

10 Career Change Mistakes to Avoid

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Are you considering changing your career? Are you bored, fed-up, lost, or otherwise unhappy in your current career? Are you facing a crossroads at which you need to decide between staying in your current field and moving to a new one? Do you have skills that you are not using in your current career? Have you been promoted to a point where you are no longer doing what you love?

Changing careers is one of the biggest decision job-seekers face, and with many possible outcomes and consequences. Before you make that jump to a new career field, consider these common career change mistakes so that you can avoid them as you make the transition from one career to your next.

Making a career change without a plan.

Probably the biggest mistake you can make is attempting to change careers without a plan. A successful career change can often take months to accomplish when you have a strategy, so without one, you could end up adrift for an even longer period. Having a detailed action plan (including items such as strategies, finances, research, and education/training) is essential to your success. Without a plan, you might take the first job offer that comes along, whether it is a good fit for you or not. Read: [The 10-Step Plan to Career Change](#).

Changing careers because you hate your job.

Don't make the mistake of confusing hating your current job with hating your current career. Take the time to analyze whether it's just the job/employer/boss that you hate, or whether it's the career/skills/work that you dislike. The same goes with if you are feeling bored or lost with your job; review whether it's the job/employer or the career. Whatever you determine, it's best not to leave your job — if possible — until you have a plan for finding a new job/career.

Making a career change solely based on money/benefits.

Certain career fields are very alluring because of the salary and other benefits they offer, but be very careful of switching careers because of all the dollar signs. Keep repeating to yourself, "money won't buy me happiness." Remember that you may make more money, but if you hate your new career, you'll probably be spending that money on stress- and health-related expenses. A career that's hot today could be gone tomorrow, so dig deeper.

Changing careers because of outside pressure.

Don't let your parents, significant others, or anyone else influence your career choice. They don't have to live that career every day; you do. If you love what you do and earn a reasonable living, why is it anyone's business but yours? If you switch careers because of outside pressure to have a "better career," and then hate your new career, you'll end up resenting the person(s) who pressured you to make the switch.

Making a career change without refreshing your network and finding a new mentor.

Don't ever attempt a career change alone. As soon as you have identified the career field you want to switch into, begin developing new network contacts. Conduct informational interviews. Join industry associations. People in your

network can provide inside information about job-openings and can even champion you to hiring managers. Networking is essential for all job-seekers, but even more so for career-changers. And use a current or new mentor as a sounding board to help guide you in the transition. Learn more about [networking](#) and [the value of a mentor](#).

Changing careers without examining all the possibilities.

Don't jump career fields without first conducting thorough research into all the possibilities, including career fields you may never have considered. By conducting research into careers you have never considered or been exposed to, you may find the career of your dreams. Talk to people in your network, read career and job profiles, meet with a career management professional. The more information you have about various career choices, the more successful you'll be in making a career change. Use these [research resources](#).

Making a career change without assessment of likes/dislikes and without self-reflection.

Self-assessment (of your skills, values, and interests) is a critical component to career-change success. Make a list of the skills you love doing (in your job, in your hobbies, in all aspects of your life) and the skills you never want to do again. Next, consider taking one or more assessment tests, especially those with a career component. Preparing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Analysis is also a useful activity. All these activities are designed so that you better understand yourself — your product — so that you can find the best career for you and then sell yourself to employers in that new career. Learn more about [assessing your likes and dislikes](#), as well as [preparing a personal SWOT Analysis](#).

Changing careers based on the success of others.

It's human nature to fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to others. Just because your best friend or neighbor is successful in a certain career does not mean that you will be — or that you will be happy doing it — so certainly consider the career field, but make sure you do the research before jumping into it. Finally, just to add yet another cliché, too many job-seekers switch careers on the assumption that the grass is always greener — and often times find out that is not the case.

Making a career change without necessary experience/education.

As a career-changer, you must find a way to bridge the (experience, skills, and education) gap between your old career and your new one. While transferable skills (skills that are applicable in multiple career fields, such as communications skills) are an important part of career change, it is often necessary to gain additional training and experience before you can find a good job in a new career field. Research whether you need additional training, education, or certifications. And try to find time to volunteer, temp, intern, or consult in your new career field — what some experts refer to as developing a parallel career — before quitting your current job and searching for a full-time position in your new career field.

Changing careers without updating job-search skills/techniques.

If it's been a while since you were last on the job market, take the time to polish your job-search skills, techniques, and tools. Review your resume-writing techniques, master networking, and polish your interviewing skills. What's the sense of doing all this research and preparation in attempting to change careers if you are not current with your job-search skills? Use the resources in our Career Toolkit to examine and polish all aspects of your job-hunting techniques and tools.

Final Thoughts on Career Change

You have so many resources at your fingertips, both here at Quintessential Careers and other career sites, that there is no excuse to making any of these career change mistakes. But if you do make one of them, step back and see if there is a way to fix it and move on... a career should not control you; you should control your career.