Question: When did you first realise you wanted a career change, and what motivated you to take the first steps?

Answer: After undergraduate school I joined the Air Force. Not staying in was a career choice. Talk about authority issues. I got my degree in psychology, but for a number of reasons didn’t return to graduate school.
I had a string of “careers” after the Air Force, including bartending, starting a limousine service and being the sales manager for a dating service way before the internet arrived. Twelve years after leaving the Air Force, I returned to graduate school to become a psychotherapist.

So to answer your question, I realised I wanted a career change countless times in my life.

At the age of 35, I returned to graduate school. My main motivation to change careers was that I knew in some way that what I was doing wasn’t ‘really me’. Many of my career choices were driven by the desire to make a lot of money, with some desire to be happy working, but I would find myself unhappy and want a change.

The drive to change careers was an emotional one that came from unresolved emotional issues. Once I worked on those, choosing the right career and staying with it was easy. I’ve been in this field for some 25 years now.

**Question: What was the biggest challenge you had to overcome when making your career change?**

**Answer:** I had to face the truth of who I was. I was someone driven by unhealthy emotional forces, so I then had to do the hard work of changing who I was. In short, I had to learn what really mattered to me.

**Question: What have been the biggest benefits to your career change?**

**Answer:** Finding the right motivation, living my life more authentically and working in a job that truly satisfies me in so many ways are just some of the payoffs of being in a career that fits the person I’ve become. It’s so much easier to go to work, and it doesn’t even feel like work.

I help people become who they truly are so they can find the right career and live their lives in a way that fits. I make more money than ever before, but money is not the motivator it was 30 – 40 years ago and that makes a fundamental difference.
2. Business, Management and Services: 

**Brittney Borowicz**

Brittney Borowicz is the marketing manager for a computer networking company as well as a freelance social media consultant. She works to introduce new marketing initiatives, implement successful social media strategies and communicate brand messages across a variety of mediums.

Before moving into marketing, however, she graduated from university with a Broadcast Journalism degree and worked for a news station as a newscast director and master control operator. We asked Brittney to share some of her insights into both the challenges and benefits her career change brought with it.

**Question: When did you first realise you wanted to make a career change and what motivated you to take the first steps?**

**Answer:** There were several factors that made me realise I needed a career change. The biggest reason was my schedule. I was working from 2pm until about midnight, every weekend and every holiday. I was at work while all my friends were at home and at home when they were at work.

In addition, it took a lot of time away from family as I was unable to attend holidays when many professions get the day off work.

On top of the terrible schedule, I was only being paid $US10 an hour for my work and the job strongly discouraged anyone from working overtime. I was being paid once every two weeks and would have to use a whole pay check, plus part of a second one, just to be able to pay my rent every month.

I always said I would be okay with not much pay as long as I was happy, but in addition to not being paid much, I wasn't happy.

**Question: What was the biggest challenge involved in making the switch?**

**Answer:** I knew I wanted to move into marketing, but at the time, I didn't have much experience. I had graduated with a broadcast journalism degree and even though I had a few marketing internships in college, most of them involved jammed copiers and making coffee runs rather than learning real marketing skills.

I really had to convince my next employer that I could utilise the journalism skills and sales skills from being a waitress and bartender in college to be a good marketer for their team. From there,
I took it upon myself to do my own research on the ins-and-outs of marketing and made sure I seized every opportunity I could to learn from others in the marketing field.

**Question:** What would you say have been the biggest benefits to changing careers so far?

**Answer:** There have been many benefits. First and foremost, my work/life balance is so much better. I work hard but am able to see friends after work and on the weekends. I am able to spend holidays with my family members rather than sitting at work.

Along with the better schedule, my salary is now three times greater than what it used to be which not only allows me to pay rent, bills and other necessities, but it also allows me to travel and occasionally splurge on myself and others.

I am extremely happy I made the switch. I love my job and have been gifted with some amazing opportunities in the marketing field. I also work for a great company that takes care of me and makes sure I am happy with what I am doing.

