

6 steps to a successful career change

Making a career change can be a daunting experience. But gone are the days when the majority of the workforces stayed in the one stable job for decades. In New Zealand, 68% of people have made a career change before; 27% of those have done so in the last twelve months. So, how did they do it?

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1. **Self-assessment.** A good place to start is with an honest self-assessment. Changing careers can present you with a number of significant challenges; you may find yourself being forced to confront difficult questions about your past work experience and performance. You'll be best served if you've already thought about these before a hiring manager puts them to you. Here are a few questions you might want to ask yourself:
 - What do you want from your career?
 - What sacrifices are you prepared to make to achieve it?
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses?
2. **Seek advice.** Speak with people who've taken the plunge and changed careers before. They might be able to guide you on some of the pitfalls you should try and avoid. It's also worth seeking out people in the industry or role you're interested in joining. They might be able to provide you with a plan about how to best go about achieving your goals.
3. **Speak with your boss.** It's important that you ensure you have a strong support network when you decide to change careers. Being open and communicating can make the transition much easier; explain the reasons for your decision and a little about the direction you hope to move in. If you're particularly worried about how he or she will react, this can be a good way to alleviate some of the stress involved with changing careers.
4. **Set goals.** "Set yourself a series of short, medium and long-term goals," says Wayne Baker, Chief Operations Officer at Symmetry HR. "They can be as simple as applying for five jobs or cold-calling companies you'd like to work for." Have a clear idea of what you want to achieve and then set process-oriented goals. So, for example, rather than setting one of your goals as getting your dream job, set yourself the goal of acquiring the skills that will make you the best candidate for getting that dream role.

5. **Network.** Seek out people you know working in the industry or role you want to move into. Be up-front with them about your desire to change career; be bold in asking for their help. Ask whether they know of any opportunities currently available and tell them you'd appreciate it if they kept you in mind if they heard of anything in the future. Maintain personable and regular contact with these people while you're looking to change careers, as they're often among the best resources for information.
6. **Volunteer.** Volunteering can be a great way of gaining experience in a field you've not worked in before. If you're unsure about the change, volunteering can be a way of getting an idea of whether you want to go down a particular path. One of the advantages is that you can usually volunteer outside of your normal work hours, so you don't have to quit your job before making any firm decisions about your future.

Changing careers can be daunting, but it can also turn out to be one of the best decisions you will ever make. If you're unhappy where you are or just wish you were doing something else, why settle?