

Reprinted from the August 2015 issue of BIC

Making a career transition: Five steps to success

Considering a change in careers? If so, you may have discovered just thinking about the process can be overwhelming.

Making a career transition is a turning point. It can also mean a realignment of other parts of your life — additional education/training, relocation or a lifestyle shift.

There are three basic ways to make a career transition. Probably the most ambitious action, yet the path many people choose, is to change professions entirely — both the job and the field of endeavor. Another course to

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take is to move to a new position in the same industry. And finally, the third option is to find the same position in a new industry.

Potentially, the biggest mistake you can make is attempting to change careers without a plan. A successful change may often take months to accomplish when you have a strategy. Without a plan, you could end up drifting for an even longer period of time.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” strategy for making a career change. However, here are five fundamental steps you can take that should increase your chances of success.

1. Determine the “why” — Avoid rushing into the change. You should

ask yourself what you are seeking to accomplish and why. Do you want to change careers because you dislike your job, your boss or the company culture? Do you want more money/benefits? Try not to confuse disliking your current situation with disliking your overall career. Take the time and effort to analyze whether it’s just the job/boss/company you’re not happy with, or whether it’s the career/skills/work you dislike. Whatever you conclude, keep in mind it’s best to maintain your current job, if possible, until you have an action plan in place.

2. Assess likes and dislikes — Analysis can be a useful activity. It helps us to better understand ourselves. In most cases, determining your dislikes on the job is the easy part. A key question to ask yourself is what do you really like doing when you’re at work. What gets you excited and enthused? What do you have a passion for? If you’re not quite sure, consider completing a few online career assessments to help you get a better understanding of your “likes.” Another option is to visit with a career professional who can help guide you in the transition.

3. Research other careers — Examine the possibilities. Avoid jumping into a different career field before you spend some time researching the careers that center on your passion. Network with your contacts and read career/job profiles. Great career information and skills-matching services can be located on the Internet. The more information you have about vari-

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ous career choices, the most successful you’ll be in making a transition.

4. Evaluate transferable skills — You probably already have a good amount of skills and experience that is transferable. Consider your communication skills — oral, written, interpersonal and presentation; and skills in problem solving; planning, organizing, implementing and leading others; computer applications; and customer satisfaction. Once again, it’s important you keep in mind the fact you may need additional education, training or certifications to effectively transition into your new career.

5. Find a mentor — Changing careers is undoubtedly a challenging undertaking. You need to have someone to assist you through the difficult times, to help motivate and keep you focused on your goal. There will be times when the insecurities and lack of confidence set in. When seeking out a mentor, look for someone with whom you can build a relationship, who can add to your current level of wisdom and, finally, someone who doesn’t just encourage you but will also be direct and frank with you when you’re moving in the wrong direction.

Finding a new job is tough. Changing careers is even tougher. Yet, with a strategic plan, lots of resourcefulness and commitment, you can be successful and make it happen.

For more information on Dr. White’s programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307. ●