Brittney Borowicz

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3. Finance and Accounting: Jill Dahl

Jill Dahl is a writer, coach and entrepreneur who recently launched her own company Second Hand Therapy. But when she first started out, she wanted to be a teacher, and after graduating from university with a degree in education she taught high school English and Home Economics for five years.

However, Jill soon felt she needed a change and her love of numbers led her to the financial industry where she started out as an insurance advisor and eventually worked her way up to branch manager of a billion dollar business with a staff of 40.

Although she's recently made another career change in order to start her own business, we talked to her about her initial switch from education to finance where she ended up working for over a decade.

**Question:** Going from high school teacher to insurance adviser is a pretty big leap, so what attracted you to the financial industry in the first place?

**Answer:** I loved taking accounting in high school and I was always passionate about teaching my friends about money. Going into the financial industry was the closest I could get to my love of numbers and teaching others, without having to go back and get another degree.

**Question:** What were some of the first steps you had to take when making this switch, and what was it like looking for a job in finance with your background in education?

**Answer:** I started researching entry level positions in the financial industry. Getting started in a commission-based role as an insurance advisor meant fewer barriers for someone like me without any previous experience in the financial industry.

After that role, I was able to switch over to the personal banking side because I was considered to have “experience” from my insurance role.

I had to take a really challenging test to become an insurance advisor. I think it was about a month solid of studying. To switch over to personal banking, I had to get my mutual funds licence, which included studying two textbooks worth of material and two exams.

I thought the fact that my degree was in education, and not in business, would be a detriment to my career in banking, but as it turns out it was actually an asset. When I transitioned to management after a few years in banking, my teaching degree and experience actually set me apart from my peers.
I was used to having to figure out creative ways to teach teenagers, so getting adults who wanted their pay cheque to learn a new skill or product was easy in comparison.

**Question: Do have any advice for those looking to transition into the financial industry from something completely different?**

**Answer:** My answer to this question is much different today than it would have been five years ago, as the banking industry is evolving into a much more customer-oriented, retail environment.

Demonstrated results in sales and outstanding customer service are much more valued than any studying or course work you could do. Without experience, you’d likely have to start in an entry level position, but if you are able to prove your ability to learn quickly and close sales, you will find that doors open quite quickly.

It’s also important to make contacts in the financial industry. Get to know the manager at your local bank, and find out who makes the hiring decisions. When looking for a job, network with the people who know the decision-makers and would be willing to vouch for you and try to connect with corporate recruiters on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

Jill Dahl
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4. Creative Industry: **Ian Taylor**

Ian Taylor is the owner and CEO of [Ian Taylor Trekking](#), a travel company that specialises in hikes and climbs in far-flung places like Nepal, Tanzania, and Peru. He also speaks internationally about his expeditions and is an ambassador for the [Fields of Life](#) charity, which collaborates with rural East African communities to make quality education, clean water and healthcare more easily accessible.

He didn’t always intend to be an entrepreneur. Before he made the decision to follow his creative passion and travel the world while helping others do the same, he was an Assistant General Manager of a team of 150 at Europe’s largest leisure facility.

So how did he make the switch from his corporate job to Everest climber? We asked him a few questions to find out.

**Question: When did you first realise that you wanted to make a career change and how did you get started?**

**Answer:** After travelling for nine months I realised there was so much more to life than where I grew up, but the reality of life is that we need money to live, survive and develop ideas and freedom to explore.

As I needed a job, I started working as an operations manager and was promoted to Assistant General Manager by the time I was 25. During this time I was always thinking about travelling, although I had no idea I would be doing what I am now. I just knew I needed to make a change.

Four years into this job, my friend and I were in Peru and had a conversation about climbing Mount Everest. I instinctively knew that this was something that would help me take the next steps toward my goal, although I still wasn’t exactly sure what that goal was.

People were telling us we couldn't do it and even our guide cancelled our climb two months before we were due to fly to Nepal. My job was also very reluctant to give me the two and half months off that I needed for the climb.

