

HOW TO CHANGE CAREERS WITH NO EXPERIENCE IN YOUR NEW FIELD

Every person deserves career happiness, so when one's current situation no longer satisfies, a switch may be in order. The prospect of changing careers, however, can seem daunting — especially without a background in the new field of interest.

To facilitate this move, we've compiled a guide to help you change careers even when you have no experience.

Answer the question “What do I want to do instead?”

Some career changers possess a clear idea of where to switch, while others feel lost. People in the latter category need to start with introspection. Thinking about things that make you passionate can provide clues, as can looking back at activities enjoyed as a child. If you never went anywhere as a kid without a book in hand, for instance, and you have an interest in working with kids, becoming a librarian might be a great option.

Still having difficulty? Consider seeking help from a career coach or taking an online assessment.

Research

Learn everything you can about the new job(s) of interest: educational requirements, market, salary, in-demand skills, etc. Start online, but also try to find actual people holding positions you find fascinating. Talking with them, or even job shadowing for a firsthand look at their daily duties, provides insight and allows for asking questions.

Evaluate

As you gain knowledge about the new career, you can begin to assess what it would take to break into it. You might decide, for instance, that enrolling in an LPN program is better suited to your current situation than a lengthier course of study to become a registered nurse.

Some career changes may be easier than originally anticipated because of transferable skills. Examine current abilities you possess that employers in your new field would find desirable. Customer service skills from years in retail, for instance, could be put to good use working the front desk of a busy medical practice.

Demonstrate seriousness

Show prospective employers that this career change isn't just a whim. Take a relevant class or two to bolster your credentials. Look for volunteer opportunities or freelance assignments that let you put skills into practice or demonstrate your passion. Join appropriate professional associations and attend industry events.

Become an active member of LinkedIn groups in the field of interest. Such activities also help to expand your network.

Sell yourself

In the end, getting any job involves convincing a prospective employer that you have what it takes to meet the company's needs. Instead of dwelling on what you lack, focus on what you offer.

Start with an impeccable cover letter that clearly makes your case. Promote yourself as a fast learner, a jack of all trades, someone sharing the company's values, or an applicant with outstanding transferable skills — whatever angle seems most likely to gain the hiring manager's attention.

Then, consider constructing a functional resume. While the standard chronological resume highlights work history, a functional one concentrates on skills and can be more effective when switching careers. You'll still need to list previous employment, but such information gets briefly stated later in the document rather than taking center stage.

And when you get an interview, keep the pitch going. What you lack in direct experience often can be made up for in proper positioning and enthusiasm!

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