

# Jump-Start Your Career Change

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The prospect of changing careers is both exhilarating and daunting. If you know exactly what you want to pursue, don't become stymied by the enormous challenges the career-change process presents. Employ these powerful strategies to make that career change a reality.

## Determine Your Leverage Points

Inventory the skills and experiences you can leverage in your career switch. Examples include:

- **Company Type:** Leverage your knowledge about the kinds of companies you've worked for. Nonprofit organizations have certain similarities. So do family-owned or owner-operated businesses and, to a certain degree, public companies.
- **Transferable Skills:** In most cases, skills you've honed in one career will be relevant in the next. Project management, team leadership, sales, customer service, analytical capabilities, problem solving, hiring, training and numerous other abilities are all common transferable skills.
- **Experience:** Use any startup, shutdown, merger, product launch or corporate crisis you've lived through as leverage when you talk to companies dealing with similar issues.
- **Job Environment:** If you've ever worked in a pressure-cooker environment, you'll be no stranger to a similar environment in another industry. The same will be true if you've ever dealt with unions, worked for an entrepreneur or worked without supervision.
- **Networks:** Leverage your current relationships to find entry points into your new field. All it takes is a different type of conversation to get started. Ask contacts what they know and whom they know related to the field you want to enter. Follow up on their leads, and you'll make progress quickly.

## State Your Case Effectively

Be sure you have strong, valid reasons to change careers. If you know why you want to make the change and what you stand to gain from it, you'll increase your odds of success considerably. Also, be sure you can articulate those reasons to potential employers and explain what's in it for them. Employers don't want to feel like you're running away from something.

## Find the Logical Entry Point

Often, a certain role or company will serve as a natural transition into your new field. Bolster your chances of getting hired by using your leverage points to identify where you best fit.

## **Avoid Overanalysis**

Developing a strong understanding of yourself is imperative to managing your career change, but avoid analysis paralysis. You cannot think your way to a career change; eventually, you must act.

## **Connect with People in Your Target Field**

When you're changing careers, your resume is less useful as a marketing tool. For that reason, building your network becomes even more critical. Connect with people in your target field to validate your interest and learn about opportunities.

## **Make an Impression**

On interviews, be the standout candidate by talking up the actions you've taken that prove your commitment to the field. Reveal your industry knowledge, and mention industry events you've attended or industry associations where you volunteer. If you write an industry-related blog, reference that as well. You could even present a white paper on an industry issue you've researched or a business plan that demonstrates the value you could bring to the organization.

Your goal is to make potential employers see you as someone already in their industry and in it to stay, regardless of whether they hire you. Don't leave the impression that if they don't hire you, you will do something else.

## **Moonlight**

One tangible way to start your career change is through freelance or part-time work. Such work builds your resume and lets you test the waters in your new field.

Concrete steps such as these create momentum for your career change, demonstrate your commitment to potential employers and validate your plan.

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[Ian Christie founded [BoldCareer.com](http://BoldCareer.com) to help individuals build bold, fulfilling careers and help organizations attract, develop and retain talent. A career coach, consultant, three-time entrepreneur, former senior director at Monster and former retained executive search consultant, Ian is an expert in the fields of careers and recruitment. He believes that career management is a

central theme to both personal and organizational effectiveness. BoldCareer.com offers career services to companies and individuals as well as free career resources.]