



career & education

How to simplify your transition to a new career

Today's professionals change careers and jobs much more frequently than those of past generations. While a person may have once thought themselves lucky just to have a job and hold on to it as long as they could, workers today tend to be more fickle and jump around until they find the perfect career fit.

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics says it is difficult to determine just how often a person changes a career, noting the difficulty with regard to defining the parameters of what constitutes a career change. However, one study by the NLS that looked at young baby boomers found the average number of jobs held by people ages 18 to 46 was 11.3. Other studies examining American and British employment patterns discovered Americans tend to move around more, having 10.5 jobs in a lifetime compared to Brits' 6.9 jobs.

Although the job search was once considered a one-time event, today looking for a job is a larger part of career development. Staying on top of the job market and finding niches that offer the best opportunities for success is key. Transitioning from one job to another is more commonplace and these tips can make the move easier and more successful.

- Have a valid reason to change careers. Boredom

alone should not be the driving force behind a career change. If advancement opportunities seem nonexistent or if the job you're in simply isn't in tune with your interests, you may have a good reason to switch careers.

- Be willing to learn a new skill. You may need to learn new skills to pursue a new career. If that's the case, you may want to enroll in a continuing education course prior to job-hunting. Even if a job doesn't work out on the first attempt, new skills always look good on a résumé.

- Be a courteous networker. Send handwritten notes to any and all people who helped you find new job opportunities. This reaffirms your relationship and you never know when you might need a reference or support in the future.

- Educate yourself on office politics. It's helpful to know a company's rules in advance. This may be as simple as learning the dress code for employees and any other rules and regulations of the office. Do employees dine out for lunch, or do they eat primarily at their desks? What is the tendency for coworkers to mingle outside of the office? Learning these policies or habits may help you find a company that's the best fit for you.

- Go with the flow. You may have your own ideas on how

to improve performance, but assimilate into the routine first before you start becoming more vocal. There is plenty of time to lend your advice and show the team how they can grow.

- Bring a treat for your new coworkers. Offer the first olive branch by bringing in a snack the office can enjoy or offer to take a few coworkers out for coffee. This can break the ice and facilitate new office friendships.

- Take a lot of notes. A lot of new information will come at you in your first weeks on the job. There will be procedures and technological details. Jot down notes along the way, and do not be afraid to ask questions for further clarification.

- Get cozy with the IT team. Many IT teams are increasingly becoming the backbone of many companies, ensuring everyone is online and working at peak potential. Get to know the IT department so you will not feel sheepish about turning to them when your computer freezes or your files vanish.

It can take several weeks for new employees to successfully transition to a new career. But there are several strategies men and women can employ to make that transition go as smoothly as possible.

■ Metro Creative Connection

What does it mean to be a mentor?

Mentors can serve as trusted confidantes to young people in need of professional guidance, providing the support or advice many need to break into a given industry.

While mentoring is most commonly associated with the professional arena, it need not be restricted to corporate environments. When looking to give back to their communities, men and women may not think of mentoring. However, mentoring can be a powerful empowerment and personal development tool, for both mentors and the people being mentored. The following are a handful of tips to foster a successful mentoring relationship.

- Ask a lot of questions. Mentors should expect to field a lot of questions, but they also should ask their share of questions. Asking questions is a good way to challenge people and get them thinking about various scenarios and situations they may find themselves in. This will help shape the person you're mentoring into an individual who can anticipate situations and deal with them on his or her own.

- Ensure confidentiality. Confidentiality should be of paramount importance in a mentoring relationship. The person you're mentoring should feel comfortable coming to you with any situation and have your support, as trust is essential to the mentor-mentee relationship.

- Stretch a person's abilities. The goal of a mentor is not to solve all of



his or her mentee's problems. Delegate tasks and provide advice to lead the mentee in the right direction. Encourage a mentee to take on more responsibilities, which can instill confidence and facilitate personal growth.

- Enjoy the experience. Mentors benefit from mentoring, which can provide satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment that results from knowing you played an integral role in the success of another person. If your career is in a slump, mentoring may provide the breath of fresh air you need to recharge. Mentoring also may give you insight into another person's life, which can be used in your own personal development. As long as your goal is the success and support of the mentee, mentoring can be a selfless act that touches the lives of others.

Formal mentoring programs exist, but mentoring relationships often begin when a less formal connection forms between two people. Should a friend, employee or colleague ask for your assistance in mentoring, embrace this compliment and make the most of your opportunity to aide in the growth of another person.

■ Metro Creative Connection

"I've cared for residents that I'll always remember. Everybody has a story."



It's rewarding for me to be a part of their lives in a positive way."

SAID JAKOB, A CNA FOR FIVE YEARS

Answer ... A Call to Care

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*For wage information go to the SD Department of Labor - Labor Market Information Center <http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/>