Long story short, we did climb Everest, and in doing so were able to raise $US100,000 to build the Mt. Everest Primary school in Uganda. I also started looking at leading hikes and bringing people out on climbs, and I was getting a lot of people interested in joining me.

Ten months after the climb I was made redundant, and although I had already been working toward setting up my own travel company, I was forced to actually move forward with it.
Question: What was the biggest challenge involved in making your career switch?

Answer: Although I did have a wide range of skills, I still needed to re-educate myself over a two year period to make this dream a reality. I also took on a couple of business start-ups, managed a business turn around project and used the money to move my own business forward.

From the time I was made redundant it took me two years of hard work to get my own business up and running and I had to work two jobs to make it work.

The biggest challenge was having no money. I had just gone into debt to climb Everest, lost my job and moved back in with my parents. This was just after I had turned 30, and climbing Everest was starting to look like a really bad thing.

I had to take unemployment benefits for months. Things were looking bleak. I had to remind myself that I'd put in a lot of work to setting up my own business, but had no money.

I started offering out business development services and got some work. I was still working on the website, marketing, guiding techniques and developing my skill set. During this time I also took on a two-year business management project that paid well and gave me the chance to develop and pay for my own business start-up.

“I had a couple of rough years financially, but the switch has definitely been very worthwhile.”

Ian Taylor
Question: What have been the biggest benefits of making this career change so far?

Answer: While I was in the transition of living with my parents and out of work, my girlfriend, and now wife, stood by my side. Laura is from Lawrence, Kansas and after eight years of living in Ireland she wanted to move closer to her family.

So after getting the business up and running, we moved to Colorado to further develop the business, which gave me the opportunity to live at altitude in the mountains. I can now pick and choose my schedule, and be going skiing in 45 minutes. In short, I have full control over my future.

Of course, it's not always easy. Some months we make no money, but we are slowly growing and developing a quality service on all our treks as well as unique and proper acclimatisation programs for our clients.

I have a great work/life balance and I'm more interested in what I do. I do get paid a little more than before, but that's only since last year. I had a couple of rough years financially, but the switch has definitely been very worthwhile.

I get to lead treks and trips around the world, speak internationally about my journey, own a company in Nepal and have partnered with another company in Africa. I'm also an ambassador for the charity that we raised the money for to build the Mt. Everest Primary School.

Ian Taylor

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5) Health and Wellness: **Julianne Soviero**

Julianne Soviero is a personal trainer, sports performance consultant and author of *Unleash Your True Athletic Potential*. She has studied nutrition, performance, recovery and even hypnosis in order to help athletes perform to the best of their abilities and has produced a number of award winning athletes.

Her career started in education and she taught high school English before realising that her true passion was working with and training athletes. So what made her want to try something new and what has she gained since then? Here's her story.

**Question: What made you realise that you wanted to change careers, and how did it all start?**

**Answer:** I realised I wanted a career change because the political climate in teaching English seemed to be taking a turn for the worse. I was waking up extremely early and staying up very late reading papers and writing lesson plans. I was feeling really burnt out and run down.

More and more clients were asking me to give them pitching lessons, and after only a few months of teaching, I had an offer to play professionally in Italy in the spring.

My district would not give me leave to do that, so I stayed for the full academic year and then gave notice with plans of playing professionally the following year. My small business started to grow in that year though, so I ended up coaching the Italian professional team for two weeks instead of going to play there for several months.

**Question: What was the biggest challenge you faced once you made the decision to move into a new career?**

**Answer:** The biggest challenge involved in making the switch was fear of the unknown. I was giving up health insurance and a job in a good district to do something I loved. There was no security in that at all.

**Question: What have been some of the biggest benefits of making a career switch?**

**Answer:** The benefits are almost too numerous to list. I get to do something I love every day, I get to speak to motivate people, I help athletes get into college, and I mentor young instructors to help them create great athletes. I don't think I ever would have had the time to write a book if I was still teaching English. I couldn't be happier that I made this switch.

Julianne Soviero

[www.trueathleticpotential.com/about-media-page.html](http://www.trueathleticpotential.com/about-media-page.html)