



Questions to ask yourself when changing career

Years ago it was the norm for people stay in the same career for their entire professional life, working their way from the bottom to the top. These days, however, things are little different.

A tough employment market and reduced job security mean that more and more people are changing career, in many cases more than once, in search of higher pay, more opportunities and a better working life.

The rewards can certainly be great, but taking the plunge and changing career is not without its risks. So, if you're thinking of making the switch, we've come up with a few questions you should ask yourself.

Why am I thinking about a career change?

Even if you think you already know the answer to this question, it's important to really think about why you're considering such a big change. Is it that your true calling is elsewhere, or that you're just bored? If it's the latter, it might be a case of needing a new challenge within your current role, rather than an entire career change.

It's also worth considering whether you're motivated by a dislike of your current job or a passion for something else. If you're motivated by a need to escape from your existing role, you should think carefully about your next career – you don't want the same problems to come up again.

Can I afford a change?

If you want to change an aspect of your life, money shouldn't stand in your way. But there are important financial factors, both long and short term, to consider when changing career.

After all, changing career isn't like changing job; there's the possibility that you'll have to start from the bottom and work your way up. This could mean taking a pay cut, so you'll need to take a good look at your finances to work out a way of managing the lower wage.

In the shorter term, you may have to consider the cost of training or studying for qualifications, depending on the industry you want to go into. This can be expensive, so make sure you budget for any initial costs.

What opportunities are out there?

Whether you have a specific role in mind or you just know you want a new challenge, it's important to do your research before making any big decisions. You certainly don't want to re-enter the jobs market blind!

Take a look at what opportunities there are in your chosen industry (or in general if you're yet to settle on a specific area), making a note of things like salaries and progression opportunities. It's even worth applying for a couple of jobs as a 'dummy run' to see how you get on.

What's it like in my chosen field?

You probably have some impression of what it's like to work in the industry you're switching to, but it's a good idea to speak to someone already working in that field. If you don't know anyone working in that industry, speak to a careers advisor who might be able to put you in touch with someone.

Talking to people who are already doing what you want to do will give you a real insight into what it's actually like to have a career in your desired area, from working hours to job satisfaction, allowing you to make an informed decision.

What do my friends and family think?

This question may come last on our list, but it's no less important than any of the others. Speaking to your loved ones and getting their advice is always a good idea when making a big decision like changing career – especially if you have people depending on you.

They will be able to give you the kind of advice you need to hear, and help you make the decision that's best for you. You'll need their support once you've taken that plunge, so it's best to include them every step of the way.